

A Socio-Instrumental Pragmatism View for Strengthening Sales Representatives Productivity in B2B Face-to-Face Sales Interaction System

George S. Spais¹

Konstantinos Z. Vasileiou²

Abstract

This paper examined the possibility of an extension of Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization of business transaction (in terms of Business Action Theory, B.A.T.), in order to examine the value of a socio instrumental pragmatism view of communication actions for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Such an approach allowed us to introduce clear propositions for strengthening sales representatives' productivity. First, it attempted to do this by categorizing 42 (forty-two) identified empirical papers of the last decade (2000-2010) into Lind's and Goldkuhl's assumptions for B.A.T. in order to view communication as action. These assumptions were directly and implicitly equated with the assumptions and best practices of B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Second, the occurrence of each category was presented in three (3) sections; the paper provided some summary points and interpretive claims. The discussion section assessed the extent to which these points and claims have addressed the stated aim of the paper, it reviewed whether the claims were unique in relation to existing literature and explored some implications and future possibilities.

I. Introduction

According to the review of the empirical evidence of the last ten (10) years (Williams, Everett and Rogol, 2009; Rodríguez-Ardura, I., Meseguer, A. and Vilaseca, J., 2008; Lynch and De Chernatony, 2007; Gounaris (2005a); Gounaris (2005b); Gounaris and Venetis (2002); Axelsson, Melin and Goldkuhl, 2002) it seems that many parameters have an impact to the way a B2B sales representative interacts with a customer. For example, Byrnes and Mujtaba (2008) underline parameters such as new innovative communication technologies applications, rising labor costs and evolving preferences by the customer are all factors that need to be considered when designing a framework for a B2B face-to-face sales interaction. According to Jap (2001), establishing and maintaining solid, long-term marketing relationships are vital to the success of a sales representative as well as the firm the representative is employed. In accordance to Ford and Håkansson (2006) the interactive nature of business relationships is a key challenge, so the question is one. How a long-term marketing relationship perspective can be strengthen without an effective and efficient B2B face-to-face sales interaction system?

¹ Athens University of Economics & Business (Greece), gspais@aueb.gr

² University of Patras (Greece), konvasil@upatras.gr

Series of studies showed us that the cost of B2B face-face sales calls continues to increase over time (Nickels, McHugh and McHugh, 2008; Kem, 1986). On the other hand, the salesperson's personal contact with a customer is most likely the most effective method in B2B sales, especially in order credibility and trust to be earned at the first stages of B2B sales interaction. According to Byrnes and Mujtaba (2008) when credibility and trust is earned and established, the need for face-to-face meetings diminishes. According to Dixon (2002), all marketing information can be delivered immediately, product and concept demonstrations can be provided either through the web or through other high-speed communication facilities. The sales representative needs to understand customer's preferences, budget constraints and communication styles in order to achieve success. Since customers can vary significantly, it is extremely important to quickly assess customer's requirements and then adapt a selling strategy that will meet those requirements. According to Sujana, Weitz and Kumar (1994), it is equally important for sales representatives to maintain a set of selling strategies that will respond to customer's preferences.

However, the entire above are meaningless if not all the above communicative strategic actions in a B2B sales context are not managed under an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. The literature on communicative action provides many theoretical frameworks to describe business processes. For example, Business Action Theory/B.A.T. (Goldkuhl and Lind, 2004; Goldkuhl, 1998; Goldkuhl, 1996), Dynamic Essential Modeling of Organizations/D.E.M.O. (Dietz and Habing, 2004; Dietz, 1999), Action Workflow (Kethers and Schoop, 2000; Denning and Medina-Mora, 1995), Action-Based Modeling (Lehtinen and Lyytinen, 1986) and Conversation for Action (Winograd and Flores, 1986).

We believe that through Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization and assumptions of business transaction between a supplier and a customer can strengthen sales' representatives productivity; these assumptions can directly and implicitly equated with new assumptions and best practices of an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. These new assumptions and best practices, based on our literature summary points and interpretive claims, will help promotion managers and sales managers to gain a deeper and sharpened understanding of the impact of B2B face-to-face sales interaction system to sales representatives' productivity. In addition, promotion managers and sales managers may deepen the understanding of what might become important to look at more extensively in future promotion and sales research.

