

Emotional Salespeople: Customer Orientation and Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Customer orientation is recurrent in academic research because it enables more effective value creation for customers and shareholders. In this context, this research investigates an unexplored topic, which is the relationship between the emotional intelligence of salespeople and their customer orientation. In a sample of 167 Brazilian salespeople, two validated scale were used, but rarely applied together: (a) Saxe and Weitz Sales Orientation and Customer Orientation Scale (SOCO); (b) Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS). It was concluded with the structural equation model developed that the percentage of customer orientation variability explained by the model is 12% and that for each increase in standard deviation of total emotional intelligence, customer orientation increases by .35 standard deviation, that emotional intelligence is greater in older salespeople, and that emotional intelligence varies according to the economic sectors of salespeople.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Inteligência emocional.
Orientação consumidora.
Vendedor.
Satisfação do consumidor.
Lealdade do consumidor.

RESUMO

A orientação ao cliente é recorrente na pesquisa acadêmica, pois permite uma criação de valor mais efetiva para clientes e acionistas. Nesse contexto, esta pesquisa investiga um tópico inexplorado, que é a relação entre a inteligência emocional dos vendedores e sua orientação para o cliente. Em uma amostra de 167 vendedores brasileiros, foram utilizadas duas escalas validadas, mas raramente aplicadas em conjunto: (a) Saxe e Weitz Sales Orientation e Customer Orientation Scale (SOCO); (b) Escala de Inteligência Emocional de Wong e Law (WLEIS). Concluiu-se com o modelo de equação estrutural desenvolvido que a porcentagem de variabilidade da orientação ao cliente explicada pelo modelo é de 12% e que para cada aumento no desvio padrão da inteligência emocional total, a orientação do cliente aumenta em 0,35 desvio padrão, que a inteligência emocional é maior nos vendedores mais velhos, e essa inteligência emocional varia de acordo com os setores econômicos dos vendedores.

1 Introduction

The concept of customer orientation is extensively explored in marketing studies that address the satisfaction of customer needs, the level of salesperson-customer interaction, the creation and construction of long-term customer relationships (Coda, Silva, Garcia, & Silva, 2007). Sales professionals are often placed in situations where conflict and ambiguity are predominant (Rozell, Pettijohn, & Parker, 2004) and the academic literature shows positive relationships between companies and customer orientation, profitability, customer satisfaction and loyalty (Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Williams & Attaway, 1996). These relationships are mainly due to the fact that salespeople create expectations and provide services and solutions to the customers (Pilling & Eroglu, 1994) and thus have a leading role in the results of companies from different segments and sizes, especially considering the current competitive environment, more demanding, sophisticated and with greater diversity in the value propositions of companies (Wisker & Poulis, 2014).

Donavan, Brown, and Mowen (2004) stated that the development of the customer satisfaction and the long-term profitability are related to more customer-oriented salespeople, who in turn have better sales performance. However, researchers identify a gap in the literature, indicating the need for more empirical studies that relate customer orientation beyond customer satisfaction (Franke & Park, 2006; Schwepker Jr., 2003). In order to better develop customer satisfaction, the literature reports that aptitude and motivation are critical factors in sales and that the salespeople's emotional control of has an impact on sales performance and customer loyalty (Churchill, Ford, Hartley, & Walker, 1985; Borg & Johnston, 2013). Sjöberb and Littorin (2003) go even further by stating that salespeople who have high level of emotional intelligence are more resilient and better able to control themselves and deal with difficult situations. In this way, it is observed that emotional intelligence is an important construct for salespeople to achieve high performance in their customer relationship functions (Sojka & Deeter-Schmelz, 2002; Weitz, Castleberry, & Tanner, 2004).

A study carried out by Pipedrive Consulting (2018), with more than 70,000 sales teams around

the world, concluded that the best teams convert about 37% of the sales proposals made in an average time of 36.5 days, and the worst ones have a rate of 4.95%, and take 56.62 days to complete a negotiation. The Brazilian teams, in this study, took an average of 28 days to reach agreements, ranking first in the world. On the other hand, the Swedish consulting firm Better Business World Wide conducts The Smiling Report, a compiled from mystery shopping evaluations worldwide with more than one million evaluations each edition in 37 countries. This report seeks to assess emotional aspects of the purchase through three criteria: (a) the percentage of the interactions started with the salespeople's smile; (b) the percentage of interactions initiated with a greeting; (c) Add-on sales suggestion. The Smiling Report release 2019 shows that overall 80% of the customers received a smile, 82% were greeted, while only 49% received an add-on sale suggestion. Brazil systematically presents good indicators when compared to other countries. 4th position for the Smile (91%), 17th position for the Greeting (82%) and 2nd position for the Add-on sales (75%) (Better Business World Wide, 2019).

