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# The Effects of Salesperson's Social Capital on Sales Performance: Evidence from China

Graduate School of Chosun University

Department of Business Administration

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판매원의 사회적 자본이 판매성으로 연결되는 메커니즘에 관한  
연구: 중국시장을 중심으로

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# The Effects of Salesperson's Social Capital on Sales Performance: Evidence from China

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## ABSTRACT

# **The Effects of Salesperson's Social Capital on Sales Performance: Evidence from China**

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In recent years, offline sales are increasingly impacted by online sales. Maintaining the competitiveness of offline shopping malls has become a genuine problem, as malls face significant online sales competition. This thesis establishes the core strength of the new role of salespersons in today's changing sales environment, emphasizes salesperson creativity, and tests both independent factors and dependent variables affecting salesperson creativity.

The independent factor of social capital determines the creativity of a salesperson, and this dimension is divided into communication openness, trusting culture, and shared vision. Data on 607 Chinese salespersons were collected through a structured questionnaire, and relevant hypotheses were tested based on these data. The results show: First, social capital perceived by the salesperson has a positive impact on the salesperson's creativity. Second, creativity plays a positive role in a salesperson's

adaptive selling. Third, in this process, salesperson creativity plays a mediating role between social capital and adaptive selling. Fourth, adaptive selling by the salesperson improves sales performance. Finally, the relationship between social capital and salesperson creativity is regulated by self-efficacy.

Based on the test results of the proposed hypotheses, this thesis grasps the role of salespersons in the digital era and puts forward empirical and theoretical clarifications of core factors salespersons should cultivate in the future.

*Key words:* Salesperson, Social Capital; Salesperson Creativity, Self-efficacy; Adaptive Selling, Salesperson Performance

## 한 글 요약

# 판매원의 사회적 자본이 판매성으로 연결되는 메커니즘에 관한 연구: 중국시장을 중심으로

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본 연구는 변화하는 판매환경에서 판매원들의 새로운 역할을 정립하기 위한 핵심역량으로 판매원 창의성을 설정하고, 판매원 창의성에 영향을 미치는 선행요인과 결과변수를 살펴보았다.

판매원들의 창의성을 결정할 선행요인으로 사회적 자본의 차원을 공개적 의사소통, 신뢰문화, 비전의 공유로 나누고 각 차원들이 판매원의 창의성에 미치는 영향의 정도를 확인하였다. 또한 판매원 창의성이 실제 판매성으로 이어지기 위한 적응적 판매의 역할도 확인하였다. 마지막으로 사회적 자본이 판매원의 창의성에 미치는 과정에서 자아존중감의 조절적 역할도 실증하였다.

중국의 판매원 607 명을 대상으로 구조화된 설문지를 통해 데이터를 수집하였고 이를 바탕으로 가설을 검증하였다. 가설검증결과, 첫째, 판매원이 지각한 사회적 자본은 판매원의 창의성에 긍정적 영향을 미치는 것으로 나타났으며, 둘째, 판매원의 창의성은 판매원의 적응적 판매행동에 긍정적 역할을 수행하는 것으로 나타났다. 셋째, 이 과정에서 판매원의 창의성은 사회적 자본과 적응적 판매행동 간의 매개적 역할을 하는 것으로 나타났다. 넷째, 판매원의 적응적 판매행동은 판매원들의 판매성과를 향상시키는 것으로 확인되었으며, 마지막으로 사회적 자본 중 비전공유와 판매원의 창의성 간의 관계는 자아존중감에 의해 조절되는 것을 확인되었다.

위와 같은 가설검증 결과를 바탕으로 디지털 시대 변화하는 판매원들의 역할을 파악하고 향후 판매원들이 배양해야 할 핵심역량은 어떤 것들이 있는지에 대한 실증적, 이론적 시사점을 제안하였다.

**핵심주제어:** 판매원, 사회적 자본, 판매원 창의성, 자기 효능 감, 적응적 판매, 판매성과

# I. Introduction

## 1.1 Research Overview

In today's era of network economy, the number of network consumers has increased sharply, resulting in a doubling of network sales (Liu et al., 2004). Chinese consumers increasingly like to obtain product information online and purchase goods online(Chen, 2017). With the rise of this new consumption ecology, the physical offline sales by salespeople will be increasingly affected. Consequently, traditional market competition and sales performance management must change. Han (2013) pointed out that the enthusiasm and creativity of salespeople in their sales activities impact their own sales performance, and thus, enterprises should improve the enthusiasm and creativity of salespeople. Today, the sales of offline salespeople are affected by the turnover of online shopping. Enterprises must continuously innovate to improve the sales performance of salespeople, which requires employees' creativity or innovative behavior. It has become centrally important for enterprises to stimulate employees' creativity (Guan et al., 2017). As the personal characteristics of salespeople differ, enterprises must conduct further research on salesperson innovation.

If traditional commercial enterprises want to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage, relying on traditional economic capital alone is clearly insufficient (Wang and Jia, 2019), and salespeople must innovate from the perspective of social capital. Scholars have found that social capital plays an important role in explaining enterprise innovation behavior and sales performance (Woolcock, 2004). According to social capital theory, the sales performance of employees not only depends on their

intellectual capital, but also on their social capital, i.e., the ability of employees to carry out sales innovation through social connections (Shi, 2015)

As the world's second largest economy and the fastest growing economy (Lu, 2019), the business environment of Chinese enterprises has always been a focus of scholars (Wang and Wei, 2019). Moreover, in the micro business field, studying the social capital of Chinese employees in a relationship-based environment, especially the social capital of salespeople, is also an important aspect towards understanding China's business environment (Li et al., 2019). Personal social capital of employees is not only an important factor constituting personal core competitiveness, it is also an important factor affecting enterprise performance (Wang and Hu, 2005). Therefore, in the context of Chinese culture, how social capital can be better established, accumulated, and used, and how the social capital of salespeople can be better explored on the premise of the same intellectual capital have become key factors with which enterprises strive to increase performance.

With the development of the Internet economy, network consumption is becoming increasingly convenient. Today, with increasing network consumption, offline sales of physical shopping malls have been affected at an unprecedented level. Faced with the challenge of Internet consumption, how to increase the sales performance of physical shopping malls has become a genuine research hotspot. To adapt to the new marketing environment of Internet consumption, the salesperson's own knowledge structure, creative ability, and good self-adjustment ability are becoming increasingly important. Individual differences and different characteristics of salespeople determine that their self-efficacy can affect their self-adjustment ability. Therefore, based on the Chinese



background, this study addresses the problem that the sales performance of salespeople is driven by the composition of salespersons' social capital, creativity, adaptive selling, self-efficacy, and other variables. The goal provides suggestions for the improvement of sales performance of physical shopping malls under the challenge of network economy.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

With the rapid development of online sales, their impact on the traditional sales model has become increasingly serious. This implies that physical sales must quickly adapt to these changes to establish a foothold in development. The competition between online sales and offline sales is also a competition between sales models. The main players in sales are people, i.e., sales talent. Under the impact of network sales, the social capital of physical sales personnel is key to affecting the enthusiasm and performance of sales workers, who are fundamental for the survival and development of physical sales. This study explores the internal influence mechanism of social capital and sales performance of sales personnel in physical sales enterprises under the impact of online sales. The following objectives are pursued.

First, the dimension of employee social capital in offline sales enterprises and its positive effect on salesperson creativity are explored, to provide new ideas for analyzing the influencing factors of salesperson creativity. At present, most scholars merely focus on the role of salesperson creativity on sales performance, and research lacks a thorough discussion on the antecedents of salesperson creativity. This thesis assesses the roles of communication openness, shared vision, and trusting culture on

salesperson creativity, which is not only a supplement for the preconditions for salesperson creativity, but provides a new feasible path for offline sales enterprises to stimulate salesperson creativity and improve sales performance.

Second, the influence of salesperson creativity on adaptive selling is assessed. The creativity of salespeople is helpful towards realizing new methods for achieving sales work or generating new ideas and adaptive behaviors that promote product upgrading. Adaptive selling behavior is a skill or ability, which implies that salespeople can effectively modify sales information and behavior in different sales situations. Research on the relationship between salesperson creativity and adaptive selling is helpful towards fully utilizing salesperson creativity and adapting to the new sales situation and the diversified needs of customers, with the goal of promoting the improvement of sales performance.

Third, the impact of salesperson adaptability on sales performance is explored. This thesis shows that salespeople flexibly adopts appropriate sales behavior according to different transaction situations and customer needs, to establish a new role path between sales performance improvement.

Fourth, research on salesperson creativity as an intermediary variable is conducted. In this thesis, salesperson creativity is assumed as an intermediary variable, and a research model is constructed that includes different dimensions of social capital, salesperson creativity, and sales performance. The goal is to establish a new path between salesperson social capital and sales performance improvements.

Finally, the study of self-efficacy as a regulatory variable is enriched. At present, most scholars focus on the influencing factors of sales performance, and research lacks

a discussion on the regulatory variables of social capital and salesperson creativity. This thesis explores the regulatory effect of salesperson self-efficacy on social capital and salesperson creativity, which not only supplements the regulatory conditions of salesperson creativity, but also provides a new incentive path for salesperson creativity and sales performance.

## **1.3 Structure of the Study**

### **1.3.1 Main Research Contents**

This thesis first presents information on social capital, sales performance, salesperson creativity, adaptability, self-efficacy, and other related literature and theory analysis. Then, according to the characteristics of the salesperson, the concept and dimensions of the above variables analysis are explored and the relationship between variables and assumptions is clearly defined. A theoretical model is built from data gathered through a survey questionnaire. Then, by analyzing these questionnaire data, empirical research on the hypotheses is carried out. Finally, the conclusions, management suggestions and research prospects are drawn. This thesis is divided into the following six chapters:

Chapter I presents an introduction. Here, the research background is reviewed from the realistic environment and theoretical research status of Chinese enterprises. The research objectives of this thesis are clearly defined, and the structure of this thesis is described from the two aspects of research content and research ideas.

Chapter II introduces the theoretical background and a pertinent literature review. In this chapter, social capital theory and its main content are reviewed, and the

dimension characteristics of social capital are analyzed. The development course of social capital theory is plotted, and the evolution of social capital theory is explained. Secondly, the theoretical research on creativity is summarized, and the influencing factors of employee creativity are analyzed based on the literature. Thirdly, a literature review on adaptive marketing is carried out. Fourthly, a literature review of self-efficacy theory is carried out, focusing on literature related to self-efficacy of sales personnel.

Chapter III presents hypotheses and constructs the model. Based on the literature review, this thesis defines the connotation of relevant concepts, and puts forward the hypothetic relationships between social capital and innovation-driven sales, social capital and performance-driven sales, as well as sales innovation and performance-driven sales. Moreover, the mediating role of sales innovation, the mediating effect of adaptive selling, and the moderating effect of self-efficacy are explored. The theoretical model of social capital and sales performance is also constructed.

Chapter IV presents the scale development and data analysis of social capital of sales personnel to sales performance. This chapter presents the design and distribution of the research questionnaire. Specifically, through translation, adjustment, and integration of the existing mature scale, a formal questionnaire was formed, and sales personnel were surveyed by the questionnaire. To ensure sufficient quantity and quality of samples, this study relied on friends engaged in procurement and sales to conduct on-site questionnaire distribution. At the same time, online questionnaire distribution was conducted through the Wenjuanxing network platform. The reliability and validity of sample data were tested to provide conditions for subsequent analysis and testing.

Chapter V presents an empirical analysis of social capital of sales personnel to sales performance. For this study, a questionnaire survey was conducted among sales personnel to obtain relevant data. SPSS21.0 was used for descriptive statistical analysis of the original data, and AMOS19.0 was used to analyze the relationship between variables. Finally, based on the test results, the proposed research hypotheses are evaluated and the reasons for the test results are discussed.

Chapter VI presents conclusions and prospects. The main conclusions of this study are obtained from the literature and empirical parts. The literature review mainly reveals the stage of the existing research and its possible shortcomings, which is of significance for providing pertinent research inspiration and theoretical reference for this thesis, and provides guidance for subsequent research. The main significance of the conclusions obtained from the empirical test is to identify promising countermeasures and suggestions with which sales personnel can improve their sales performance. Because of limitations associated with research time, funds, and other conditions, some limitations and deficiencies are unavoidable. Therefore, this last chapter proposes future research directions for deepening and refining this topic.

### **1.3.2 Research Methods**

Based on Adamson's research suggestions, this thesis adopts a hybrid research method combining normative research (qualitative) and empirical research (quantitative) (Adamson, 2004). The underlying rationality is that normative research method and empirical research method are dialectically unified. While theoretical research forms the basis of empirical research, empirical research supports theoretical research, and

neglecting either side will lead to the deviation of research results. Therefore, using different research methods at different research stages can achieve research objectives more effectively.

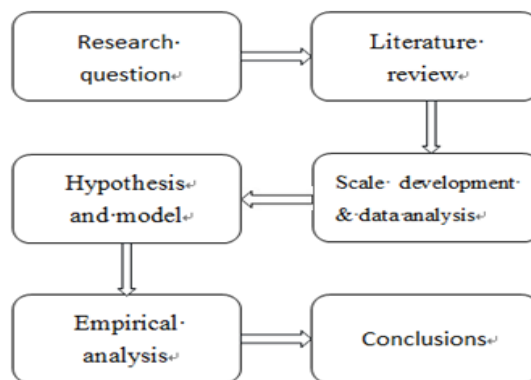
First, research methods are standardized. This study focuses on the core concept of social capital of sales personnel, and literature related to sales personnel, social capital, and other relevant aspects is analyzed. Based on the collation and comprehensive analysis of relevant literature, the connotation of social capital of salesperson is defined to ensure that the interpretation of the concept is appropriate and scientific. This thesis employed keywords such as “salespeople”, “social capital”, “creativity”, “job performance”, “self-efficacy”, and “adaptive selling” to retrieve, sort, and classify the collected literature. On this basis, the research status and problems of existing research and research ideas are identified. The research hypotheses address salesperson and creativity of social capital, social capital and sales performance, salesperson creativity and the mediation effect of sales performance, salesperson creativity, adaptive marketing intermediary effect, and the regulating effect of self-efficacy.

Second, the empirical research methods used in this thesis are statistical analysis method and questionnaire method. The reason for the questionnaire survey method is that it is highly feasible. Firstly, questionnaire survey requires little manpower and funds. Secondly, the survey results are easily quantifiable, facilitate statistical processing and analysis, and the final large-scale investigation is relatively simple. To ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the questionnaire survey results, this thesis draws on the research suggestions of Brown and Harris, which are based on normative research (Brown and Harrison, 2010). The questionnaire was designed according to

three standards of clarity of purpose, clarity of object, and accuracy of item, and the reliability and validity of the source scale were comprehensively considered. Common and mature scales were used as templates. To ensure the authenticity of data, the questionnaire was distributed both online and on-site, and all interviewees were sales professionals. A total of 1300 questionnaires were distributed, of which 607 were effective, with a recovery rate of 48%. Finally, SPSS21.0 and AMOS19.0 were used for statistical analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire.