At 1996, Goldkuhl introduced Business Action Theory (B.A.T.) and it was strongly advanced and strengthened by Goldkuhl (1998) and Goldkuhl and Lind (2004), presenting to the scientific community more empirical evidence. The basis of the theory is the Socio-Instrumental Pragmatism (according to Goldkuhl, 2002) relating communicative (social) and material (instrumental) aspects of actions. According to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the theoretical platforms of B.A.T. are: a) the Speech Act Theory that views communication as action between two individuals and b) Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1984), which examines action into a social context.

Research Aim

Based on the above, the paper will examine the possibility of an extension of Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization of business transaction (in terms of Business Action Theory, B.A.T.), in order to examine the value of a systemic approach of a socio instrumental pragmatism view in order to strengthen sales representatives' productivity in B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Our research intention is to categorize the constructs of the following fundamental concept: "B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind's and Goldkuhl's BAT approach". Regarding to the epistemological approach, we adopted a critical hermeneutics approach.

Quite recently, the research topic of the B2B interaction system seems to gain the appropriate focus by marketing scholars. According to the recent invitation (2010) of the

special issue: “Time and process in business network research” of the *Industrial Marketing Management*, the interactive nature of B2B relationships is a key challenge, in accordance to Ford and Håkansson (2006). The basic tenet of this approach is that change and dynamics are based on interaction processes between active and purposeful actors in the network and that no actor can operate fully independently. Halinen and Törnroos (2005) identified another challenge: the lack of methodological tools for the study of networks and process. The complexity of business networks as a study object leads inevitably to increased complexity at the methodological domain. Business networks are temporally and socially embedded structures. Organizations are connected to each other through direct and indirect relationships, which add to the complexity and methodological difficulty, in accordance to Easton (1995). Therefore, the introduction of a systemic approach analyzing research themes in a B2B environment seems to become a challenge for such a promotion management research topic, in accordance to the research proposition of Parente, Venkataraman, Fazel and Millet (2004).

Assumptions of the Paper

1. Approaching B.A.T. by Goldkuhl from B2B face-to-face sales management aspect, its conceptualization in promotion management can contribute to a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system framework.
2. The extended B.A.T can be considered as a control tool for analyzing and evaluating two parties’ (a seller and a buyer) interaction in a business relationship. The outcome of this analysis can then be used for improvements of interaction and serve as a ground for developing a suitable B2B face-to-face sales interaction system.

Introducing Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s (2005) and Goldkuhl’s (1998) conceptualization on business transaction between supplier and customer – reasoning the focus of the paper

Business action conceptualizations seem to have the potential to enhance efforts to improve the assumptions and best practices of sales representatives’ productivity, which can be strengthened through our proposition for an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system, as a framework of evaluation and analysis for sales and promotion managers.

Goldkuhl’s conceptualization on business transaction between supplier and customer can be proven an emerging fundamental concept, with valuable implications in the promotion management literature. It is a conceptualization of high value, which can offer a new interpretation of sales’ representatives’ productivity through an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system, as a framework of evaluation and analysis for sales and promotion managers.