Thus, the objective for this research is to identify relationships between emotional intelligence and customer orientation of salespeople and propose a model for measuring emotional intelligence on consumer orientation. This research contributes to the advancement of studies in emotional intelligence related to aspects of the customer orientation in general terms, and particularly in the Brazilian business environment. In this sense, a review of the literature on sales emotional intelligence and customer orientation was carried out and two instruments were applied through field research with 167 Brazilian salespeople: Customer Orientation and Sales Orientation Scale (SOCO), developed Saxe and Weitz (1982) to measure the levels of customer orientation and Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) developed by Wong and Law (2002) to measure the traits of emotional intelligence.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Emotional Intelligence

The emotional intelligence has been popularized by Goleman (1995a, 1998) with the

argument that in many aspects of life it may be more relevant than the intelligence quotient (IQ), but in the sense of social intelligence, a theme that had already been approached by Thorndike (1920) and defined, as emotional intelligence, by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as "the subset of the social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p.185).

The construct has received numerous contributions aiming at its development, and after Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995b), George (2000) emphasized that it adds to the construct aspects related to the ability to understand and manage humor and emotions as a source of contribution of the effective leadership in the organizations, Macaleer and Shannon (2002) that emphasize the idea of emotional intelligence as a combination of competences that influences behaviors, thoughts and interactions, Coleman (2008) that proposes the question of distinguishing and naming the different emotions and Agarwal and Chaudhar (2013) relating the construct to the success in life and psychological well-being and performance for ethical decision-making. Table 1 presents the efforts to define emotional intelligence in a chronological evolution perspective.

Table 1. Chronological evolution of the concept of emotional intelligence

Author	Year	Definition
Salovey & Mayer	1990	The subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to distinguish among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions
Goleman	1995b	Refers to how well we handle ourselves in our relationships in five domains i.e. self-awareness, managing emotions, self-motivation, empathy, handling relationship.
Mayer & Salovey	1997	The ability to perceive emotions, to access, and generate emotions to assist the thought, to understand the emotions and the emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

George	2000	Ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in the one's own and others that contributes to the effective leadership in organizations
Macaleer & Shannon	2002	Emotional intelligence is usually accepted to be a combination of emotional and interpersonal skills that influence our behavior, thinking, and interaction with others
Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki	2007	As a constellation of emotional self-perceptions within the lower levels of personality hierarchies
Coleman	2008	The ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, to distinguish between different emotions and label them appropriately and use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior
Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade	2008	Emotional intelligence concerns the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought.
Agarwal & Chaudhar	2013	Essential factor responsible for determining success in life and psychological well-being, seems to play an important role in taking the ethical decision-making
Lopes	2016	A set of interrelated abilities at the interface of emotion and cognition, including perceiving, understanding, using, and managing emotions
Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey	2016	The ability to reason validly with emotions and with emotion-related information and use emotions to enhance thought

However, even with the large number of researches already done, there is still no convergence between results. There is discussion about the validity and usefulness of emotional intelligence. There are several researches that seek to validate and evaluate the usefulness of emotional intelligence in the sales process, and while some studies have found a correlation between emotional intelligence, personal relationships and leadership, others have not found such correlations, (Mners, Côte & Lievens, 2018). It is believed, however, that theories that relate emotional intelligence and other variables can bring important contributions to the development of the construct, since meta-analyzes indicate that 1 to 7% of the variance is explained by the relationships between cognitive abilities, personality metrics and emotional intelligence (Ybarra, Kross, & Sanchez-Burks, 2014).