### 1.3.3 Technology Route

This thesis is carried out according to the ideas of theoretical deduction, empirical research, and conclusion induction. Firstly, through a review of the literature, the research problems are identified. Secondly, based on the theoretical analysis and literature review, the theoretical model and research hypotheses are constructed. Then, according to the needs of models and assumptions, questionnaires are designed, and the relevant data are recovered and analyzed. Finally, according to the results, the research conclusions and suggestions are drawn.



<Figure 1> Technical Route Map of Research

## **II. Theoretical Background and Literature Review**

### **2.1 Research on Social Capital**

#### **2.1.1 Definition of Social Capital**

As an economic concept, “capital” refers to the basic material resources necessary for the production process for an extended period, e.g., land, factories, production equipment, and raw materials. With the expansion of social reproduction and the continuous development of the economy, scholars have expanded the concept of capital, dividing it into four forms: material capital, human capital, natural resources, and technical knowledge, which changed capital research from material to non-material. The concept of “social capital” can be traced back to 1916. Hanifan suggested that social capital can be used to describe vital intangible resources in people’s daily life, such as goodwill, friendship, mutual sympathy, and mutual communication(Hanifan, 1916). In the 1960s, Schultz and Becker introduced the concept of “human capital” into the field of economics when studying human resources. In doing so, “intangible capital” was combined with the organization and the personnel constituting the organization. Intangible capital became a synonym for all material and non-material resources that can add value(Schultz, 1974; Becker, 1975). With the further development of society and economy, the connotation of capital has further expanded. Following the 1970s, Western sociologists Bourdieu, Goleman et al. brought the social relations and social structure, which economists used to ignore, into the scope of capital analysis, and



initially put forward the concept of perfect social capital (Bourdieu,1985; Coleman, 1988).

Bourdieu was the first to systematically elaborate on the definition of social capital. Bourdieu suggested that “social capital is the aggregate of actual or potential resources, which are inseparable from the possession of lasting networks (Bourdieu, 1986). Those resource networks are related to the membership system of a group, which supports each member from the perspective of collective capital ownership and provides opportunities to win reputation (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu’s analysis focused on the mutual transformation of economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu, the purpose of investing in social relations is to transform the self and private special interests into super utilitarian, collective, public, and legitimate interests. Therefore, actors can absorb economic resources, improve their cultural capital, and establish close ties with institutionalized organizations by social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This effect of social capital can be found especially when different individuals obtain unequal benefits from truly equivalent economic and cultural capital. The accumulation and investment of social capital depend on the scale of the relationship network an actor can effectively mobilize. This in turn depends on the quantity and quality of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital owned by the associated individuals. Therefore, the production and reproduction of social capital presuppose continuous social efforts, which means that the investment of time and energy as well as the direct and indirect consumption of economic capital is related to the membership of a group (Coleman, 1988).

<Table 1> Some Representative Definitions of Social Capital

Representative	Main Points
Wallace et al. (1978)	Social capital is a natural social relationship between people who can promote or help to obtain valuable skills or characteristics in the market.
Bourdieu (1986)	Social capital is a collection of actual or potential resources, which are associated with the possession of a lasting network of institutionalized relations that we are familiar with or recognized.
Goleman et al. (1978)	Social capital is the ability of people to work together for a common purpose in a collective and organization. It is an entity with common characteristics in two aspects: these entities constitute many aspects of social institutions; They promote certain actions of actors, whether individuals or companies.
Putnam (1996)	Social capital is a kind of organizational characteristics, such as trust, norms and networks. They can enable participants to take more effective collective action in the process of pursuing common goals. In short, social capital is the norm and trust of social connections and participants.
Zhou (2006)	The definition of social capital is the collection of obvious and potential resources that can be controlled by the enterprise, which is conducive to the enterprise to achieve its goals and target activities, and is embedded in the enterprise network structure.
Chen (2002)	Social capital is the sum of the horizontal connection between an enterprise and related enterprises, the vertical connection between each link of its supply chain, the social connection with related entities and groups outside the enterprise, and the sum of the enterprise's ability to obtain and use these relationships to absorb external information and other resources.
Cheng and Bian ( 2014 )	Social capital is the connection between actors and society and the ability to access scarce resources through this connection. From the perspective of social capital theory, it includes three categories: vertical connection, horizontal connection and social connection.

In a study of social capital, Goleman suggested that people in groups and organizations have the ability to cooperate to achieve common goals. Social capital is defined as “many subjects with common things, which are composed of some aspects of social structure, and they are conducive to the specific behavior of actors, whether they are individuals or legal persons in the structure (Coleman, 1988).” The definition

given by Goleman comprehensively defines the three elements of social capital: the owner of social capital, the source of social capital, and the resource itself (Coleman, 1988).

Carlson and Putnam defined social capital from the perspective of social organization. They studied social capital from the perspective of democratic politics (Carlson and Putnam, 1993), and further expanded the concept. Carlson et al. pointed out that social capital refers to the characteristics of social organizations, such as trust, norms, and networks, which can improve the efficiency of a society by promoting coordinated action (Carlson and Putnam, 1993).

In a precursor of relevant research on social capital in China, the scholar Zhang Qizi also defined social capital, pointing out that interpersonal relationship network is the main form of social capital. This social network not only has the function of connecting various parties, but it also optimizes resource allocation (Zhang, 2004).

### **2.1.2 The Content of Social Capital**

Social capital has attracted extensive attention because of its good explanatory power for the interpretation of organizational and individual behavior. Scholars study social capital from multiple levels according to their respective fields. The existing literature indicates that social capital theory can be classified and summarized from the following perspectives.

First, from a relationship perspective, social capital is a social relationship between people with the function of obtaining valuable information and experience (Paul and Kwon, 2002), and a social relationship network with the function of resource

acquisition and ability endowment(Li et al. 2018). The social capital of social network suggests that the interpersonal relationship or interpersonal network of the members of an enterprise is the essential connotation of social capital and forms an important premise for employees to exchange fine-grained information resources with internal and external relationship builders. From this perspective, social capital represents the interdependence of members in the relationship because of long-term communication. This dependence is expressed as standby reputation, which not only contributes to the generation of the next transaction, but also continuously accumulates and increases value. The widespread existence of relationship orientation in consumer groups makes people more inclined to choose relationship trading when faced with the choice between market and relationship. By strengthening the network relationships already existing in a group, common interest goals of a group or organization can be realized.

Second, from a resource perspective, enterprise social capital refers to the social resources that can realize value transfer by enterprises within their social relationship network (Zhang and Chen, 2009). Corporate social capital represents the sum of the network structure of an enterprise and various kinds of available resources that can be obtained via this structure (Zeng et al., 2013), especially valuable intangible resources in the relationship network. Its essence corresponds to material capital, which is another important influencing factor for the development and accumulation of social wealth. Cantner and Stuetzer (2010) pointed out that social capital can be described as a collection of existing or future resources that can be controlled and owned by the organization and embedded in the enterprise relationship network. These are expected to help the enterprise achieve its goals. Zheng pointed out that social capital is a multi-

level concept with capital that can help enterprises obtain resources and compensate for defects through the mutual transformation between individuals and organizations (Zheng et al., 2017). This form of social capital focuses on scarce resources that are available in a complex social network structure (Ru, 2016). It can only be understood as social capital when employees' social relations and networks provide resource value.

Third, Third, from the perspective of ability, social capital is the sum of the ability of an enterprise to absorb external information and other resources by using social relations. Examples for these are horizontal links with relevant enterprises, vertical links with each link of the supply chain, and social links with relevant entities outside the enterprise (Chen and Li, 2001). Westlund and Bolton (2003) suggested that corporate social capital can help enterprises deal with problems in the process of operation, which is a comprehensive result of the ability to solve practical problems (Westlund and Bolton, 2003). Liu suggested that social capital is an ability that helps enterprises obtain other heterogeneous resources and extends enterprise resource boundaries, thus enriching the resource base and enhancing both competitiveness and diversity (Liu et al., 2017). Chinese scholars such as Shanlin (2017), Sun et al. (2017), and Wang et al. (2017) held similar views. Zhang et al. (2018) divided social capital into two dimensions based on the theory of social capital capability. Information capital reflects the ability of actors in the network to obtain information resources, while control capital reflects their ability to obtain influence, power, human feelings, and support (Zhang et al., 2018). Although differences exist among various definitions of social capital, according to the definition of social capital by sociologists, social capital includes the following factors:

First, network, trust, and reciprocity are essential elements of social capital. Network represents the cross relationship between people or organizations, which belongs to the material level. Trust represents a positive psychology and attitude towards others. Reciprocity represents mutually beneficial behavior. Among these aspects, trust and reciprocity are crucial for social capital. Trust is the glue holding the network together and forms the premise of reciprocity. Reciprocity is not only the result of trust, but also a manifestation of trust. Therefore, “trust” is valued by many scholars and plays a key role.

Second, social capital has the characteristics of network, publicity, and non-concession. In essence, social capital is social, exists through the common behavior of several people, and manifests in non-material forms such as norms, authority, responsibility, and cooperation.

Third, social capital is an indispensable and decisive factor in obtaining material capital and human capital.

Fourth, social capital has micro, meso, and macro analysis levels. The micro level considers the potential ability of an individual to allocate resources through its embedded network, and specifically focuses on individual results. The meso level emphasizes the relationship network model between individuals, and focuses on the structure of social capital and its allocation consequences. The macro level indicates that social capital is embedded within larger political, economic, or cultural norms.

This thesis suggests that the concept of social capital should include communication openness ability, trusting culture, and shared vision of salespeople within their organization.

## 2.1.3 Dimensions Research of Social Capital

### Literature Review on the Dimension of Social Capital

Social capital includes many aspects of the social level and is a form of intangible capital (Sui, 2013). It is composed of concepts that are difficult to quantify and abstract, such as social ties, trust relationships, norms, and value systems, all of which promote individual behavior within society.

First, two dimensional division of social capital

Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) analyzed corporate social capital from internal and external perspectives according to the main forms of social capital. Internal social capital, which is also known as relational social capital, is the sum of various resources embedded in the interaction between an organization and external actors. As all departments in an organization adhere to the same goal, the ability of the organization to deal with environmental risks is improved by expanding information exchange, improving cooperation efficiency, and strengthening internal cohesion. This maximizes the interests of internal members. External social capital is also called bridge social capital, and represents the sum of various resources embedded in the interaction between the organization and external actors. By playing the role of social capital in this dimension, enterprises can quickly identify key market information, enhance their influence in their industry or market, and improve their ability to control future development trends (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998).

Zhang et al. (2018) divided external social capital into the two dimensions of information and control based on the concept of social capital capability. Information

capital is expressed in the ability of the members of a network to obtain information and other resources. This ability reflects their understanding of the dynamics of the market and competitors, policy trends, and other information. Control capital is expressed in the acquisition ability of the members in a network in terms of appeal, power, and support, specifically in the importance of the position of the members of a network, which will have a direct impact on the extent of their rights.

Considering the role of control in society, Wang regarded it as horizontal and vertical relationship capital according to different objects: Horizontal relationship capital refers to the relationship between organizations and other companies and associations. Vertical relationship capital refers to the relationship between members of a relationship network, government management institutions, and industry associations (Wang et al.,2017).

Shi (2008) divided social capital into the two dimensions of hierarchy and market according to the two ways of resource allocation in the transition economy period. The former mainly refers to the ability to obtain and mobilize resources related to the administrative system, while the latter refers to the ability to obtain and mobilize resources related to enterprises and market participants. This classification method focuses on the relationship between enterprises and a subject and describes different types of sources of social capital.

According to the different construction objects of social capital, Li and Xu (2012) differed between commercial and political social capital. Business capital reflects the relationship network established between individuals and major business partners.



Political capital refers to the relationship network established between individuals, administrative departments, and industry associations.

#### Second, Three Dimensional Division of Social Capital

The three-dimensional division of social capital is mainly based on the theoretical perspectives of Nahapiet et al. (1998). According to its essential attributes, social capital is studied from the three dimensions of structure, relationship, and cognition. Structural social capital mainly refers to social ties or social interactions, which form a social channel that realizes the effective transmission of information or other resources (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). At the same time, it is also a structural factor embedded in social interaction, which can be used through social interaction and helps organizations acquire resources. It is usually measured by the existence and strength of connections. Relational social capital, also known as social embedded relational factors, mainly refers to the strength or characteristics of a relationship. It also includes the assets that can be obtained through the construction and utilization of the relationship, which include trust and the degree of trust, obligations and rights, penalties for violations of norms, and identity recognition of members in the network. The higher the degree of mutual trust in a relationship, the more conducive cooperation will be. Consequently, the authenticity of the corresponding information and resources obtained through the relationship can be better guaranteed. Cognition includes common language and symbols. It also includes the shared values and other meaning systems of the members of the organization, the resources representing common understanding, an interpretation and meaning system that can be communicated between two parties

through common language, as well as coding and narration (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

In addition, Brown (2001) divided social capital according to micro, meso, and macro perspectives, and analyzed the impact of external culture, politics, and macro economy on individual social relationships in the network. Liao and Welsch (2003) studied social capital from the aspects of social interaction, organizational trust, and common norms. From the perspective of social network, Meiling divided social capital into the three dimensions of institutional social capital, commercial social capital, and technological social capital (He, 2018).

### Third, Other Dimensions of Social Capital

In addition to the above two main dimensions, other classification methods also exist, but these are only employed by a narrow set of research for specific purposes or research objects. For example, Liu studied the social capital of the board of directors, and divided it into the four dimensions of industry capital, financial capital, chain capital, and interpersonal capital (Liu et al., 2017). Huang and Yu (2014) divided executive social capital into the four dimensions of students, associations, businesses, and politics when studying the CEOs of listed companies. From a perspective of embeddedness, You and Zou (2014) suggested that social capital is composed of the four dimensions of relationship, status, interest, and reputation. Kim and Cannella (2008) suggested that dimension division of social capital can be achieved according to its level, and can be divided into the four types of social capital at the individual level, social capital at the organizational level, social capital at the inter-organizational level, and social capital at the national level. By combing the research on social capital in

China and internationally, Liuqin (2007) summarized the following four dimensions of social capital: trust, relationship network, code of conduct, and institutional norms.

A thorough review of the literature shows that the three-dimensional division (i.e., structure, relationship, and cognition) of social capital by Nahapiet et al. (1998) is particularly widely used in empirical research. Therefore, this thesis also uses this division, in which the structural dimension of social capital refers to the contact mode between salespeople and interacting individuals (e.g., customers, colleagues, and competitors) in their daily work. The model not only includes members that contact, but also how they contact. Relationship dimension social capital refers to the key resources salespeople obtain through the construction and use of relationships in their daily work. This resource exists in the form of trust, norms, and identity. The cognitive dimension of social capital refers to the knowledge, vision, and terminology salespeople and interacting individuals share in their daily work.