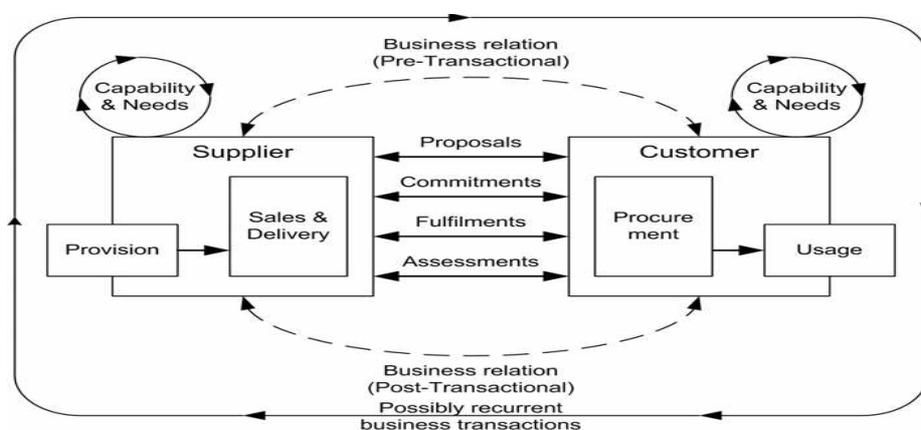


Figure 1: A Business Transaction in Business Action Theory (Lind and Goldkuhl, 2005)

Research Question

Can the extension of Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl's (1998) conceptualization, provide a better explanation of how sales representatives productivity can be strengthened through an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system?

Research & Epistemological Approach

The socio-instrumental pragmatism view for strengthening sales representatives' productivity in B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through the assumptions of Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization for business transaction is a very new research field. The conceptual character of the B2B face-to-face sales interaction system based on Goldkuhl's BAT conceptualization and model is structural for the ontological approach (Ticehurst and Veal, 2000) that we will adopt in this paper. The critical-hermeneutic approach will allow discovering concepts and broader connections in this research framework.

Originality of the Paper – Contribution to Knowledge

The extension of Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization of business transaction (in terms of Business Action Theory, B.A.T.), seems to become one of the most promising research methodology theories in the promotion management literature. There is a significant literature in information systems regarding Goldkuhl's B.A.T. process in a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system such as: Zallico, Bolman-Pullins and Mallin (2009); Dan and Song (2009); Goldkuhl and Lind (2008); He, Tan, Goh, Lee and Lee (2007); Su, Li and Chen, (2005); Honeycutt (2005); Zhang and Wang (2005); Melin and Axelsson (2004); Lind, Hjalmarsson and Olausson, (2003); (Lind, 2003); Archer and Yuan (2000).

No study, till now, have offered a new perspective for promotion and sales managers of business transaction between a supplier and a customer based on B.A.T. assumptions, which can directly and implicitly be equated with new assumptions and best practices in terms of an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system advancing sales' representatives productivity. As a result, promotion and sales managers may gain a deeper and sharpened understanding of the impact of a promotion campaign based on personal selling promotion activity. We also believe that this research topic will receive a significant attention in the promotion management literature, in the next years.

II. Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization for business transaction. The fundamental definitions and assumptions are in accordance to Figure 1 and presented in the works of Rittgen's (2006) and Axelsson's, Melin's and Goldkuhl's (2002).

III. Literature Review

Literature Review Process

The literature review process was developed through the following three (3) stages:

1. *Bibliography collection and search strategy*: For the needs of the search, we have adopted "briefsearch" and "citation pearl growing" search strategies. The first strategy

helped us to collect a series of research works (quite fast). In order to achieve an adding value in the search process, a second search strategy was adopted, which helped us to identify some key research works in order to adopt the existing terminology and concepts, quite useful for the search of other research works. We believe that it was the most suitable approach in order to investigate a research topic almost unsearchable. 2. Based on the first stage, *an extension of the literature review was achieved progressively* and 3. *Abstractive synopsis and homogenization*, based on the keywords, allowed us to categorize the research works. We believe that the G.I.S.T. principle provided us with a safe guide in order to identify broader groups arisen from the research question.

Conceptual Mapping

Based on the Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkhul (1998) conceptualization for business transaction and its extension to examine the value of a socio instrumental pragmatism view of communication actions for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system, the following conceptual mapping figure helped us to: a) deepen our understanding of the research themes, b) identify significant concepts and c) recognize and identify the research activity for each conceptual category of the "B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind's and Goldkuhl's BAT approach" (see the following figure).