In the commercial environment, emotional intelligence consists in using emotions to think more rationally, and the ability to identify the clients' emotions is one of the skills that need to be developed aiming to improve customer-oriented service. This business challenge is consistent with the definition of emotional intelligence as a set of non-cognitive skills, competencies, and skills that influence how people will cope with everyday demands and pressures in order to achieve success (Bar-on, 2006). Goleman (1995a, 1998) states that the way individuals perceive and react to environmental stimuli is impacted by competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and social skills, which in turn define a level of emotional intelligence in individuals. These concepts, which related the construct to certain competences, contributed to arouse interest in the development of the organizational policies oriented to emotional intelligence. In this sense, for Ford, Walker, Churchill and Harvey (1987), maturity and motivation are criteria that must be valued in the selection of salespeople, who are professionals exposed to rejection, rudeness, conflict of roles and at the same time, are pressured by the production of positive results. Thus, for good professional performance, the salesperson needs to have control and awareness of their feelings.

Personal sales are activities usually performed without direct and face-to-face supervision, and this requires that salespeople develop skills related to self-control, commitment and discipline that enable the attainment of the organization's objectives. Thus, the intrinsic salespeople's motivation is necessary in many aspects of sales, including prospecting opportunities, activating calls, addressing resistances and objections, and negotiating orders, which are very challenging and often present in these professionals the daily life of these professionals (George, 2000).

Empathy, characterized by the ability to interpret words and feelings of others, is an often critical factor in distinguishing individuals emotionally intelligent and determine the effectiveness of sales, that is, it seems that a good understanding of customers by the salespeople makes them more effective in the fulfillment of their goals (Pilling & Eroglu, 1994; Ingram, 1996; Weitz B., 1979). The literature indicates that there is a relationship between customer-oriented sales

and advisors' profile of salespeople (Saxe & Weitz, 1982), or that salespeople's propensity to conduct consultative sales is related to their levels of social skills and long-term orientation (Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Schultz & Good, 2000; Schwenker & Good, 2004).

These traits and behaviors seem to describe the characteristics of an individual emotionally intelligent because emotional intelligence has been described as linked to sensitivity in relation to the self-emotions or others' emotions and therefore an individual with high emotional intelligence has self-control, self-regulation and the ability to defer rewards for the future. These characteristics seem to describe a salesperson with greater ability to engage in customer-oriented sales tactics, have a long-term focus, have a higher level of self-control and empathy, and an ability to control their emotions (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Pilling & Eroglu, 1994; Ingram, 1996). When an individual can use reason to understand emotions, and when he or she can control their emotions without having aggressive behavior, he or she can use emotional intelligence in his or her favor. Emotions can be an obstacle or essential to rational thought (Pinto, 2017).

2.2 Customer Orientation

A well-explored topic in marketing, the customer orientation provides increased customer satisfaction and business profitability (Jaworski & Kohli, 1996; Narver & Slater, 1990; Ingenbleek, Frambach, & Verhallen, 2013), and comprehensively customer-oriented firms are those that seek to use market intelligence to better understand and meet customer needs (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). In this way, customer orientation is embedded in organizational cultures that create value for clients and improve business performance (Narver & Slater, 1990). The Customer orientation is defined as a set of beliefs and behaviors that puts the client's interests first, creating superior value based on the organization's culture (Rindfleisch & Moorman, 2003; Deshpander, Farley, & Weterster, 1993).

There are several studies that have investigated the relationship between customer orientation and metrics and measures of corporate performance. Slater and Narver (2000) found a positive effect of the customer orientation and the profitability. Deshpande, Farley, and Webster

(1993) argued that performance indicators such as profitability, relative growth rate and relative market share could be explained by the customer orientation from companies evaluated by their clients. Donovan, Brown, and Mowen (2004) studied the relationship with the performance of the company employees, and even more recently Menguc, Auh, Fisher, and Haddad (2013) investigated the influence of the client orientation on co-workers as an example of organizational culture, indicating that such effect requires further investigation. Zampetakis (2011) examined personal and contextual factors at work that influenced the perception of 120 mid-level managers of seven companies in the banking sector in Cyprus on client orientation of the immediate subordinate. Specifically, customer-driven employees, by having more control, can handle customer requests and problems promptly, treat customers delicately and gently and maintain a consistent level of emotionality during their interactions, being satisfied with their personal outcomes (Xue Wu, 2017).