### **Dimension Exploration of Social Capital**

In summary, social capital can be regarded as the value of an individual's position within an organizational structure. For groups, social capital refers to the savings of behaviors and norms that enable members to support each other. Furthermore, for individual members, social capital refers to the communication ability, the cultivation of a trusting culture, and the vision sharing ability individuals employ to achieve organizational goals. This study focuses on the social capital of salespeople from the three dimensions of communication openness, trusting culture, and shared vision.

First, Communication openness

Hans (2001) found that the network connection of individual employees is an important means to effectively obtain external information. Communication among employees affects their ability to acquire knowledge and achieve organizational goals. In other words, the stronger an individual's communication ability, the stronger his or her ability to acquire knowledge and achieve organizational goals. Kim and Lee (2010) regarded interactive individuals in an organization as the source of employees' knowledge acquisition. They suggested that effective interactions between individuals and knowledge sources can improve the speed of knowledge flow and the recreation of knowledge, which is a prerequisite of innovation.

When studying enterprise reforms, Chinese scholar Zhang (2003) pointed out that communication openness effectively promotes the cultivation of social capital within enterprises. When studying the creation of corporate culture, Sun (2007) discussed the issue of communication openness among employees within an enterprise. Sun suggested that communication openness can promote a healthy corporate culture and affect the operation and development of an enterprise. Through empirical research, Yu et al. (2014) showed that the communication frequency within an organization significantly impacts individual innovation behavior. In this thesis, communication openness refers to nonexclusive information exchange behavior between salespeople conducted to achieve sales goals.

### Second, Shared Vision

Li and Li (2010) studied individual knowledge sharing in online learning communities from a social capital perspective, and found that the willingness and intensity of knowledge sharing affect social capital. Zhang and Cheng (2015) studied

the structure of knowledge sharing and social capital in engineering design team members, and found that the willingness for knowledge sharing affects the improvement of their social capital level. Sun and Liu (2007) suggested that knowledge sharing depends on the relationship resources of social capital and showed that knowledge sharing can effectively promote the achievement of organizational goals. In their study on knowledge governance, Cao and Xiang (2014) empirically showed that knowledge sharing not only improves employee relationship resources, but also significantly promotes employees' innovative behavior. Qin (2012) combined social capital theory and planned behavior theory to build a research model for studying the relationship between the resources of social capital (i.e., trust and norms) within the organization and the willingness of individual knowledge sharing. Li (2019) reviewed the relationship between knowledge sharing within organizations and social capital, and further emphasized the impact knowledge sharing willingness has on social capital. In this thesis, shared vision refers to the willingness and behavior of nonexclusive knowledge sharing among salespeople who help to improve sales performance.

### Third, Trusting Culture

As an important relationship resource of social capital, trust directly impacts both social capital and organizational goals. Fukuyama (2001) suggested that trust is a form of social capital. When studying the trusting culture of social capital, Guiso et al. (2008) pointed out that a good culture can promote individual knowledge transmission and improve the level of social capital. In a study of trust and social capital, Lissowska and Maria (2013) suggested that trust exerts a direct impact on social capital. When studying the theory of social capital and the construction of civic culture, Chinese

scholar Huang (2007) found that trust is the core content of social capital in civil society. In a study on the interaction and coupling relationship between social capital and corporate culture, Fang (2010) showed that corporate trusting culture can cultivate and enhance social capital. Diao (2020) regarded such a trusting culture as a dimension of social capital when explaining the university trusting culture from a sociological perspective. In this thesis, trusting culture refers to the values and codes of conduct salespeople consciously observe and that help to improve sales performance.

## **2.1.4 Theoretical Basis of Social Capital**

### **Relationship Theory**

Granovetter (1973) developed the concept of relationship theory when studying social capital. Granovetter divided relationships into strong relationship and weak relationship, in the belief that strong and weak relationships play a fundamentally different role between people, organizations, individuals, and social systems. Among these terms, a strong relationship forms links within groups and organizations, while weak relationships form links between groups and organizations. Strong relationships develop among individuals with similar socio-economic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, professional identity, and income level. Weak relationships develop between individuals with different socio-economic characteristics. Therefore, in strong relationships, it is easier to cross social boundaries and obtain information and other resources. In 1973, Granovetter introduced the “advantage of weak connection” theory. Bian (1997) pointed out that under the social and cultural background of China, the social network is no longer an information bridge, but a human network. The

stronger human relationships, the greater the probability that the individual is being taken care of and the greater the possibility of getting a job. Based on this, Bian put forward the “strong connection hypothesis”. This hypothesis posits that social capital is not owned by individuals, and that individuals must obtain social capital through relational networks.

### **Social Resource Theory**

Lin (2001), the creator of social resource theory, suggested that social capital is obtained from resources that are embedded in social networks. Lin (2001) identified these resources as “things that are considered valuable by the group after some procedures in a society or group, and the possession of these things will increase the survival opportunities of the occupier.” Lin further divided resources into personal resources and social resources. Personal resources refer to wealth, equipment, natural endowment, physique, knowledge, status, and other resources that can be controlled by the individual. Social resources refer to resources that are embedded in the personal social relationship network, such as power, wealth, and reputation. These resources exist in the relationships between people and can only be obtained by communicating with others. Using social resources is an effective way for individuals to achieve goals, and personal resources greatly affect social resources that can be obtained.

### **Structural Cavity Theory**

Burt (1997) put forward the structural hole theory in a study on social capital. The structural hole theory holds that the core problem of social capital is not the characteristic of direct connection, but rather, the connection characteristics between

contacts in individual relationship networks. When two contacts in a relational network are disconnected, a structural hole emerges. Burt suggested that the strength of a relationship is less important than whether the relationship is repetitive or non-residual in the established relationship network. As individuals who constitute bilateral relations share wealth, power, interests, and values with similar people in the network, the self-closed network can only provide repeated resources. Networks that are rich in structural holes provide individuals with three main advantages: more resources and faster access to these, greater bargaining power and therefore control of resources and outputs, and more prominent and more numerous career opportunities (Burt, 1997).

The structural hole theory holds that the position of an individual in the network is more important than the strength of the relationship, as the position in the network determines the individual's information, resources, and power. Therefore, regardless of the strength of the relationship, if structural holes exist, a third party who connects two actors who are not directly connected holds both information advantages and control advantages, and can obtain more services and returns. Therefore, if individuals or organizations want to maintain the advantage in a competition, they must establish extensive connections while at the same time, occupy many structural holes.

### **2.1.5 Influencing Variables of Social Capital**

The relevant literature on social capital variables is summarized in <Table 2>.



<Table 2> Research on Social Capital Variables

Author	Dependent Variable	Mediator	Moderator
HALi-Hassan et al. (2015)	Job performance		
KV and Servaes (2017)	Firm performance		
King et al. (2019)	Innovation process		
Kim and Shim (2018)	Performance	Knowledge sharing and innovation	
Tantardini and Kroll (2015)	Performance Management		
Bhatti et al. (2020)	Employee creativity	Knowledge sharing (KS)	Work meaningfulness (WM)
Swanson et al. (2020)	Employee loyalty	employee job performance	
Berraies et al. (2020)	Knowledge sharing	employees' well-being	Enterprise Social Network
Andersson et al. (2021)	Prospective employment	Job finding self-efficacy	
Christa et al. (2020)	Bank's business performance	Value innovation	
Omar et al. (2020)	New product creation	Information sharing purpose	
Chin et al. (2020)	Satisfaction, Proficiency, Market efficiency)	Entrepreneurship (Innovation, Proactive and Risk taking), Resilience capability (Adaptability, Agility and Flexibility)	

## 2.2 Salesperson creativity

### 2.2.1 Creativity

#### Definition of Creativity

Creativity refers to the ability to develop new and practical ideas, products, or solutions to problems (Zhao and Liu, 2016). In the actual work scenario, employees' creativity is reflected in improving existing work processes, designing new processes, and developing new products and services to better meet customer needs. Creativity has certain domain specificity. Specific to the sales field, salesperson creativity refers to new schemes and behaviors salespeople develop to complete the sales task.

As a behavioral driving force of employees to improve their work performance, creativity has been a hot topic in the field of management from the start (Zhang, 2018). While many studies have addressed creativity, there is still no agreement on how to define creativity. Wegerif and Rupert (2005) defined creativity as an ability that can produce novel and desirable products. This definition identifies creativity as a kind of ability and emphasizes the result. This ability should be transformed into the output of innovative products, novel ideas, and putting these ideas into practice to achieve the innovative ability of combining ideas with practice (Wegerif and Rupert, 2005).

Realizing creation is a difficult process. In this process, the strength of the individual is low, but the strength of the team is large, as each individual is good at a different field. It is easier to complement and spark inspiration in the process of communication and cooperation, which requires teamwork. In addition, the characteristic of innovation is also necessary. Obstacles imposed by rigid and dissimilar thinking should be overcome. In addition, problems should be identified and solved.

### **Environmental Perspective**

Research on employee creativity leads from a single individual perspective to the outside of the individual, adding environmental factors in the process. The stimulation of creativity is assumed to be inseparable from the role of the environment. Creativity is mainly studied from the three aspects of team, organization, and society. At the team level, leadership plays a key role for employee creativity in the environment. At present, the relationship between leadership behavior, leadership style, and employee creativity is mainly studied. Leadership style is one of the factors that substantially impacts employees' creativity. An abundance of research results exists on the mechanism of multiple leadership styles on employee creativity. For example, Xu and Luo (2016) assessed the relationship between self-sacrificial leadership and employee creativity, and Song (2018) assessed the relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee creativity. In addition, team heterogeneity, team learning goal orientation, team identity, and team leader-member exchange are important environmental variables affecting individual creativity. At the organizational level, organizational support, organizational justice, and an organizational innovation atmosphere have become the focus of attention of research on employee creativity. Yang et al. (2018) found that organizational support can stimulate employee creativity. Jin (2018) showed that organizational justice exerts a trickle effect on employee creativity. To expand relevant research, Yang et al. (2017), Ma (2016), and Cao (2016) discussed the impact of performance compensation, reward, and high-performance work systems on employee creativity. At the social dimension, the social factors affecting employees' creativity mainly include their social network and family members. Smith and Jill (2014) and Venkataramani et al. (2014) found that network strength and network

location affect employee creativity. The lower the leadership network center, the more apparent the positive effect of weak connection and employee network center on creativity. At present, the impact of the family on employee creativity is still an emerging research field. Wang et al. (2012) tested the relationship between creative individuals and “support creativity” and analyzed the relationship between work family support and employee creativity as well as its internal mechanism.

### **2.2.2 Salesperson Creativity and Sales Performance**

Employee creativity represents the ability of individuals to fully utilize their subjective initiative and creative thinking to discover and create new things for achieving organizational goals. Through empirical analysis, Wang (2014) found that employee innovation behavior has a significant impact on job performance. Li and Li (2016) studied the role of employees’ innovative behavior for both work atmosphere and work objectives. Pan and Bai (2017) empirically studied the impact of salesperson creativity on sales performance. In a study on employee creativity, Song et al. (2020) analyzed the relationship between employee creativity and organizational performance, and identified the mechanism of how employee creativity impacts organizational performance. By studying employees of high-tech enterprises, Gu and Zhang (2016) found an inverted U-shaped relationship between employees’ innovation behavior and their job performance.

### **2.2.3 Influencing Variables of Salesperson Creativity**

The research on salesperson creativity variables is summarized in <Table 3>.

<Table 3> Research on Salesperson creativity Variables

Author	Independent Variable	Mediation Variable	Moderation Variable
Bilal et al. (2020)	Sales Antecedents	Adaptive selling behaviour	Customer directed extra role behavior
Liu et al. (2020)	Climate for innovation	Openness to change and employee creativity	Psychological capital
Yan and Kang (2021)	Salesperson deep acting, interfunctional coordination	Salesperson creativity	Self-efficacy
PAN and BAI (2017)	Intrinsic motivation and prosocial motivation	Flexibility pathway and persistence pathway	
Castro-González et al. (2019)	Responsible leadership and corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions		
Jhong and Kim (2019)	Classification of sales business and the industrial category	Creativity	
Geng et al. (2020)	Service employees' motivational orientation in self-regulation (regulatory focus) and their emotional labour strategy	Emotional labour strategies	
Michael et al. (2017)	Networking behaviors (customer and professional networking behaviors)	Salesperson creativity	
Felicia et al. (2017)	Leader's emotional intelligence	Creativity	

## 2.3 Research on Adaptive Selling

### 2.3.1 The Concept of Adaptive Selling

Salespeople can respond according to customer ideas, actual needs, and sales information. Therefore, adaptive selling is a sales method that can be adjusted in time according to feedback from customers and market changes. Weitz et al. (1986, 1990)

referred to this sales method as adaptive selling and defined it as sales behavior the salesperson can adjust according to information from the perceived sales situation in the process of customer interaction. When the salesperson adjusts the sales behavior according to different sales scenarios, low-level adaptive selling means that it adapts to changes with unchanged conditions, while high-level adaptive selling means that corresponding changes are made in the sales mode.

Rapp et al. (2008) suggested that the success of sales is the result of an interaction in the sales process, and further showed that it is impossible to predict sales through personal characteristics and product characteristics. Giacobbe et al. (2006) found that adaptive selling is significantly affected by salesperson's capability to perceive empathy, information capture ability, adjustment self-expression ability, and sales.

### **2.3.2 Dimensions of Adaptive Selling**

Many scholars have enriched and improved the methods with which to measure adaptive selling behavior. The adapts scale (i.e., adaptive selling behavior scale) proposed by Spiro and Weitz (1990) has 16 items, and divides the adaptive selling behavior into three levels: action motivation, action ability, and practical action. Action motivation includes three aspects: the realization that different sales methods need to be adopted in different situations, the belief that sales person have the ability to adopt different sales methods, and the belief that the sales mode can be adjusted when interacting with customers. Action ability also includes three aspects: its knowledge structure is helpful for salespeople to distinguish different sales situations, evaluate the optimal sales mode in special situations, and collect information in the sales process for

appropriately adjusting the sales mode. Actual action implies the use of different sales methods in different sales situations.

Through the above six aspects, the adaptability of salespeople, sales motivation, ability, and behavior can be measured. Marks (1996) and Zhong et al. (2003) suggested that the adapts scale should include two dimensions: adaptive selling belief and adaptive selling behavior. Adaptive selling behavior exerts a positive and significant impact on sales performance, while adaptive selling belief does not impact sales performance. Sujan et al. (1994) proposed that the adapts scale should include three dimensions: environmental adaptation, environmental selection, and environmental shaping. Among these, environmental adaptation refers to the salesperson's perception of customers. The choice of environment includes the choice of leaders, the choice of the working environment, and the choice of customers. Environmental shaping refers to a change in the values of customers, leaders, and colleagues (Sujan et al., 1994).