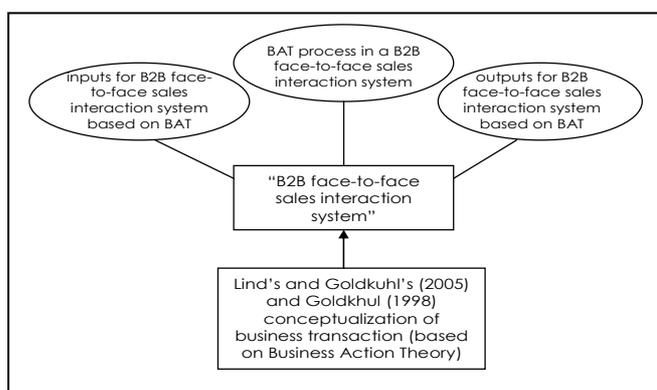


Figure 2: Conceptual mapping

The above conceptual mapping was introduced based on the key words of the research aim, the theoretical framework and on the findings of the first stage of the literature review.

Based on the above, the literature review was structured as follows:

1. Categorizing the concepts.
2. Research activity for each conceptual category.
3. Classifying empirical evidence according to chronological order
4. Summary of the literature findings

B2B face-to-face sales interaction system components through Lind's and Goldkuhl's BAT approach

1. **Categorizing the concepts:** In terms of the investigation of the research question, we categorized the concepts linked to the basic concept of the "B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind's and Goldkuhl's BAT approach".

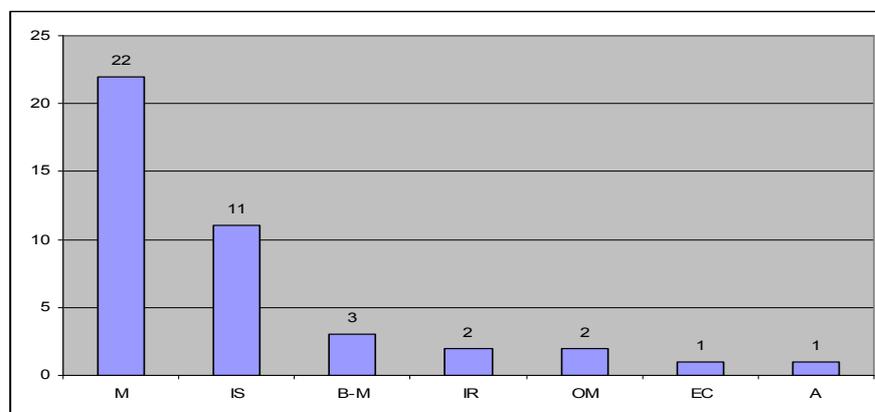
basic concept category	“B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s BAT approach”
A.	a. inputs for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system
B.	b. BAT process in a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system
C.	c. outputs for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system

Table 1: Categorization of the concepts linked to “B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s BAT approach”

2. Research activity for each conceptual category: In this subsection, we present the relative research activity for each conceptual category of the examined concept of “B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s BAT approach”, according to the categorization of the above subsection. In the following table, (see Table 2) we present the research works (presented in international academic journals and proceedings of international academic conferences), based on the key words of the conceptual mapping and the G.I.S.T. literature review principle.

Based on an initial judgmental sample of fifty (50) published research works during the last decade 2000-2010 (selected at the first stage of the literature review, using the above conceptual categories as key words) we scanned, and reached at one to the following forty-two (42) research works (see Table 2), as an indicative research activity for the basic concept of this study. We excluded the eight (8) research works, as there were discussion papers. The search and process stage took place from April 21 to May 10, 2010.

At the following diagram (Diagram 1), we illustrate the classification of the sample of the forty-two (42) published research works of the last decade (2000-2010) based on the field’s literature: a) marketing, b) information systems, c) business-management, d) internet research, e) operations management, f) electronic commerce and g) automation.