The evaluation of sales performance becomes quite straightforward in situations where the salesperson's main responsibility is to increase sales volume and / or profitability, but in many situations, the salesperson's role is not so direct and in this way, the determination of appropriate performance measures becomes more difficult (Jaramillo, Mulki, & W. Marshall, 2005), that is, there are situations in which the salesperson is focused not only on sales but also on maintaining relationships with clients, making it difficult to accurately evaluate the salesperson's performance (Johnston & Marshall, 2009). With this inaccuracy in measuring performance, the set of skills needed to meet goals and objectives becomes even more difficult. It is common for companies to look for aggressive, enthusiastic, self-confident, competitive, and outgoing salespeople, but would these be the decisive skills for business-oriented customer success?

Dunlap, Dorson, and Chambers (1988) have argued that a customer-oriented sale requires a salesperson who has behaviors that increase customer satisfaction in the long run and avoid behaviors that lead to customer dissatisfaction. One can intuitively think that the greater the orientation of a salesperson to the customer, the better his results will be, as he would be better placed to create and maintain mutually beneficial

relationships that would increase the market share and the company's financial returns in the short or long term. However, a study conducted by Homburg, Muller, and Klarmann (2010) shows that in a B2B environment, this relationship has the inverted U-shape and not linearly positive as one might suppose.

2.3 Positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Customer Orientation

There are different perspectives that investigate the relationships between emotional intelligence and customer orientation. Professionals from a nursing department in Korea (Kim & Lee, 2016), pharmaceutical salespeople in the United Kingdom (Pettijohn, Rozell, & Newman, 2010), employees of a hotel in Korea (Lim, 2017). Pettijohn et al. (2010) identify that client orientation can be influenced by managerial training policies, and, in other research, that emotional intelligence has a significantly positive effect on customer orientation. According to a study done by Pinto (2017) with 412 individuals who had worked for at least six months in Portuguese territory, the higher the emotional intelligence of a company's employees, the greater the customer orientation. Aldosirya, Alkhadher, Alaqraa, and Anderson (2016) examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and sales productivity analyzing the performance of commercial professionals in Kuwait. The sample consisted of 218 commercial professionals working in 24 vehicle dealerships. Kadic-Magljalic, Vida, Obadia, and Plank (2016) research the business-to-business sales performance of industrial sectors and services using emotional intelligence. Structural equation modeling was used, and the study offers new insights to sales and marketing managers about how individual capabilities can be transformed into high-performance sales. Park and Dhandra (2017) examined 1,006 employees in 127 companies and verified the effect of the employee orientation and customer orientation using emotional intelligence.

Thus, the following hypothesis was established:

Hypothesis 1: There are strong and positive correlation between emotional intelligence and customer orientation of salespeople.

3 Methodology

In order to identify the relationships between emotional intelligence and customer orientation of salespeople, two scales were used to measure the constructs that, together with the demographic data, comprised an electronic self-filling questionnaire. Normality were tested with Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and correlations and appropriate hypothesis tests were conducted based on the results.

The influence of emotional intelligence on customer orientation described in the theoretical framework was evaluated by creating a structural equation model with AMOS software (v.23, SPSS, IBM Company, Chicago, IL) using the maximum likelihood method applied to the original items. In the adjustment of the model a two-step strategy was used: in the first step the measurement model was adjusted, and in the second step, the structural model was adjusted. In assessing the quality of the adjustment, the CFI and GFI indices were used, considering that values above 0.90 reflect a good adjustment (Marôco, 2014). We also used the RMSEA with a 90% reliability CI and rmsea probability ≤ 0.05 . A CFI for 90% RMSEA with an upper limit of less than 0.10 was considered to indicate a reasonable adjustment, and that the adjustment is very good when the RMSEA is less than 0.05 (Marôco, 2014). To refine the model, we used the modification indices calculated by AMOS. It was considered that $IM > 11$ ($p < 0.001$) indicated local adjustment problems and, after assessing the theoretical plausibility of the modifications, correlated the measurement errors leading to considerable improvement of the measurement model adjustment. Finally, the model coefficient estimates are presented in their standardized form.

3.1 Questionnaires

Emotional Intelligence was evaluated through the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) developed by Wong and Law (2002). WLEIS is a scale used to measure emotional intelligence with adequate psychometric properties, created for the context of employment, making it possible to evaluate the expression of emotions, appreciation and recognition of emotions in others, emotions that regulate, and use of emotion to facilitate performance (Rodrigues,

Rebelo, & Coelho, 2011; Soto, Lunahuaná-Rosales, & Pradhan, 2016) and one of the most used for the measurement of emotional intelligence (Kong, 2017). It consists of 16 items in four dimensions as shown in Table 2 and each of the constructs was calculated by the average of the responses obtained. A five-point Likert scale was used (1 = totally disagree, 5 = strongly agree) and the construct and dimensions were calculated based on the mean of the responses obtained.