### **2.3.3 Adaptive Selling and Sales Performance**

Adaptive selling behavior implies that salespeople can flexibly change different sales behaviors according to the characteristics of the situation and their understanding of the different needs of customers when contacting these. Adaptive selling behavior is a skill or ability, which implies that salespeople can effectively modify sales information and behavior according to different sales situations(Cooke et al., 2002). Salespeople evaluate customers' needs, respond accurately and quickly, and finally increase customers' needs(Chonko et al., 2015). In addition, salespeople conduct adaptive selling through information collection, suggestions, communication, and

practice (Eckert, 2006). Adaptive selling refers to observing customer scenarios, accurately evaluating customer needs, responding quickly to customer changes, and carrying out customer-centered behaviors (Gimenez et al., 2015). If a salesperson can continuously obtain, participate, and respond to customers' needs in different situations, customers will be satisfied with the customized service, trust the salesperson, and maintain loyalty for a long time. Ye (2013) studied the impact of salespersons' perceived psychology on their sales performance, pointing out that under the transformation of new sales modes and the sharp increase of sales pressure, the ability of salespeople to employ adaptive selling behavior for different customers according to the actual sales situation directly affects their sales performance. Lin and Ma (2014) studied the influencing factors of adaptive selling behavior and analyzed the relationship between adaptive selling behavior and sales performance of salespeople.

### 2.3.4 Research on Adaptive Selling Variables

The research on adaptive selling variables is summarized in <Table 4>.

<Table 4> Research on Adaptive Selling Variables

Author	Research Object	Independent Variable	Mediation Variable	Moderation Variable	Dependent Variable
Maden-Eyiust and Yalabik (2020)	employees' adaptive (selling) behavior in a personal selling context	perceived organizational support and perceived supervisor support	psychological empowerment	customer orientation	
Amenuvor et al.(2021)	salespeople and customers in selected		Relationship quality		customer outcomes, mutual outcomes and



	door-to-door cosmetics companies in South Korea				salesperson outcomes
Amenuvor et al.(2021)	the antecedents of adaptive selling behavior empirically from the factors of salesperson-level customer-level and organizational-level	salesperson-level factors (intrinsic motivation, empathy, and product knowledge), customer-level(the length of the relationship between salespeople and customer s), organization al-level (supervisory empowerment)			
Harris et al.(2021)	Consultant's sales behavior	the client-advisor relationship	emotional intelligence (EI) (self-awareness, self-management ,social awareness, and relationship management )	adaptive selling behavior	
Sari Indrawati (2021)	salesperson at PT PX on sales performance through their adaptive selling behavior	Salespersons ability	adaptive selling behavior		salespersons performance
Bilal Ahmada et	ethical sales leadership and	ethical sales leadership	Emotional exhaustion and	managers' decisiveness	salesperson performance

al.(2021)	salesperson performance in B2B context		Adaptive selling behavior		
Harindranat and Sivakumaran (2019)	using unionized salespeople as respondents	customer orientation	adaptive selling	selling experience	job satisfaction
Hsiang-Chih Hu(2019)	Salespeople in Tai wan	social networking sites	adaptive selling		selling performance
Atsushi Inuzuka(2021)	salespeople selling commercial vehicles	sales approach and customer orientation			sales performance
Yeo et al.(2021)	Salesperson for Performance in Korean	customer orientation	adaptive selling behavior		organizational performance and sales performance
Bilal Ahmad et al. (2020)	salespersons in different pharmaceutical companies	Salesperson creativity and Salesperson experience	adaptive selling behavior	Customer orientation	salesperson performance

## 2.4 Research on Self-Efficacy

### 2.4.1 Concept of Self-Efficacy

Before the 1980s, Bandura (1977) regarded self-efficacy as a specific ability expectation, which can affect the individual's choice of goals and their degree of effort. It reflects the ability belief of people's behavior required to complete a goal or achieve a result. After the 1980s, Bandura suggested that self-efficacy is a self-generating ability, which can perceive and judge self-ability. This ability is generated in the process of people reaching various goals, and it is a kind of self-belief (Bandura, 1986).

Maddux (1995) defined self-efficacy as “people’s belief in the process, motivation and ability to recognize resources needed to complete tasks”.

Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) provided a broader and more practical definition: “self-efficacy refers to an individual’s exact belief (or self-confidence) in his ability to mobilize the necessary motivation, cognitive resources and a series of actions to successfully complete a specific task in a certain context”. This study defines salesperson’s self-efficacy as salesperson’s belief in the process, motivation, and ability to recognize the resources needed to complete sales performance.

#### **2.4.2 Self-Efficacy and Sales Performance**

Because of the challenge sales work impose, the self-efficacy variable is included in the scope of this thesis as a measure of the psychological quality of salespeople. Self-efficacy, as proposed by Bandura, is defined as the effectiveness with which individuals cope and deal with environmental events. It is a concept related to ability. Bandura suggested that people with high self-efficacy have more self-confidence when facing difficulties, adopt the perception and belief of adaptive behavior in the face of challenges, overcome difficulties, and complete tasks. Salespeople with high self-efficacy believe that they can impress and influence consumers, and will therefore devote more efforts to sales activities. Salespersons with low self-efficacy have low confidence to complete self-regulation and find it difficult to overcome difficulties and improve their sales performance (Bandura, 1986).

Locke et al. (1984) found that self-efficacy affects individuals’ innovative thinking and challenge seeking abilities. In the conceptual model of individual creative behavior

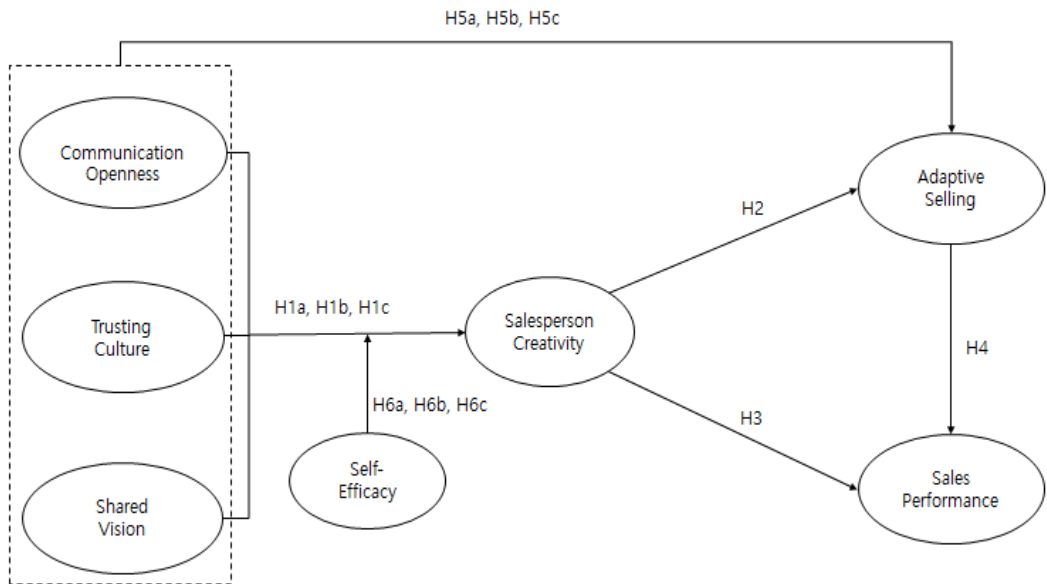
constructed by Mahoney et al. (1996), self-efficacy is regarded as a key motivation factor of innovative behavior. Choi et al. (2004) demonstrated the importance of the relationship between college students' self-efficacy and innovative behavior. Maimon and Lia (2002) initiated pioneering research on self-efficacy in the field of organizational management. Innovation efficacy is not only positively correlated with innovation activities, it also achieves good predictive effect on individual innovation behavior and performance. Self-efficacy exerts a direct significant impact on the generation and implementation of employees' innovative ideas (Feng et al., 2009). Jiang (2011) empirically verified that self-efficacy exerts a direct positive impact on the generation and implementation of employees' innovative ideas. Higher sales self-efficacy will improve the actual performance ability of salespeople (Cao et al., 2010). Their actual performance ability also promotes the formation and strengthening of sales self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).. Further, a significant positive correlation exists between sales self-efficacy and sales performance ability. They are mutually promoting. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in his or her own ability in a specific situation, and its core is the self-evaluation of that own ability. (He et al., 2016).

### III. Research Model and Hypotheses Development

#### 3.1 Theoretical Model of the Research

In this study, sales creativity is taken as mediator variable of social capital affecting sales performance, and its role as a mediator in the process of how social capital affects sales performance is analyzed. The self-efficacy of salespeople is included as a moderator variable, and its moderator effects on social capital, sales creativity, adaptive selling, and sales performance are analyzed.

This thesis constructs a theoretical model of salesperson's social capital and sales performance, as shown in Figure 2. In Chapters IV and V, the model is tested by the statistical tools SPSS, PROCESS, and AMOS.



<Figure 2> Research Model of Salesperson's Social Capital and Sales Performance

## **3.2 Development of Hypotheses**

### **3.2.1 Relationship between Social Capital and Salesperson Creativity**

Informed by the literature review presented in the previous chapters, this thesis puts forward the relationship structure of social capital, salesperson creativity, and sales performance, as well as the relationship between self-efficacy, social capital, and salesperson creativity. Based on this theoretical model, the following research hypotheses are put forward:

The advent of the era of knowledge economy has led to profound changes in the market environment. Active innovation has become the only way for enterprises to survive. As the employees with the closest contact with the market, the creativity of salespeople is the source of enterprise innovation. However, this creativity cannot be generated in a vacuum and depends on inspiration, information, and support. For salespeople, social capital is embedded in the relationship network. By strengthening the contact between all parties, information acquisition, cost reduction, and trust promotion can be achieved. Salespeople use these resources to obtain knowledge and experience while promoting the generation of individual creativity. Therefore, this thesis speculates that the generation of creativity is greatly dependent on the social capital of salespeople.

Firstly, communication openness refers to the contact mode between salespeople and interacting individuals (i.e., customers, colleagues, and competitors) in their daily work. Hans (2001) found that the network contact of individual employees is an important means for effectively obtaining external information. A significant positive

correlation exists between the quality and quantity of external contact subjects and employees' knowledge acquisition ability. In other words, the more external contact subjects are in the network, the better the quality, and the stronger their ability of employees to obtain knowledge. Kim et al. (2010) regarded interacting individuals in the network as the source of employees' knowledge acquisition. Kim suggested that effective interaction between individuals and knowledge sources can increase the speed of knowledge flow and knowledge re-creation, which is a necessary prerequisite for innovation.

Yu (2014) conducted empirical research and found that the intra organizational contact frequency in social capital exerts a significant positive effect on individual innovation behavior. Regarding sales personnel, communication openness can effectively shorten the distance between external stakeholders. It can also let them master effective knowledge more conveniently and timely, improve their ability of knowledge internalization and knowledge re-creation, and promote the generation of creativity.

Secondly, shared vision refers to the knowledge, vision, and terminology shared between salespeople and interacting individuals in their daily work. Under a market economy environment, similar values and common language between external subjects (e.g., salespeople and customers) help to quickly eliminate the sense of distance and strengthen the exchange and sharing of ideas and information among subjects. A common goal can promote unity and cooperation between salespeople and members of their network. Such cooperation can achieve the goals of all parties through the exchange and re-creation of knowledge. The common vision plays a guiding role.

Realizing this common vision will prompt the salesperson to form a mutually beneficial communication mode with the members of the network. This mode will not only improve the frequency of contact between members, but it will also provide them with role expectations. Research has confirmed that the closeness of communication directly affects the efficiency of knowledge creation. Therefore, this thesis infers that, shared vision impacts individual creativity. Zhang et al. (2018) reached a similar conclusion in empirical tests of the relationship between social capital and innovation of small and micro enterprises. They found a significant positive correlation between shared vision and innovation behavior.

Finally, a trusting culture can realize the generation of individual creativity through mutual trust and emotional reciprocity between salespeople and the members of their network, and improvements of the frequency and efficiency of information transmission among interested parties. On the one hand, the generation of individual creativity mainly depends on the internalization and re-creation of tacit knowledge; however, compared with explicit knowledge, the transmission and acquisition of tacit knowledge are often based on reliability and trust. A trusting culture enables all stakeholders to confidently provide their own unique production factors by building a good trust network atmosphere. This effectively realizes the transmission of invisible knowledge such as experience, and the promotion of the generation of individual creativity. On the other hand, a trusting culture has a strong restraining ability. When a salesperson obtained full trust with the members of the network, the speculation and prevention psychology in the communication process will be greatly reduced and the probability of successful innovation will be improved. With the further deepening of



mutual trust, salespeople are willing to take more risks and engage in individual innovation. Fang (2010) pointed out that a trusting culture in enterprises can cultivate creative core competitiveness. Diao (2020) suggested that a trusting culture positively impacts creative activities. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is put forward:

H1: Social capital has a positive impact on salesperson creativity.

H1a: Communication openness positively affects salesperson creativity.

H1b: Trusting culture positively affects salesperson creativity.

H1c: Shared vision positively affects salesperson creativity.

### **3.2.2 Relationship between Salesperson Creativity and Adaptive**

#### **Selling**

The individual creativity of salespeople represents a series of new behaviors, generated with their own resources, which are helpful to conduct new methods of sales work or promote new ideas of product upgrading and putting these into action. Individual creativity plays an important role in prompting individuals to better adapt to a dynamic environment and achieve performance improvements. Adaptive selling behavior is a skill or ability, which implies that salespeople can effectively modify sales information and behaviors according to different sales situations (Cooke et al., 2002). Salespeople evaluate customer needs and respond accurately and quickly, which can eventually increase customer needs (Chonko et al., 2015).

Firstly, creative salespeople can help to update the sales strategy of products or services in real time, to better meet the needs of different types of consumers, reduce the impact of changes of the external environment on sales work, and improve work

efficiency. In the context of today's increasing impact by online sales, if offline shopping malls want to continue to sell products, they need creative salespeople and actively adjust their sales strategies. Secondly, adaptive selling refers to a sales behavior in which salespeople can give full play to their creativity according to the characteristics of the transaction and their understanding of the needs of different customers in the process of contacting customers. Individual creativity is a positive behavior of salespeople in their work. The result of exercising their creativity is the adaptation to a new sales situation and to the diversified needs of customers. Michael et al. (2015) found that individual innovation behavior can effectively adapt to changes of the sales environment, improve sales applicability, and improve job performance. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is proposed:

H2: Salesperson creativity positively affects adaptive selling.

### **3.2.3 Relationship between Salesperson Creativity and Sales**

#### **Performance**

The individual creativity of salespeople is reflected in a series of new behaviors generated with their own resources, which help to achieve new methods of sales work or promote new ideas of product upgrading and putting these into action. This behavior plays an important role in promoting individuals to better adapt to a dynamic environment and achieve performance improvement.

Firstly, the creativity of salespeople can help to update the sales strategy of products or services in real time, thus better meeting the needs of different types of consumers, reducing the impact of external environment changes on sales work, and

improving overall work efficiency. With the severe product homogenization salespeople witness today, it is difficult to open a large gap in performance or appearance between products at the same level. Selling products in this situation and realizing the effective transformation from products to performance must depend on the creativity of salespeople. Secondly, job performance represents the output after paying behavior. Specifically, job performance represents the effective results obtained by individuals through the investment of material and spiritual resources to achieve work goals. Individual creativity, as a positive behavior of salespeople at work, is an important part of organizational creativity, and inevitably impacts performance. Finally, innovation has been recognized as the key to improve performance output. Innovation, as an ability, can help salespeople adjust their behavior by adopting new methods or behaviors to better adapt to their working environment and overcome any deficiencies in the current working process, which will improve work efficiency. Michael et al. (2015) showed that individual innovation behavior can effectively alleviate work pressure salespeople experience, reduce turnover intention, improve organizational loyalty, enable devotion to sales work, and improve job performance.