M=marketing literature, **IS**=information systems literature, **B-M**=business-management literature, **IR**=internet research literature, **OM**=operations management, **EC**=electronic commerce, **A**=automation
Diagram 1: The sample of the published works classified according to field’s literature

The classification of the forty-two (42) published research works is presented at the following table (see Table 2).

categories of concepts linked to “B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s BAT approach”		empirical evidence
A.	inputs for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system	Kim, Pae, Han and Srivastava (2010)
		Jalkala and Salminen (2009)
		Skarp and Gadde (2008)
		Cullen and Webster (2007)
		Ivens and Pardo (2007)
		Helander and Möller (2007)
		Baglieri, Secchi and Croom (2007)
		Cagliano, Caniato and Spina (2005)
		Zhang and Wang (2005)
		Reid, Bolman Pullins and Plank (2002)
		Eid, Trueman and Moneim Ahmend (2002)
		Alt, Grünauer and Reichmayr (2000)
		Archer and Yuan (2000)
		B.
Rittgen (2009)		
Zalocco, Bolman-Pullins and Mallin (2009)		
Dan and Song (2009)		
Goldkuhl and Lind (2008)		
Bigne, Aldas and Andreu (2008)		
Umapathy and Purao (2007)		
He, Tan, Goh, Lee and Lee (2007)		
Lind and Goldkuhl (2006)		
Johansson and Axelsson (2005)		
Su, Li and Chen, (2005)		
Honeycutt (2005)		
Melin and Axelsson (2004)		
Lind and Goldkuhl (2001)		
C.	outputs for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system	Kim, Pae, Han and Srivastava (2010)
		Powell and Swart (2010)
		Gummesson and Polese (2009)
		Henneberg, Gruber, Reppel, Ashnai and Naudé (2009)
		Bunduchi (2008)
		Ryu and Eyuboglu (2007)
		Sharma (2007)
		Penttinen and Palmer (2007)
		Ivens and Pardo (2007)
		Madaleno, Wilson and Palmer (2007)
		Gurau (2007)
		Castro-Lacouture, Medaglia and Skibniewski (2007)
		Lindgreen, Palmer, Vanhamme and Wouters (2006)
		Zhang and Wang (2005)
		Ulaga, Sharma and Krishnan (2002)
		Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy (2002)
		Eid, Trueman and Moneim Ahmend (2002)
		Narayandas, Caravella, and Deighton (2002)
		Chakraborty, Lala and Warren (2002)

Table 2: Classifying empirical evidence of the last decade 2000-2010 according to the conceptual categories of “B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s BAT approach” presented in a chronological order (newest to oldest)

3. Classifying empirical evidence according to chronological order: Based on the above table (see Table 2) we will present the chronological order of the forty-two (42) research works. Given that the B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through the assumptions of Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization for business transaction is a very new research field in the promotion management literature, the chronological order of the above conceptual categories will allow us to identify: i) the level of research activity; ii) the research priorities for each time period; iii) the research gaps as also iv) valuable research directions and suggestions for further research.

The above research works were classified in to three (3) categories according to the conceptual categories of the B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s BAT approach. We have decided to present the chronological order according to the following two (2) periods: a) 2000-2005 and b) 2006-2010. In the below diagram (see Diagram 2) the 42 (forty-two) publications are presented, with some interesting remarks.

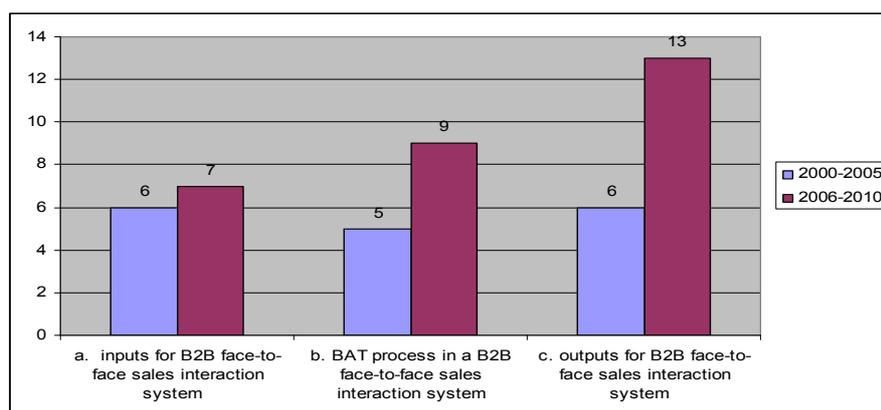


Diagram 3: The research activity of the decade (2000-2010) for each of the conceptual categories of “B2B face-to-face sales interaction system through Lind’s and Goldkuhl’s BAT approach” presented in a chronological order