Table 2. Dimensions and assertions of the WLEIS emotional intelligence scale

Dimension	WLEIS Item
Self-Emotions Appraisal (SEA)	1. I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time
	2. I have good understanding of my own emotions
	3. I really understand what I feel
	4. I always know whether or not I am happy
Others-Emotions Appraisal (OEA)	5. I always know my friends' emotions from their behavior
	6. I am a good observer of others' emotions
	7. I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others
	8. I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me
Use of Emotion (UOE)	9. I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them
	10. I always tell myself I am a competent person
	11. I am a self-motivating person
	12. I would always encourage myself to try my best
Regulation of Emotion (ROE)	13. I am able to control my temper so that I can handle difficulties rationally
	14. I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions
	15. I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry
	16. I have good control of my own emotions

Several researches were carried out with the application of the WLEIS scale in different perspectives. Park and Dhandra (2017) analyzed the mediating effect of emotional intelligence on the relationship between full attention and self-esteem in a sample of 234 people with WLEIS. There are studies that evaluated differences between genders based on WLEIS-S, an adaptation of the scale to Spanish, identifying that the gender differences were found in the total emotional intelligence score and the others-emotions appraisal, with women scoring more than men (Pacheco, Rey, & Sanchez-Alvarez, 2018). The

view that emotional intelligence should be included in the framework of traditional cognitive skills was explored in three studies with a sample of 500 people investigating the relationships between measures of emotional intelligence, traditional human cognitive skills and personality (Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998).

Client orientation was evaluated through the Sales Orientation - Customer Orientation Scale (SOCO), developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982). This is a scale designed to measure the degree or proportion of the customer-oriented sales by salespeople, such as the degree to which the salesperson practices marketing concepts by trying to help their customers make purchasing decisions according to their needs. Highly customer-oriented salespeople avoid actions that tend to result in customer dissatisfaction. SOCO is used to measure six components: (a) a desire to help customers make good purchase decisions; (b) helping customers assess their needs; (c) offering products that will satisfy those needs; (d) describing products accurately; (e) avoiding deceptive or manipulative influence tactics; (f) avoiding the use of high pressure. There are 24 items relevant to the interaction between salespeople and buyers and are presented in Table 3. A five-point Likert scale was used (1 = totally disagree, 5 = strongly agree) and the construct was calculated based on the mean of the responses obtained.

Table 3. Sales Orientation - Customer Orientation Scale (SOCO) Items

SOCO Scale items
<i>Stem-positively stated item</i>
1. I try to give customers an accurate expectation of what the product will do for them.
2. I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.
5. I try to influence a customer by information rather than by pressure.
8. I try to help customers achieve their goals.
9. I answer a customer's questions about products as correctly as I can.
12. I try to figure out what a customer's needs are.
13. A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind.
14. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product that helps him solve that problem.
15. I am willing to disagree with a customer in order to help him make a better decision.
16. I offer the product of mine that is best suited to the customer's problem.
19. I try to sell a customer all I can convince him to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.

21. I try to achieve my goals by satisfying customers.
23. I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer.

Stem-negatively stated item

3. If I am not sure a product is right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to get him to buy.
4. I imply to a customer that something is beyond my control when it is not.
6. I try to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer.
7. I spend more time trying to persuade a customer to buy than I do trying to discover his needs.
10. I pretend to agree with customers to please them.
11. I treat a customer as a rival.
17. It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer.
18. I begin the sales talk for a product before exploring a customer's needs with him.
20. I paint too rosy a picture of my products, to make them sound as good as possible.
22. I decide what products to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to buy, not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run.
24. I keep alert for weaknesses in a customer's personality so I can use them to put pressure on him to buy.