In this thesis, informed by the relevant literature, the individual creativity of salespeople is divided into the four dimensions of salesperson creativity, customer orientation, work autonomy, and adaptive selling behavior. Based on the above analysis, Hypothesis 3 is proposed:

H3: Salesperson creativity positively affects sales performance.

### **3.2.4 Relationship between Adaptive Selling and Sales Performance**

Adaptive selling behavior implies that salespeople can flexibly apply different sales behaviors in the process of contacting customers, and that they understand different needs of customers according to the characteristics of a specific transaction. Adaptive selling behavior is a skill or ability that enables salespeople to modify sales information and behavior, which can be effectively utilized in different sales situations (Cooke et al., 2002). Based on evaluating changes in customer needs, salespeople can utilize adaptive responses to meet customer needs (Chonko et al., 2015). In addition, salespeople can practice adaptive selling through information collection, suggestions, communication, and practice (Eckert, 2006). Adaptive selling refers to observing customer scenarios, accurately assessing customer needs, responding quickly to customer changes, and showing customer-centered behavior (Gimenez et al., 2015). Therefore, if a salesperson can continuously obtain, interact with, and respond to customer needs in different situations, customers will likely be satisfied with such customized service, trust the salesperson, and finally maintain loyalty for a long time.

In a study on the impact of salesperson's perceived psychology on sales performance, Ye (2013) pointed out that in response to the change of new sales mode and the sharp increase of sales pressure, the ability of salespeople to carry out adaptive selling behavior for different customers according to the actual situation directly affects their sales performance. Lin and Ma (2014) studied the influencing factors of adaptive selling behavior and assessed the relationship between adaptive selling behavior and sales performance in salespeople. Further, in a study on the sales problems of direct

selling enterprises in China, An (2009) explored the impact of adaptive selling on sales performance. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is proposed:

H4: Adaptive selling positively affects sales performance

### **3.2.5 Mediation Role of Salesperson Creativity between Social Capital and Adaptive Selling**

Innovation behavior usually emerges because of the inability of existing processes or methods to effectively cope with new situations. Salesperson creativity constitutes the ability to realize the effective transformation from products to adaptive selling (Guo et al., 2017). For salespeople, it is difficult to succeed fixed customers. Therefore, creativity is very important. Salespeople have high innovation requirements whether they are selling new products or are facing new customers. However, the generation of creativity depends on the social capital individuals possess(Liu, 2019). The reason is that social capital can help salespeople to obtain effective information more easily from customers and competitors, use divergent thinking to introduce a variety of sales plans, and adjust their sales strategies in real time. Consequently, salespeople can more effectively deal with changes of the market environment. The social capital of salespeople, colleagues, and leaders can help them to achieve support and experience acquisition, lay the foundation for the generation and implementation of innovative ideas, and achieve the purpose of improving work performance(Li and Li, 2019).

At the same time, salespeople with a suitable level of social capital can feel the trust and support of network members. According to social exchange theory, to repay external actors, salespeople will well meet customer needs and achieve organizational

goals in innovative ways. In addition, it can be inferred that there is a correlation between social capital, creativity, and adaptive selling. Therefore, according to the logic of the mediator effect, Hypothesis 5 is proposed.

H5: The relationship between social capital and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.

H5a: The relationship between communication openness and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.

H5b: The relationship between trusting culture and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.

H5c: The relationship between shared vision and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.

### **3.2.6 Role of Self-efficacy between Social Capital and Salesperson Creativity**

According to the theory of planned behavior, individuals with high self-efficacy commonly have strong intention for innovative behavior. Many studies have shown that people with high self-efficacy are more likely to accept challenging jobs, face difficulties, and exert more efforts. Even if they fail, they will not doubt their ability but rather attribute their failure to their insufficient efforts. People with low self-efficacy tend to avoid challenging work, have low goals, have little courage to face difficulties, often doubt their ability, and attribute their failure to their lack of ability.

Locke et al. (2017) found that self-efficacy affects individuals' innovative thinking and challenge seeking behavior. Mahoney et al. (1996) also took self-efficacy as a key

innovation motivation factor in the conceptual model of individual creative behavior. Choi et al. (2004) empirically verified the relationship between self-efficacy and creativity in college students. Maimon et al. (2002) studied self-efficacy in the field of organization and management and found that self-efficacy is not only positively related to innovation activities, but also is a good predictor for individual creativity and performance. Feng et al. (2009) conducted empirical research on 401 employees of nine banks in Sichuan and concluded that self-efficacy has a direct and significant impact on the generation and implementation of innovative ideas in employees. Similarly, Jiang (2011) empirically verified that self-efficacy exerts a direct positive impact on the generation and implementation of innovative ideas in employees.

Therefore, the following Hypotheses 6 is proposed:

Hypotheses 6: The relationship between social capital and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.

H6a: The relationship between communication openness and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.

H6b: The relationship between trusting culture and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.

H6c: The relationship between shared vision and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.

## **IV. Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Research Process**

In this thesis, first, the research problems are determined. Second, the research variables are identified based on literature research, as well as both expert and public interviews. Third, according to the identified variables, research models are constructed and hypotheses are proposed. Fourth, the maturity scale is employed for adaptive correction, and the research scale is developed according to the requirements. Fifth, formal research is presented. Sixth, the method of data extraction is selected. Seventh, the research ethics are presented.

### **4.2 Research Design**

First, based on a clarification of research problems, this thesis analyzes the research variables of how social capital affects sales performance. Second, based on the research variables, a theoretical model of salesperson's social capital and sales performance is constructed. Third, according to the model design, five assumptions about the mechanism of how salesperson's social capital affects sales performance are put forward. Fourth, informed by the literature, the research scale of the influence of salesperson's social capital on sales performance is developed. Fifth, research objects for formal research and data collection are selected. Sixth, Process, SPSS, and other mathematical statistical tools are employed for data analysis. Seventh, the proposed assumptions are tested and management suggestions are put forward according to the results of this analysis.



## 4.3 Data Collection

### 4.3.1 Data Source

This study selected the salespeople of two large supermarket enterprises in Handan City (M group and S group - group are one, divided into different parts, one is mainly supermarkets, the other is mainly shopping malls). Group M is mainly composed of salespeople working in supermarkets, supplemented by those working in shopping malls. Group S is mainly composed of salespeople working in shopping malls, supplemented by those working in supermarkets. The survey was conducted in July 2020, and questionnaires were distributed to the interviewed employees on-site. The survey process was organized with the assistance of the general management department or office of the interviewed enterprise, the respondents are randomly selected, and were asked to fill in the paper questionnaire. To reduce any concerns the respondents might have had and ensure the quality of the questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose and significance of the questionnaire survey to the respondents and promised that the survey results would not be disclosed to any relevant personnel of the enterprise. Respondents were informed that the results would only be used for academic research.

The questionnaire used in this study includes both an online version and a paper version. The network questionnaire survey is mainly based on the questionnaire star. To encourage everyone to complete the questionnaire truthfully and ensure high data quality, an audit function is specially set up and red envelopes of different amounts were issued as incentives. A total of 900 paper questionnaires were distributed, and 485

valid questionnaires and 300 valid questionnaires were recovered; 400 online questionnaires were recovered, 307 of which were valid. A total of 607 valid questionnaires were collected.

<Table 5> Questionnaire Release and Recovery

Research Methods	Questionnaire Distribution	Questionnaire Recovery	Valid Questionnaire	Questionnaire Efficiency
Paper Questionnaire	900	485	300	61.86%
Online Questionnaire	400	400	307	76.75%
Total	1300	885	607	68.59%

### 4.3.2 Scale Development

Through different affective components (such as gratitude and empathy), the customer develops more respect for the organization and builds a strong relational bond. In turn, customers become loyal to the products and services of the organization. When an organization provides after sales services that exceed the customer's expectation, more customers are retained. Hence, such affective mechanisms play an important role in the building of a successful customer relationship and the preservation of customer loyalty. Further, gratitude as a significant component of business-to-consumer (B2C) relationships, can offer valuable insights into the mediating mechanism by which customer's perceptions of relationship marketing activities derive the long-lived relationship with organizations (Morales, 2005) and create loyalty among customers.

## **Scale Development Steps**

In empirical research, the development of the questionnaire scale is related to the scientificity of statistical research. When developing a scale with reliability and effectiveness that is to meet the requirements, it is necessary to ensure consistency between measurement indicators and variables (Zhang, 2002; Chen and Wei, 2009). The specific process of scale development used in this study is summarized in the following:

First, the research problems were determined. Second, the research variables are determined based on literature review, as well as expert and public interviews. Third, according to the findings of the second step, research models are constructed and hypotheses are proposed. Fourth, in reference to the maturity scale, the applicability was revised, and the research scale was developed according to the requirements. Fifth, a small-scale pre survey was carried out, and the scale was verified and corrected according to the pre survey data. Sixth, a formal scale was developed and the formal investigation was carried out.

## **Principles of Scale Development**

Generally, to ensure a smooth survey progress, (miles, 2008; pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993; newsted et al, 1998) the basic principles of scale development should include a number of steps as outlined in the following: first, the length of the questionnaire should not be excessive, and the time required to provide answers to all questions should remain under 20 minutes. If the questionnaire is excessively long, the authenticity of answers is affected. Second, as a metaphysical external presentation, the

questionnaire should be presented as beautiful as possible to make it pleasing to the eye of respondents. Third, the description of the questionnaire must include an introduction of the research purpose, an answer guidance, and an explanation of complex item terms. Fourth, the language of the questionnaire items shall be simple to enable respondents to understand the content without ambiguity. Fifth, the structure design of the questionnaire should be scientific, reasonable, simple, and clear. Sixth, the specific items of the questionnaire should be relevant and unified, and closed questions should be used as far as possible (Newsted et al., 1998; Berdie, 1989; Bentler and Chou, 1987).

### **Scale Design and Development Process**

The literature review showed that literature on the problems studied in this thesis is rare and the relevant scales are not comprehensive. Based on the limited mature scales in other fields, this thesis had to develop certain index items. For this, experts were interviewed to test whether questionnaire items are in line with reality, and the items of the questionnaire were supplemented and improved accordingly. Through repeated optimization, the questionnaire used in this thesis was finally formed.

## **4.4 Measurement**

According to the literature review presented in Chapter II, this thesis defined the relevant variables of social capital affecting sales performance.

### **Social Capital of Salesperson**

In Chapter II, the concept of social capital is defined as the value of an individual's position in an organizational structure. For groups, social capital refers to the reserves

of behaviors and norms that enable members to support each other. Regarding the social capital of salespeople, this incorporates their communication ability, trusting culture cultivation, and vision sharing ability used towards achieving organizational goals. In this thesis, the social capital of salespeople is defined according to three dimensions: communication openness, trusting culture, and sharing vision.

Specifically, communication openness is defined as information exchange behavior directed at achieving sales goals between salespeople via non-exclusive information exchange. Shared vision refers to the willingness and behavior of non-exclusive knowledge sharing among salespeople who help others to improve sales performance. Trusting culture refers to the values and codes of conduct that are consciously observed by salespeople who help to improve sales performance. Trusting culture includes values and code of conduct, which helps sales personnel to improve sales performance.

### **Salesperson Creativity**

Salesperson creativity is reflected in improving existing workflow, designing new processes, and developing new products and services to meet customer needs. Creativity has certain domain specificity. In the sales field, salesperson creativity is defined as the development of a new scheme by the salesperson to complete the sales task and new behavior.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is one of the representative variables of perceived behavior control. Because of the challenge associated with sales work, the self-efficacy variable measuring the psychological quality of salespeople is also included in the scope of this

thesis. The self-efficacy of salespeople is defined as their belief in the process of action, motivation, and their ability to recognize resources. Salespeople need self-efficacy to complete sales performance.

### **Adaptive Selling**

Adaptive selling behavior implies that salespeople can flexibly switch between different sales behaviors in the process of contacting customers and can understand the different needs of customers according to the characteristics of the situation in which the transaction takes place. In this study, adaptive selling is defined as the skills or abilities that not only meet the different needs of customers, but also promote sales performance under different transaction situations

### **Sales Performance**

Based on Campbell's perspective, in this study, the work performance of salespeople is defined as behavior performance and comprehensive benefits. The performance of salespeople in the work process is related to their sales results.

The questionnaire used in this study mainly collects respondents' sociodemographic variables, communication openness, trusting culture, common vision, salesperson creativity, sales performance, self-efficacy, and adaptive selling in a total of 32 items in 11 parts. These data are shown in <Tables 6 and 7>.

<Table 6> Defining Key Variables

Key variables	Dimensions	Definition
Social capital	Communication openness	Communication openness is a non exclusive exchange of information between salespeople to achieve sales goals
	Trusting culture	Trusting culture is the values and code of conduct that salespeople consciously abide by to improve sales performance
	Shared vision	Shared vision is the willingness and behavior of non exclusive knowledge sharing among salespeople who help to improve sales performance.
Salesperson creativity		Salesperson creativity is the new scheme and behavior that the salesperson puts forward in order to complete the sales task.
Salesperson performance		Salesperson performance is the behavior performance of salespeople in the working process and the comprehensive benefit of their sales results.
Adaptive Selling		In the process of contacting customers, salespeople can flexibly change different sales behaviors according to the characteristics of the transaction situation and different needs customers.
Self-efficacy		Salesperson's self-efficacy is the belief salesperson in the process, motivation and ability to recognize resources needed to complete sales performance.

Further, several items correspond to each variable, as shown in <Table 7>. For measurement purposes, the basic structure of the questionnaire used in this study follows the research method of the Richter five subscale.

### Detailed Analysis of Scale Items

The first part of the questionnaire collects sociodemographic variables. As mentioned above, the sociodemographic variables of the questionnaire of salesperson's social capital include gender, age, work experience, and education.

The sub-items of each item are designed using the internationally accepted Likert 5-level scale. The options include the following five levels: completely disagree, disagree, general, agree, and fully agree, which are scored from 1 to 5 points, respectively. The respondents choose the degree of agreement with each item according to their own feelings. With these data, the respondents' evaluation of each index is obtained

<Table 7 > Scale Items

Key variables	Dimensions / factors	Items	Reference scale
Sociodemographic variables	Gender	Q1	Kang,Hur and Kim,2018 Kang, Lee and Kim,2018 Yan and Kang,2021
	Age	Q2	
	Work Experience	Q3	
	Education	Q4	
Social capital	Communication openness	A11	Hans,2001 Kim and Lee,2010 Yu,2014 Yan and Kang,2021
		A12	
		A13	
		A14	
		A15	
	Trusting culture	A21	Yan and Kang,2021
		A22	
		A23	
		A24	
	Shared Vision	A31	Zhang,2018 Yan and Kang,2021
		A32	
		A33	



		A34	
Salesperson creativity		B1	Guo et al,2017 Liu,2019 Li and Li,2019 Yan and Kang,2021
		B2	
		B3	
		B4	
Salesperson Performance		C1	Bernardin and Beatty,1984 Peng,2010 Wang et al,2003 Yan and Kang,2021
		C2	
		C3	
Adaptive Selling		G1	Michael et al,2015 Michael et al,2015 Lin and Ma,2014 An,2009
		G2	
		G3	
		G4	
		G5	
Self-efficacy		E1	Locke et al,1984 Maimon,2002 Feng et al,2009 Yan and Kang,2021
		E2	
		E3	

## V. Empirical Analysis

### 5.1 Sample Characteristics

For this study, SPSS21.0 software was used to conduct a preliminary analysis of demographic variables on 607 effective samples. This section presents the basic information of respondents, including gender, education level, age, and job experience.

<Table 8> Summary of Sample Characteristics

		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	242	39.9
	Female	365	60.1
Education	High graduation	212	34.9
	university graduation	241	39.7
	Postgraduation School	16	2.6
	Others	138	22.8
Total		607	100.0
		Mean	Standard Deviation
Age		31.870	6.976
Job Experience		3.940	3.664

First, Gender

According to the summary of sample characteristics presented in <Table 8>, more than half of the effective samples recovered in this scale are women. The gender distribution shows that 39.4% (n = 242) of respondents were male and 60.6% (n = 365) were female. This shows that in this sample, Chinese salespeople are mainly female.

#### Second, Education

In the frequency analysis shown in <Table 8>, the education levels of respondents mainly include high graduation, university graduate, postgraduation school, and other qualifications. 34.9% of respondents have high graduation qualification (n = 212), 39.7% have high graduation salesperson university graduation qualifications (n = 241), 2.6% of respondents are postgraduation school postgraduates (n = 16), and 23.8% have other qualifications (n = 138). More than half of the respondents have high school education, and most respondents have high school education or below. Those with university education account for 39.7% of the total. Many respondents have university education. The education level of respondents is generally average, and 2.6% of graduate respondents have high education, indicating that few salesmen have high education..

#### Third, Age

The sampled salespeople are relatively young, with an average age of 31.87 years. The age dispersion of salespeople was not obvious, and the standard deviation was 6.976.

#### Fourth, Job Experience

As shown in Table 8, the average number of working years of the sampled salespeople is 3.940 years, and salespeople are quite mobile. The standard deviation of 3.664 reflects the dispersion of the job experience in the summary of sample.

## 5.2 Research Design

### 5.2.1 Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

To understand the research variables, the respondents are proposed in this thesis. The average and standard deviation of each measurement item of the research variable is calculated and the results are shown in <Table 9>. The average value indicates the average degree of agreement of respondents to a question. The standard deviation indicates whether the respondents agree with the item.

As shown in <Table 9>, social capital consists of the three parts of communication openness, trusting culture, and shared vision with scores of 4.019, 4.034, and 4.177, respectively. These scores show that most respondents engaged in sales tend to apply communicate openness, trust culture, and common vision in terms of social capital. Examples are: TC2: “Generally speaking, the motives and intentions of those people in my store are good”, which has a score of 3.99. TC3: “My colleagues are always honest and trustworthy”, which has a score of 4.04. TC4: “The people in my store are very honest”, which has a score of 4.08. Regarding communication openness on the sub item, CO5: “The structure of our store enables people or teams engaged in similar tasks to easily share their experiences and problems” obtained the highest score (4.17). CO4: “New salespeople often have the opportunity to learn from people at all levels” (4.14). CO3: “We can well complete the assigned sales tasks” (4.11). In summary, the average value of the three items of communication openness is 4.11–4.17. In the three dimensions of social capital, the scores are basically the same, indicating that the effect is good. Regarding the item of shared vision, SV1: “Our team has ‘team spirit’” (4.21)

SV2: “Here, inter departmental teamwork is a daily work method, not a regular exception” (4.15). SV3: “Our store has a common purpose” (4.17). SV4: “All job levels and departments in our store have a shared vision” (4.18). In conclusion, there is little difference in shared vision among respondents.

<Table 9> Descriptive Statistical Analysis Results of Independent Variables

Variable	M	SD	Items	M	SD
Communication openness	4.019	.869	CO3	4.11	.948
			CO4	4.14	.908
			CO5	4.17	.898
Trusting culture	4.034	.715	TC2	3.99	.865
			TC3	4.03	.889
			TC4	4.08	.876
Shared Vision	4.177	.670	SV1	4.21	.876
			SV2	4.15	.794
			SV3	4.17	.832
			SV4	4.18	.827
Salesperson creativity	3.133	.472	SC2	4.16	.811
			SC3	4.13	.796
			SC4	4.24	.769
Adaptive Selling	4.11	.592	AS1	4.04	.842
			AS2	4.14	.758
			AS3	4.07	.791
			AS4	4.02	.851
			AS5	4.25	.732

Sale Performance	4.093	.668	SP1	4.10	.796
			SP2	4.11	.797
			SP3	4.07	.811
Self-efficacy	4.174	.640	SE1	4.22	.726
			SE2	4.10	.814
			SE3	4.20	.734

### 5.2.2 Descriptive Statistics of Salesperson Creativity

The scores of each item are shown in <Table 9>. Here are a few examples: SC2: “People in our store are receptive to unanticipated ideas and processes” (4.16). SC3: “Experimentation is encouraged in our store” (4.13). SC4: “In our store, new insights and ideas get developed into improved services or processes” (4.23).

### 5.2.3 Descriptive Statistics of Adaptive Selling

<Table 9> presents the score of adaptive selling. AS1: “When I feel that my sales approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach” (4.04). AS2: “I like to experiment with different sales approaches” (4.14). AS3: “I am very flexible in the selling approach I use” (4.07). AS4: “I find it easy to use a wide variety of selling approaches” (4.02). “I try to understand how one customer differs from another” (4.25). The results of the questionnaire show that there is no significant difference in the scores of adaptive selling. Salespeople can flexibly use a variety of sales methods and complete work tasks for different customers. Respondents would like to try different sales methods to better serve customers.

## 5.2.4 Descriptive Statistics of Sale Performance

<Table 9> shows the score of sales performance and the following presents sample items: SP3: “We perform sales tasks that are expected of ours” (4.07). SP2: “We fulfil the responsibilities specified in our sales description” (4.11). SP1: “We adequately complete assigned sales duties” (4.10). Overall, the average difference of the three items of sales performance was small (4.07–4.11).

## 5.2.5 Descriptive Statistics of Self-efficacy

< Table 9 > presents the score of each item, and examples are presented in the following: SE1: “Overall, I am confident of my ability to perform my task well” (4.22). SE2: “I feel I am very capable at the task of selling” (4.10). SE3: “I feel I have the capabilities to successfully perform this task” (4.20). The scores of self-efficacy among respondents show little difference and generally, the sampled salespeople can complete work-related tasks well and assume to have the ability and confidence to complete the task.

## 5.3 Test of Reliability and Validity

### 5.3.1 Reliability Test

According to the general process, the reliability and validity of the collected questionnaire data should be tested before the analysis. Reliability represents the consistency of the scale and the reliability of the questionnaire. Hair et al. (1998) and Henson et al. (2001) pointed out that if the Cronbach’s coefficient of reliability test

result exceeds 7, the reliability is high, and if it exceeds 0.5, the reliability is acceptable (Hair et al., 1998; Henson et al., 2001). In this thesis, Cronbach's coefficient of reliability is calculated by SPSS22.0 software. According to the reliability the coefficient, the internal consistency of the corresponding measurement items of the seven research variables in this thesis is tested, and the test results are shown in the <Table 10>.

The reliability test standard is met, and the measurement items of each research variable (communication openness, trusting culture, common vision, salesperson creativity, sales performance, self-efficacy, and adaptive selling) have good internal consistency. The data collected by the questionnaire survey is relatively reliable and can be used for further analysis.

### 5.3.2 Validity Test

As the questionnaire has passed the reliability test, further confirmatory factor analyses are carried out for dependent variables, independent variables, and regulatory variables contained in the scale. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test for structural validity. Confirmatory factor analysis is realized by the structural equation model, which is mainly realized by Amos 22.

<Table 10> The Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Standardized loading	t-value	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Communication Openness	CO1	.690		.740	.771	.529
	CO2	.717	14.815			



	CO3	.685	14.290			
Trusting Culture	TC1	.674		.748	.796	.566
	TC1	.736	15.425			
	TC3	.709	14.969			
Shared Vision	SV1	.787		.819	.868	.623
	SV2	.738	18.650			
	SV3	.695	17.383			
	SV4	.696	17.421			
Sales Creativity	SC1	.686		.706	.796	.565
	SC2	.648	14.256			
	SC3	.675	14.800			
Adaptive Selling	AS1	.727		.798	.864	.563
	AS2	.738	16.522			
	AS3	.675	15.190			
	AS4	.641	14.453			
	AS5	.545	12.327			
Sales Performance	SP1	.773		.781	.848	.651
	SP2	.757	18.434			
	SP3	.681	16.453			
Self-efficacy	SE1	.761		.797	.895	.699
	SE2	.73	17.181			
	SE3	.78	18.337			

$\chi^2_{(df=231)}=597.604$  GFI=.921, NFI=.913, IFI=.944, CFI=.944, TLI=.933, RMSEA=.051

CR: composite reliability, AVE: averaged variance extracted

The specific analysis shows that the factor load (SL) of all measured questions exceeds 0.5, and each dimension of the structure ranges from 0.545 to 0.761. The combination reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to measure convergence validity. CR reflects whether all questions in each latent variable consistently explain the latent variable. When the value exceeds 0.70, the latent variable has better construct reliability (Zhang, 2019). Table 10 shows that the CR value of each dimension constructed ranged from 0.706 to 0.819, which exceeds 0.7, and thus meets the standard requirements, indicating that all topics consistently explain the corresponding latent variables. The AVE exceeds 0.5 (Zhang, 2019). All AVE values are higher than the correlation coefficient of a specific dimension and any other variable. The AVE of each dimension constructed ranges from 0.529 to 0.699, which meets the requirements and indicated good convergence validity. In conclusion, the theoretical model in this thesis has good reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The result of CFA is  $\chi^2(df=231)=597.604$ , GFI=.921, NFI=.913, IFI=.944, CFI=.944, TLI=.933, RMSEA=.051.

### 5.3.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation verified variables in the theoretical model form the basis and premise to explore the relationship structure of variables in the model and test the model. In this thesis, Spearman correlation coefficient is used to test the correlation between dependent variables, independent variables, and regulatory variables in the theoretical model. The independent variables are social capital (i.e., communication

openness, trusting culture, and shared vision), intermediary variables (i.e., salesperson creativity and adaptive selling), and dependent variables (i.e., sales performance).

<Table 11> Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CO(1)	4.019	.809	.529						
TC(2)	3.690	.637	.631**	.566					
SV(3)	4.183	.667	.619**	.677**	.623				
SC(4)	4.088	.636	.566**	.571**	.662**	.565			
AS(5)	4.112	.590	.423**	.518**	.533**	.571**	.563		
SP(6)	4.136	.853	.430**	.535**	.605**	.640**	.558**	.651	
SE(7)	4.250	1.347	.396**	.502**	.522**	.517**	.622**	.663**	.699

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , The number in the diagonal is AVE

JE: Job Experience, Ed: Education, CO: Communication Openness, TC: Trusting Culture, SV: Shared Vision, SC: Salesperson creativity, AS: Adaptive Selling, SP: Sales Performance, SE: Self-Efficacy.

<Table 11> presents the mean and standard deviation in the correlation matrix and the correlation matrix of all variables. In the analysis of mean value, standard deviation, and correlation, the average values of five of the six structures exceed 4. In the Likert subscale, among the three dimensions of social capital, the average value of trusting culture is 3.69, indicating that most investigators' judgment of the trusting culture is neutral. Similarly, the average values of several other variables exceed 4 (the mean of CO = 4.019, SD of CO = .809, the mean of TC = 3.690, SD of TC = .637, the mean of

SV = 4.183, SDof SV = .667, the mean of SC = 4.088, SDof SC = .636, the mean of AS = 4.112, SDof AS = .590, the mean of SP = 4.136, SDof SP = .853, the mean of CO = 4.250, SDof SE = .051). This indicates that paying attention to social capital is beneficial to salesperson creativity and self-efficacy. As shown Table 11, the standard deviation of each variable ranges from .590 to 1.347, showing that the data is representative.

The results of correlation analysis are presented in the following (see the <Table 11>).

A significant positive correlation exists between communication openness and trusting culture ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .631$ , showing a high degree of correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between communication openness and shared vision ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .619$ , showing a high degree of correlation. A significant positive correlation also exists between communication openness and salesperson creativity ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .566$ , showing a strong correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between communication openness and adaptive selling ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .423$ , indicating a moderate correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between communication openness and sales performance ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .430$ , indicating a moderate correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between communication openness and self-efficacy ( $P < 0.01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .423$ , indicating moderate correlation.

A significant positive correlation exists between trusting culture and shared vision ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .677$ , showing a high degree of correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between trusting culture and salesperson creativity ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .571$ , showing a high intensity of correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between trusting culture and adaptive selling ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .518$ , showing a moderate correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between trusting culture and sales performance ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .535$ , showing a moderate correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between trusting culture and self-efficacy ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .502$ , indicating a moderate correlation.

A significant positive correlation exists between shared vision and salesperson creativity ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .662$ , showing a high intensity of correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between shared vision and adaptive selling ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .533$ , which is highly correlated. A significant positive correlation exists between shared vision and sales performance ( $p < 0.01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .605$ , which is highly correlated. A significant positive correlation exists between shared vision and self-efficacy ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .522$ , which is highly correlated.

A significant positive correlation exists between salesperson creativity and adaptive selling ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .571$ , which is highly correlated. A significant positive correlation exists between salesperson creativity and sales

performance ( $p < .01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .640$ , indicating strong correlation. A significant positive correlation exists between salesperson creativity and self-efficacy ( $p < 0.01$ ), and Pearson correlation coefficient  $r = .517$ , indicating a strong correlation.

## 5.4 Hypothesis Testing

Sampling is an indispensable part of quantitative research. As the entire population cannot be sampled, a certain number of people are selected as representative for the entire population (Bryman and Bell, 2015). As this thesis employs a customer-centered perspective, the sample population involves consumers of mobile telecommunication services from South Korean telecommunication service providers. However, because of time and cost constraints, it was not possible to obtain a huge number of samples.

Further, while aligning the focus of this study with the purpose to test the hypotheses of the relationship between relationship marketing activities and customer loyalty within the mobile telecommunication service market, the sample population context was kept specific. This includes individuals who use mobile telecommunication services either constantly or at least on a regular basis. A simple random sampling technique is employed for this research. Also considering the limitations imposed by time and funds, the sample population targeted university students. University students are among the main users of mobile telecommunication services on a regular basis. This study selected undergraduate and master's students of Chosun University as survey sample.