The use of the SOCO scale was adapted in a research carried out with patients and nurses in a health setting, as a way of analyzing the use of scale in alternative environments and groups, as well as conventional corporate environments (Daniel & Darby, 1997), to understand the influence of emotional intelligence on the buyer (Delpechitre & Beeler, 2018), in a sample of 989 consumers of books, CD and DVD, and travel agencies (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). Brown, Widing, and Coulter (1991), Dunlap, Dotson, and Chambers (1988) and Williams and Attaway (1996) examined the replication of the study. Brown et al. (1991) used 348 consumers to test the modified version of the SOCO scale, while Bateman and Valentine (2015) used the SOCO scale to evaluate relationships between salespeople's ethical perceptions, confidence and purchase intentions.

3.2 Sample

A link to an electronic self-filling questionnaire with questions in a randomized order available on the Internet was disclosed in groups of salespeople in the social media and, therefore, salespeople of companies operating in Brazil in different economic sectors were invited to participate in the survey. Participants were informed about the exclusively academic purpose

of the study and the possibility of not identifying themselves, being anonymous, and voluntarily responding. A total of 167 responses were obtained from individuals with a mean age of 34.75 years old (SD 9.42) and experience in sales of 11.07 years (SD 8.24). The most frequent group among the respondents is women (63.47%), active in commercial sector companies (36.53%), with undergraduate degree (45.51%) in the business (36.53%).

Elementary	1	0.60
Secondary	38	22.75
Undergraduate	76	45.51
Graduate	52	31.14
Field of knowledge		
Business	61	36.53
Health	12	7.19
Humanities	34	20.36
Math & Science	33	19.76
Others	27	16.17
Total	167	100

4 Findings and discussion

Table 4 presents the frequency and percentage obtained for gender, age groups, economic sector, academic degree and field of knowledge of the respondents.

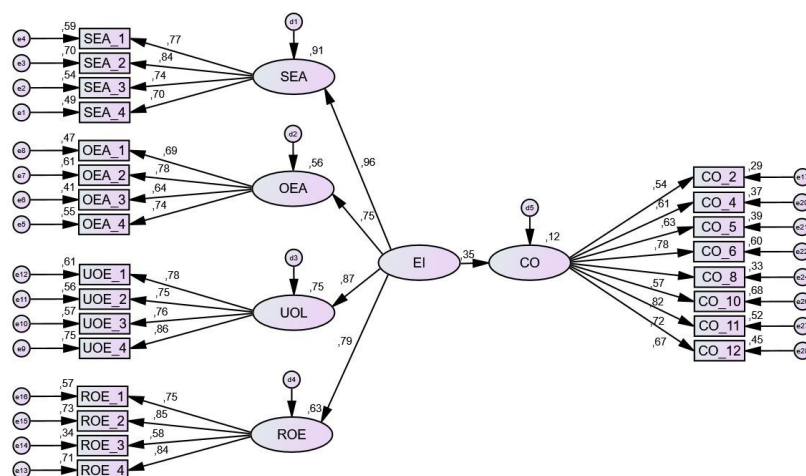
Table 4. Sampling profile

	Frequency	%
Sex		
Man	61	36.53
Woman	106	63.47
Age groups		
Less than 30	60	24.55
From 30 to 37	44	31.74
From 38 to 42	27	22.16
More than 42	36	21.56
Economic sector		
Industrial	54	32.34
Commercial	61	36.53
Service	52	31.14
Academic degree		

Normality were tested and rejected with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; thus, non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis hypothesis tests were conducted (Hair Jr., Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tathan, 2009; Marôco, 2018) and were possible to identify the differences among salespeople based on demographic characteristics and it was found that the salespeople of industrial economic sector seem to regulate their emotions better (ROE) than commercial sector salespeople ($\chi^2(2) = 24.13, p = 0.02$). In addition, salespeople in the industrial sector indicated that they had greater sales orientation (SO) than the service sector ($\chi^2(2) = 27.82, p = 0.01$).

The model for measuring the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Customer Orientation (CO), adjusted based on a sample of 167 respondents of both sexes, is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Emotional Intelligence measurement model on consumer orientation



The model has a reasonably good fit to the variance and covariance structure of the 24 items analyzed $\chi^2(247) = 341.68$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.38$, CFI = 0.95, GFI = 0.86, RMSEA = 0.05, $P[\text{rmsea} \leq 0.05] = 0.593$, and 90% CI [0.04, 0.06]. All indices have satisfactory factor weights and the percentage of customer orientation variability explained by the model is 12%. Being the direct and positive effect of EI on CO ($\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.0001$), it can be stated that the higher the level of emotional intelligence of salespeople, the greater will be their customer orientation, or in other words, the addition of 1 standard deviation in EI implies an increase of 0.35 standard deviation in CO.

The results not allowing to reject hypothesis 1: There are strong and positive correlation between emotional intelligence and customer orientation of salespeople.

The results of the correlation between the constructs and their respective latent variables, as well as the results of the adjustment of the measurement model, the first phase of the structural model construction, corroborate the reliability and validations of the Wong and Law (2002) scales for emotional intelligence and Saxe and Weitz (1982) for customer orientation. The strong and positive correlation between total emotional intelligence and customer orientation of salespeople, besides the good structural adjustment found, are aligned with the theoretical perspectives that supported this research, especially in the articles by Pinto (2017) and Park and Dhandra (2018).

The literature still mentions the relationships of the two study variables to the salespeople's performance, thus, indirectly, the results found are also aligned with the findings of the studies by Aldosirya, Alkhadher, Alaqraa, and Anderson (2016) and Kadic-Maglajlic, Life, Obadia, and Plank (2016)

5 Conclusion

Emotional intelligence has been showing growing interest in the academic area and is related to sales orientation and customer orientation. New business models and technological developments are putting increasing pressure on the salesperson because it is the link between corporate interests and the needs and desires of the customers, who in turn have more and more product options, value propositions, types of distribution channels, media

and forms of communication and sales. Therefore, the salesperson must constantly find different ways of relationship so that the company's offers fit the demands of the clients, and this professional is a critical success factor for companies, whether in matters related to financial goals or to guarantee of the positioning, unique selling proposition and the practical feasibility of other typical concepts in Marketing.

This context causes companies to exert strong and constant pressure for results in their sales departments, frequently establishing challenging goals for the salespeople who, for their own sake, must know how to react to these pressures, and, at the same time, satisfy the demands of exigent clients. The level of emotional intelligence may be crucial to the success of these professionals, since it is known that high scores of emotional intelligence may be a relevant factor for professional performance (Jacobs, 2001) or that emotional intelligence is a predictor of personal satisfaction and mental health of individuals (Kong, Zhao, & You, 2012).

On the other hand, it is also known that there is a positive relationship between the customer orientation and the achievement of sales targets. Individuals customer-oriented establish lasting relationships and gain customer's trust. There is, therefore, the need to deepen the knowledge between the level of salespeople's emotional intelligence of and the relationship with orientation to the client.

With the structural equation model developed in this paper, it was concluded that the percentage of customer orientation variability explained by the model is 12% and that for each increase in standard deviation of total emotional intelligence, customer orientation increases by .35 standard deviation.

In other words, salespeople who have a better understanding of the reasons for their feelings, greater awareness of the reasons for their degree of happiness and, above all, can control their temperament, calming down quickly when irritated, are more customer oriented.

Regarding demographic factors, it was possible to conclude that the older salespeople, the greater their evaluation of their own emotions, the use of emotions, total emotional intelligence and customer orientation. It is worth mentioning that it was expected to find the same about the sales experience, since there is a correlation between

respondents' ages and years of sales experience, but no correlation was found between sales experience with any of the study variables, which allows us to conclude that emotional intelligence and customer orientation may vary with age, but not necessarily with sales experience. That is, if for example you want to select someone to train a team of salespeople in customer orientation would be more effective to use age as a criterion than the sales experience of the candidate to coach. Another interesting finding is related to the economic sector in which the salesperson operates: sales professionals in the industrial sector have better regulation of the emotions than those in the commerce sector, and greater total emotional intelligence than the services sector.

Future studies could deepen in specific sectors or work on other demographic variables that allowed us to create a predictive model of performance through the characteristics raised in the study, or to go beyond and understand, through structural equation models, the relationships between emotional intelligence, orientation customer satisfaction and performance.

6 Implications and Further Research

The results of this research, besides the contributions in the theoretical field, show, in the practical field, opportunities for human resources professionals to develop new approaches to recruiting, selecting and qualifying sales professionals by exploring the emotional intelligence as a way of improving the customer orientation. exploration of these opportunities would be desirable considering that emotional salespeople would be better prepared to meet the current demands of clients in extremely dynamic markets while safeguarding their own professional and personal quality of life.

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