### 5.4.1 Direct Effect

The effect of the independent variable (i.e., open communication, trusting culture, and shared vision) on mediator variable (i.e., salesperson creativity) is tested. The model fitting indexes were calculated by AMOS 22.0. As shown in the <Table 12>, these reached acceptable levels: GFI =.929, NFI =.917, IFI =.948, CFI =.929, TLI =.939, and RMSEA = .051. The analysis results of the path in the structural model are shown in the <figure2>. The Chi-square test was also significant ( $\chi^2$  (DF = 181) = 567.949,  $P < 0.000$ ). In conclusion, the model achieved acceptable fit. The evaluation path coefficient and hypotheses test can be carried out.

<Table 12> The Results of Hypotheses Test (Direct Effect)

	Path		Coefficient	T-value	Results
	From	TO			
H1a	Commucation Openness	Salesperson creativity	.214	4.775	Accept
H1b	Trusting Culture	Salesperson creativity	.330	6.763	Accept
H1c	Shared Vision	Salesperson creativity	.715	11.642	Accept
H2	Salesperson creativity	Adaptive Selling	.770	10.244	Accept
H3	Salesperson creativity	Sales Performance	.736	7.980	Accept
H4	Adaptive Selling	Sales Performance	.109	3.436	Accept

$\chi^2_{(df=180)}=465.928$  GFI=.929, NFI=.917, IFI=.948, CFI=.929, TLI=.939, RMSEA=.051

As shown in < Table 12>, the empirical results are supported the conceptual model proposed of this thesis. According to the data on social capital in <Table 12>,

communication openness positively affects salesperson creativity ( $b = .214, p < .001$ ), trusting culture positively affects salesperson creativity ( $b = .330, p < .001$ ), and shared vision also positively affects salesperson creativity ( $b = .715, p < .001$ ). Therefore, hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c are supported and H1 is also supported. Similarly, salesperson creativity positively affects adaptive selling ( $b = .770, p < .001$ ), salesperson creativity positively affects adaptive selling ( $b = .736, p < .001$ ), and adaptive selling positively affects service performance ( $b = .109, p < .001$ ). Based on the results provided above, hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 are supported.

Based on the results provided above, the hypothesis H1,H2,H3,H4 is supported.

### 5.4.2 Mediation Effect

Model 4 in SPSS macro, developed by Hayes (2012), is used to test the mediating effect of salesperson creativity in the relationship between social capital and adaptive selling.

<Table 13> The Results of Hypotheses Test (Mediation: Indirect Effect)

Mediation Path	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Communication Openness→Salesperson creativity→Adaptive Selling	.217	.026	.167	.273
Trusting Culture→Salesperson creativity→Adaptive Selling	.193	.024	.147	.244
Shared Vision→Salesperson creativity→Adaptive Selling	.225	.033	.161	.294

As shown in the <Table 13>, the relationship between social capital and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity. Specifically, salesperson creativity mediates the impact of communication openness (indirect effect value.217, s.e. =.026,



$p < .01$ ), trusting culture (indirect effect value 0.193, s.e. = .024,  $p < .01$ ), and shared vision (indirect effect value .225, s.e. = .033,  $p < .01$ ) on sales performance.

For the path of communication openness → salesperson creativity → adaptive selling, the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval are .167 and .273, respectively, as shown in <Table 13>. Thus, the relationship between communication openness and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity. For the path of trusting culture → salesperson creativity → adaptive selling, the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval are .147 and .224, respectively. The relationship between trusting culture and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity. For the path of shared vision → salesperson creativity → adaptive selling, the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval are .161 and .294, respectively. The relationship between shared vision and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity. In short, the mediation hypotheses H5a, H5b, and H5c are supported.

<Table 14> Summary of Mediation Test

	Hypothesis	Conclusion
H5	The relationship between social capital and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.	Accept
H5a	The relationship between communication openness and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.	Accept
H5b	The relationship between trusting culture and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.	Accept
H5c	The relationship between shared vision and adaptive selling is mediated by salesperson creativity.	Accept

### 5.4.3 Moderating Effects

If the action relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable is affected by another explanatory variable, that variable is called the

regulating variable. It affects the direction or relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. In the study, Model 7 in SPSS macro, developed by Hayes (2012), is used. The moderated mediation model was tested controlling for gender, age, and grade, and the results are shown in Table 15. The relationship between communication openness and salesperson creativity is mediated by self-efficacy.

<Table 15> The Relationship between Communication Openness and Salesperson Creativity by Self-Efficacy

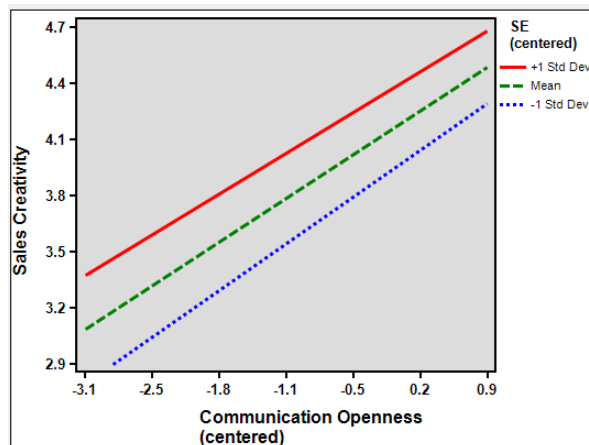
Variables	Salesperson Creativity	
	b	t
Age	.009**	2.75
Education	.009**	.538
Gender	-.007	-.187
Job Experience	-.016**	-2.578
Communication Openness	.349**	12.200
Self-Efficacy	.335*	9.838
Communication Openness × Self-efficacy	-.037	-1.339
R <sup>2</sup>	33.6%*	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ,

The results shown in <Table 15>, which are controlled for age, education, gender, job experience, and communication openness, indicate a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity ( $b = .349$ ,  $t = 12.200$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity. Communication openness × self-efficacy has a significant predictive effect on salesperson creativity ( $b = -.037$ ,  $t = -1.339$ ,  $p > .05$ ),

which shows that the moderating variable of self-efficacy has no a moderating effect on communication openness and salesperson creativity. The association between communication openness and salesperson creativity was not significantly moderated by self-efficacy.

To further test the moderating effect of the relationship between communication openness and salesperson creativity, a simple slope test was conducted. <Figure 3> shows the subjects with low self-efficacy (m-1sd) by simple slope analysis. Communication openness exerts a significant positive predictive effect on service innovation (low: simple slope = .373, 95% confidence interval [.316, .403]). For subjects with a high level of will control (M + 1sd), although communication openness also exerts a positive predictive effect on salesperson creativity, its predictive effect is large (high simple slope = .325, 95% confidence interval [.269, .381]). With improving self-efficacy, the predictive effect of communication openness on salesperson creativity does not increase as shown in <Table15 and Figure 3>.



<Figure3> The Relationship between Communication Openness and Salesperson Creativity by Self-Efficacy

<Table 16> The Relationship between Trusting Culture and Salesperson Creativity by Self-Efficacy

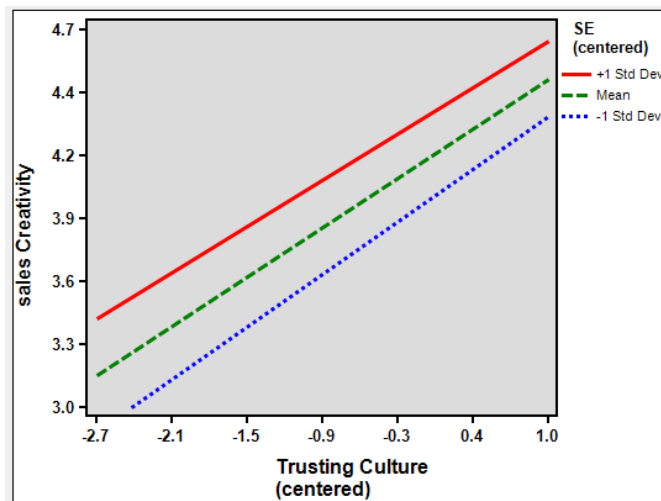
Variables	Salesperson Creativity	
	b	t
Age	.011**	3.257
Education	.016**	.927
Gender	-.004	-.112
Job Experience	-.018**	-2.862
Trusting Culture	.360**	11.245
Self-Efficacy	.295**	7.919
Trusting Culture × Self-Efficacy	-.034	-1.092
R <sup>2</sup>	35.9%*	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ ,

The results (see the <Table 16>) show that trusting culture has a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity ( $b = .360$ ,  $t = 11.245$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Self-efficacy exerts a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity ( $b = .295$ ,  $t = 7.919$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The combination trusting culture × self-efficacy has no a significant predictive effect on sales service innovation ( $b = -.034$ ,  $t = -1.092$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Self-efficacy did not significantly adjust the relationship between trusting culture and salesperson creativity.

<Figure 4> identifies the subjects with low self-efficacy ( $m-1sd$ ) by simple slope analysis. Trusting culture has a significant positive predictive effect on salesperson creativity (low : simple slope =  $.382$ , 95% confidence interval [ $.319$ ,  $.445$ ]). For subjects with high level of will control ( $M + 1sd$ ), although trusting culture also exerts

a positive predictive effect on salesperson creativity, its predictive effect is large (high : simple slope = .337, 95% confidence interval [.275, .400]). With improving self-efficacy, the predictive effect of trusting culture on salesperson creativity is not gradually increasing (see <Table 16> and <Figure 4>).



<Figure 4> The Relationship between Trusting Culture and Salesperson Creativity by Self-Efficacy

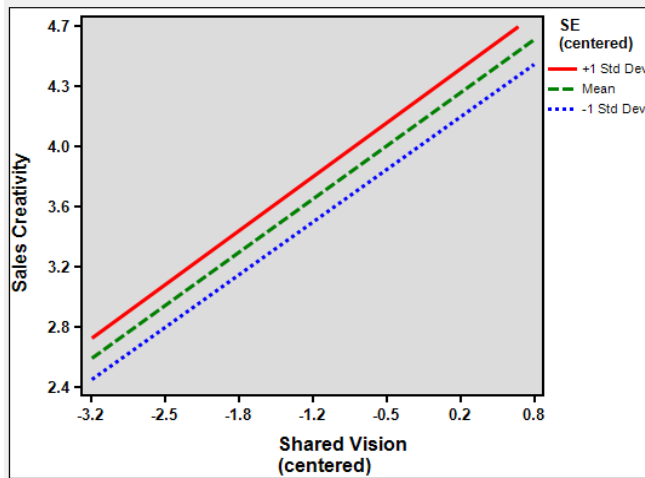
The results (see <Table 17>) show that shared vision has a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity ( $b = .502, t = 15.501, p < .01$ ). Self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity ( $b = .238, t = 6.919, p < .05$ ). The combination communication openness  $\times$  self-efficacy has a significant predictive effect on sales service innovation ( $b = .011, t = 2.430, R^2 = 36.5\%, p < .05$ ) The  $R^2$  changed significantly, indicating that the moderating variable self-efficacy has a moderating effect on shared vision and salesperson creativity.

<Table 17 > The Relationship between Shared Vision and Salesperson Creativity by  
Self-Efficacy

Variables	Salesperson Creativity	
	b	t
Age	.009**	3.042
Education	-.001	-.089
Gender	-.027	-.714
Job Experience	-.017**	-2.968
Shared Vision	.502**	15.051
Self-Efficacy	.238**	6.919
Shared Vision × Self-Efficacy	.011*	2.430
R <sup>2</sup>	36.5%*	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

The results (see <Table 17>) show that shared vision has a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity ( $b = .502$ ,  $t = 15.501$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Self-efficacy has a significant positive impact on salesperson creativity ( $b = .238$ ,  $t = 6.919$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The combination communication openness × self-efficacy has a significant predictive effect on sales service innovation ( $b = .011$ ,  $t = 2.430$ ,  $R^2 = 36.5%$ ,  $p < .05$ ) The  $R^2$  changed significantly, indicating that the moderating variable self-efficacy has a moderating effect on shared vision and salesperson creativity.



<Figure 5 > The Relationship between Shared Vision and Salesperson Creativity by Self-Efficacy

Further simple slope analysis (<Table 18 and Figure 5>; the simple slope diagram when self-efficacy is  $\pm 1$  SD), shows that the positive correlation between shared vision and salesperson creativity is more apparent among employees with high self-efficacy level and high average level. In subjects with high self-efficacy level ( $M + 1sd$ ), shared vision exerts a significant positive predictive effect on sales innovation (high:  $b = 0.539$ , 95% confidence interval [.444, .575]; average:  $b = .502$ , 95% confidence interval [.436, .567]). For subjects with low self-efficacy ( $m-1sd$ ), shared vision also exerts a positive predictive effect on sales innovation, but its predictive effect is small (low:  $b = .09$ , 95% CI [-.06, .24]). This implies that with improving individual self-efficacy, the predictive effect of shared vision on salesperson creativity is gradually increasing. Therefore, h5c, high self-efficacy exerts a more obvious regulatory effect on the existence of shared vision and salesperson creativity than low self-efficacy. The moderating effect results of self-efficacy are shown in < Table 19>.

<Table 18 >Moderating Effect of Self-Efficacy

Dependent Variable	Independent variable	Moderation: Self-efficacy	Effect	S.E	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Sales Creativity	Communication Openness	-1SD	.373	.028	.316	.430
		Mean	.349	.028	.293	.405
		+1SD	.325	.028	.269	.381
		-1SD	.382	.032	.319	.445
		Mean	.360	.032	.297	.423
		+1SD	.337	.032	.275	.400
	Trusting Culture	-1SD	.494	.033	.428	.460
		Mean	.502	.033	.436	.567
		+1SD	.539	.033	.444	.575
		-1SD	.494	.033	.428	.460
		Mean	.502	.033	.436	.567
		+1SD	.539	.033	.444	.575
Shared Vision	-1SD	.494	.033	.428	.460	
	Mean	.502	.033	.436	.567	
	+1SD	.539	.033	.444	.575	
	-1SD	.494	.033	.428	.460	
	Mean	.502	.033	.436	.567	
	+1SD	.539	.033	.444	.575	

According to the above empirical analysis results, the relevant path relationship hypothesis of self-efficacy proposed in the theoretical model of this thesis is tested:

Hypothesis test on the moderation effect of self-efficacy

H6a: Self-efficacy significantly regulates the path relationship between communication openness and salesperson creativity. According to the above analysis, self-efficacy has no significant regulatory effect on communication openness. Low self-efficacy has no weak regulatory effect on the positive effect between communication openness and salesperson creativity. In other words, under low self-efficacy, improving communication openness exerts a relatively unimportant effect on promoting the salesperson creativity of the individual's actual sales line. Therefore, H6a is not accepted.



<Table19> Summary of Moderating Test

	Hypotheses	Results
H6	The relationship between social capital and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.	Partial
H6a	The relationship between communication openness and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.	Reject
H6b	The relationship between trusting culture and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.	Reject
H6c	The relationship between shared vision and salesperson creativity is stronger in high self-efficacy than in low self-efficacy.	Accept

Yang and Zhang (2012) studied the impact of communication on innovation behavior, and found that communication has an inverted U-shaped impact on innovation behavior under self-efficacy. Huang (2016) studied the relationship between team communication and creativity and showed that if self-efficacy is used as moderating variable, negative emotions played an important role. Yu (2014) studied self-efficacy, creativity, and team communication, and found that self-efficacy largely determines the efficiency and level of creative activities; however, as a hidden variable, it induces uncertainty and complexity. Therefore, the reason why H6a is not accepted may be that negative emotions and other factors are not considered or because of the uncertainty and complexity of self-efficacy itself.

H6b: self-efficacy does not significantly regulate the path relationship between trusting culture and salesperson creativity. Self-efficacy has no significant moderating effect on trusting culture, and high self-efficacy has no strong regulatory effect on the positive effect between trusting culture and salesperson creativity. In other words,

under high self-efficacy, improving trusting culture cannot effectively promote the individual implementation of salesperson creativity. Under low self-efficacy, improving trusting culture has comparatively little effect on improving personal salesperson creativity. H6b is rejected.

In a study on employee creativity, Du et al. (2015) found that self-efficacy partially affected the relationship between cultural trust and employee creativity. Wu (2016) studied the relationship between trust and employee creativity and found that self-efficacy partially affected the relationship between organizational trust and employee creativity. Therefore, the reason why H6b is not rejected may be that employee creativity has strong innovation attribute, and a single self-efficacy cannot effectively regulate the influence of organizational trusting culture on creativity.

H6c: self-efficacy significantly regulates the path relationship between shared vision and salesperson creativity. Self-efficacy has a significant regulatory effect on shared vision, and high self-efficacy has a strong regulatory effect on the positive effect between shared vision and salesperson creativity. Under self-efficacy, improving an individual shared vision can effectively prompt the individual to implement salesperson creativity. In addition, improving the shared vision plays a relatively large role in improving personal salesperson creativity. Therefore, H5c is corroborated.

H6: In contrast to low self-efficacy, high self-efficacy has a partly moderating effect on the path relationship between social capital and salesperson creativity. In other words, under high self-efficacy, improving individual trust culture and communication openness cannot effectively promote the implementation of salesperson

creativity in the individual. The moderating effect of high self-efficacy on shared vision and salesperson creativity was significantly higher than that of low self-efficacy.

## VI. Conclusion and Implementation

### 6.1 Research Summary

This thesis establishes the core strength of the new role of salespersons in the changing sales environment, emphasizes salesperson creativity, and explores independent factors and dependent variables affecting salesperson creativity.

As the leading factor determining the creativity of a salesperson, the dimension of his or her social capital is divided into communication openness, trusting culture, and shared vision. This division confirms the impact of various levels on the creativity of salespeople. In addition, it also confirms the role of a salesperson's creativity in adaptive selling to achieve actual sales performance. Finally, it confirms the moderator role of self-efficacy in a salesperson's creativity of social capital in the process of innovation.

Taking 607 Chinese salespeople as research object, the data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and the hypotheses are tested on the basis of these data.

#### **Descriptive analysis conclusions**

SPSS 21.0, Amos 22.0 and other statistical methods were used to analyze the sample data.

The survey data of the three dimensions of social capital show that regarding communication openness, the surveyed salespeople mostly share customer information. Regarding trusting culture, respondents are more likely to trust their sales partners. Regarding shared vision, the proportion of respondents who totally disagree and

partially disagree is low, indicating that the surveyed salesperson implement a shared vision.

Salesperson creativity. The survey data of salesperson creativity show that the proportion of respondents holding complete and partial disagreement is low, indicating that the surveyed salesperson perform better in terms of creativity.

Self-efficacy. The proportion of total and partial disapproval of the respondents is low, indicating that the surveyed salespeople have high levels of self-efficacy.

Adaptive selling. The proportion of respondents holding complete and partial disagreement is low, indicating that the surveyed salespeople perform well in adaptive selling.

The demographic survey shows that women are the main salespeople in China. In this study, the supermarket salespeople in Chinese shopping malls are relatively young. The average working years of the salespeople in Chinese shopping malls and supermarkets are 2–3 years, and the salespeople are quite mobile.

### **Correlation Analysis Conclusions**

The correlation analysis of various variables in the model using SPSS 21.0 shows that social capital exerts a positive impact on sales creativity. A significant positive correlation exists between communication openness, trusting culture, shared vision, and salesperson creativity. The same direction change relationship applies. Salesperson creativity exerts a positive impact on adaptive selling and sales performance. Adaptive selling exerts a positive impact on sales performance. Self-efficacy is significantly positively correlated with social capital and salesperson creativity. Communication

openness, trusting culture, shared vision, and sales performance are significantly positively correlated, and have the same direction change relationship.

### **Conclusions of Testing Effect**

For testing the six proposed hypotheses, PROCESS V.34 is used. The results for the tests of hypotheses are summarized in the following: H1: Social capital has a positive and significant impact on sales creativity. H1a: Open communication has a significant impact on sales creativity. H1b: Trust culture has a significant impact on sales creativity. H1c: Shared vision has a significant impact on sales creativity. H2: Salesperson creativity has a positive and significant impact on adaptive sales. H3: Sales creativity has a positive and significant impact on sales performance. H4: Adaptive sales have a positive and significant impact on sales performance. H5: Sales creativity plays a complete intermediary role in the relationship between the three dimensions of social capital and sales performance. H6 is partially verified. High self-efficacy does not exert a stronger moderating effect on communication openness and salesperson creativity than low self-efficacy. High self-efficacy does not exert a more significant moderating effect on trust culture and salesperson creativity than low self-efficacy. High self-efficacy has a more significant moderating effect on the shared vision and salesperson creativity than low self-efficacy.

## **6.2 Implications**

### **6.2.1 Theoretical Implications**

This thesis establishes the core advantages of the role of salespersons in the changing sales environment, emphasizes salesperson creativity, and tests the driving factors and outcome variables affecting salesperson creativity. As driving factors of salesperson creativity, the three dimensions of social capital are analyzed. These are communication openness, trusting culture, and shared vision. The impact of each dimension on salesperson creativity is verified. It is confirmed that salesperson creativity has a positive impact on adaptive selling, and adaptive selling has a positive effect on sales performance. Finally, the mediator effect of salesperson creativity on sales capital and adaptive selling, and the moderator effect of salesperson self-efficacy on social capital and salesperson creativity are confirmed.

## **6.2.2 Practical Implications**

First, the recruitment and selection of salespeople

In the recruitment and selection of salespeople, to obtain high-performance talents and predict the sales performance of salespeople, in the past, the management of the organization was often emphasized, rather than considering the social capital and multidimensional nature of employees. Guided by the improvement of sales performance, employers tried to hire salespeople with high social capital. However, to enhance social capital during employee training, such training should be improved from three aspects: communication openness, trust culture, and shared vision. The communication openness, shared vision, and trust culture of salesperson's social capital can help salespeople to obtain useful information related to their career within the organization. Moreover, salespeople can find emotional support and a sense of

belonging through social capital outside of the organization. Good communication between individuals and other network members is of great significance towards realizing individual sales performance goals. Therefore, salespeople should develop their social capital as much as possible to lay a solid foundation for the improvement of their sales performance.

#### Second, classification management of salesperson

The establishment and empirical analysis of the relationship model between salesperson's social capital, self-efficacy, sales creativity, and sales performance provide important information for salesperson management. It not only provides a perspective for understanding the salesperson's social capital and self-efficacy, it also shows that salesperson's social capital and self-efficacy can be trained and developed from the three dimensions of social capital. By using the salesperson's social capital scale to diagnose existing social capital and self-efficacy, the strength of a salesperson's social capital and self-efficacy can be better understood, and important information for the design of training projects can be provided.

Classified management of sales personnel can effectively improve their sales performance. Salespeople with high social capital and high self-efficacy should tap their potential to a greater extent, as this will provide them with higher positions and more power, which they can use to drive other salespeople.

#### Third, salesperson creativity management

Salesperson creativity not only directly impacts adaptive selling, it is also a complete intermediary variable of social capital and adaptive selling. In management practice, on the one hand, to better meet customer requirements and adapt to the



changing sales environment, it is necessary to give full play to the creativity of sales personnel and emphasize innovation to adapt to new sales situations. On the other hand, a possible way for employees to translate their social capital into adaptive selling is via salesperson creativity. In other words, salesperson creativity plays an important role in realizing adaptive selling.

#### Fourth, improvement of adaptability and sales ability of salespeople

No salesperson exists in isolation, and all are embedded in social networks composed of suppliers, customers, competitors, and other entities. Under the background of the diversification of customer needs and the complexity of the sales environment, salespeople not only need a high level of social capital, high self-efficacy, and high salesperson creativity, they also need a pronounced adaptive selling ability. Adaptive selling behavior is closely related to salesperson's social capital and sales creativity.

### **6.3 Limitation and Direction for Future Research**

Although the questionnaire was revised several times based on a thorough literature review, because of the limitations imposed by research conditions and research ability, the thesis inevitably has deficiencies. Follow-up research should improve the following aspects:

First, the questionnaire used in this study is revised by the author based on Chinese and international literature, through small sample test, and expert discussion. Although the reliability and validity of the scale are good, the limitation of their own research ability has many deficiencies, and the appropriateness of the scale must be studied

further. In addition, the items in the questionnaire are personal subjective judgments and cannot be used in the process of answering.

Respondents may avoid survey objects to deliberately conceal the truth with the goal to protect own interests or as a result of other psychological influence. Such behavior would distort the measurement results, and impose certain limitations on the research conclusions.

Second, because the literature on the concept and measurement of social capital is not unified, at present, the empirical research literature mainly studies the role of the enterprise level social capital on enterprises, and few empirical studies address salesperson social capital from the individual level. The concept of social capital mainly originates from western research. Although this thesis includes China's cultural background in the research of social capital, this has been greatly simplified in application. Therefore, the important impact of social capital on sales performance under complex national conditions cannot be fully reflected.

Third, social capital and self-efficacy were put forward under the European and US cultural background, where the questionnaire was first compiled. The measurement method basically adopts the self-report method, which will lead to deviations because of differing social expectations between different cultural backgrounds and groups. Follow-up research should conduct a more in-depth study on social capital and self-efficacy according to the actual situation in China.

Fourth, limited by the research conditions, only 607 valid questionnaires were obtained. This number of samples imposes limitations. Follow-up research should

expand the sample size to obtain more general research conclusions through the comparative research of more salespeople.

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Hello.

The purpose of this survey is for learning about your opinion how salespeople take use of their ability to improve sales performance.

Your opinion is very important and there is no right or wrong answers, so please give your honest opinions.

Your opinions will be used for developing better service skills and providing better services to meet customer's future needs. Your answers will be kept confidential and used only for statistical purposes.

Don't hesitate to send me e-mail if you have any question about that questionnaire.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

2020. 7. 6  
 YANHUIZHE(251198030@qq.com)

<b>Gender</b>	(1) Male    (2) Female	<b>Age</b>	(      )
<b>Job Experience</b>	<b>How long have you been working <u>in this store</u> as salesperson?</b>	About (    ) Years	
	<b>How long have you been working in salesperson?</b>	About (    ) Years	
<b>Education</b>	<b>What is your educational background?</b>	① High graduation ② University graduation ③ Postgraduation School ④ Others (      )	

**A. Social Capital**

**For question A1-A3, please circle the number which best represents your overall opinion**

[A-1] Communication Openness	Completely Disagree	1	2	Neither agree nor disagree	3	4	Completely agree
1. There is a wide-spread sharing of critical information between people within our store.	1	2	3	4	5		

2. People in our store always share relevant information about customers.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ideas are shared openly within our store and can be tested by all interested salesperson.	1	2	3	4	5
4. New salespersons are given frequent opportunities to learn from others at all levels	1	2	3	4	5
5. Our store is structured so that people or teams working on similar tasks can easily share their experiences and problems.	1	2	3	4	5
[A-2] Trusting Culture	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. I am not sure that I fully trust my fellow salespersons	1	2	3	4	5
2. Overall, the motives and intentions of those in my store are good.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My co-workers are always honest and trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Members of my store show a great deal of integrity.	1	2	3	4	5
[A-3] Shared Vision	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. A 'team spirit' exists in our ranks.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Around here, cross functional teamwork is the common way of working rather than the exception to the norm.	1	2	3	4	5
3. There is a commonality of purpose in our store.	1	2	3	4	5
4. There is total agreement on our store's vision across all levels and departments in our store.	1	2	3	4	5

## B. Salesperson creativity

For question B, please circle the number which best represents your overall opinion

[B] Salesperson creativity	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. People in our store are receptive to unanticipated ideas and processes.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Experimentation is encouraged within in our store.	1	2	3	4	5
3. In our store, new insights and ideas get developed into improved services or processes.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Our shared understanding of store ideas supports the development of new ideas in our store.	1	2	3	4	5

## C. Sales Performance

For question C, please circle the number which best represents your overall opinion

[C] Salse Performance	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. We adequately completed assigned sales duties.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We fulfilled the responsibilities specified in our sales description.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We performed sales tasks that are expected of ours.	1	2	3	4	5

## D. Customer Orientation

**For question D, please circle the number which best represents your overall opinion**

[D] Customer Orientation	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. In our store, we are always working to improve the quality of service we give to customers.	1	2	3	4	5
2. We have specific ideas about how to improve the service we give to customers.	1	2	3	4	5
3. We often make suggestions about how to improve customer service in our store.	1	2	3	4	5
4. We put a lot of effort into our jobs to try to satisfy customers.	1	2	3	4	5
5. No matter how we feel, we always put ourselves out for every customer we serve.	1	2	3	4	5
6. We often go out of our way to help customers.	1	2	3	4	5

### E. Self Efficacy

**For question E, please circle the number which best represents your overall opinion**

[E] Self-efficacy	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. Overall, I am confident of my ability to perform my task well.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel I am very capable at the task of selling.	1	2	3	4	5

3. I feel I have the capabilities to successfully perform this task.	1	2	3	4	5
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### F. Task Autonomy

**For question F, please circle the number which best represents your overall opinion**

[F] Job Autonomy	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. I have significant autonomy in determining how we do my task.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can decide on my own how to go about doing our task.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my task.	1	2	3	4	5
4. This job allows me to use personal initiative or judgement in carrying out the task.	1	2	3	4	5

### G. Adaptive Selling Behavior

**For question G, please circle the number which best represents your overall opinion**

[G] Adaptive Selling Behavior	Completely Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Completely agree
1. When I feel that my sales approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach	1	2	3	4	5



2. I like to experiment with different sales approaches	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am very flexible in the selling approach I use	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am easily use a wide variety of selling approaches	1	2	3	4	5
5. I try to understand how one customer differs from another	1	2	3	4	5

**I deeply appreciate your time and cooperation for this response!**

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Yan Huizhe