Remarks based on the above diagram:

- a. The majority of the published works of the sample were focused on outputs for a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system.
- b. There is a significant increase of the research activity the last five (5) years (2006-2010) for the outputs of a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system.
- c. There is a significant increase of the research activity the last five (5) years (2006-2010) for Business Action Theory.
- d. The research activity for the inputs of a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system is steady for both periods.

4. Summary of literature review findings: The findings of the literature review are summarized as follows:

- § Regarding to the inputs for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system: it seems that inputs is a very crucial component for an effective system for B2B interactions, where supplier’s strategies are based on customer reactions at problem solving in the upgrading of the product offerings. Among the B2B critical success factors, we found internal (types of pre- and post- interaction), external and psychological factors. The most significant inputs are marketing sales and service information to product offer development, the offer and the level of supplier’s satisfaction from pre- and post-interaction with the customer.
- § Regarding to the BAT process in a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system: it seems that the majority of published research works focused on the prerequisites and the assessment phases. Regarding to the assessment phase there are strong suggestions for introduction of B2B sales performance measures, such as salesperson skill development, goal attainment and customer relationship management. For the prerequisites phase, it seems that there is an emphasis at the connection of technology and sales performance and at the improvement of B2B interactions and communication capabilities for organizational integration.
- § Regarding to the outputs for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system: it seems that a socio-economic approach of the outputs of B2B transactions, with emphasis to trust, power and transaction costs is needed. Correlating customer satisfaction with supplier’s positioning and the performance of digital B2B technologies, it seems that questioning, identifying, prioritizing, enhanced offerings and complaint management seem to be proven critical outcomes of a B2B sales interaction system. In addition,

internal, external and psychological factors are B2B critical success factors influencing the quality of a B2B sales interaction system outputs.

Based on the theoretical framework of the present study, we can interpret the above findings as follows:

- § A B2B face-to-face sales interaction system it seems that it is about exchange of value (exchange of products/services vs money) and business communication, which must not be seen as mere information transfer. It consists communicative acts that include both representation of the world as talked about and certain “relationship creators”. When performing a communicative act, an actor (the sales’ representative or the professional buyer) is not only presenting some facts of the world but is ‘*doing*’ something when communicating in relation to the receiver such as commitments and expectations. Promotion and sales managers must realize that in such a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system delivering a message to a customer, there can be a piece of the message consisting of delivery information. This piece of information, which represents a part of the world referred to, can be part of different communicative acts. It can be part of customer’s queries for possibilities to deliver the item, an offer from a supplier or order from a customer, or part of an order confirmation from the supplier. It can also be part of a delivery slip following the goods or an invoice to the customer or a reclaim from the customer. Not all these communicative acts can be reduced to a transfer of information about some universe of discourse. They are all different acts involving different types of relationships and interactions in each phase of BAT between the sender and receiver of the message.
- § Promotion and sales managers may see many benefits of an extension of BAT to be raised, if they realize that all communication in a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system should be seen as action and every such act consists of two (2) parts: a. *propositional* part and b) the illocutionary (or performative) part, which can be assessed and evaluated based on the inputs and the outputs of the system.
- § A systemic approach seems to be crucial for the extension of BAT phase model considering critical inputs and outputs and critical success factors of a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Promotion and sales managers seem to have an instrument for analyzing interaction and the outcome of this analysis can be then used for improving sales’ representatives’ productivity and serve as a ground for developing a suitable B2B face-to-face sales interaction system.

In accordance to the above findings and their interpretation, our proposition for the socio-instrumental pragmatism view of communication actions for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system based on Lind’s & Goldkuhl’s (2005) and Goldkuhl’s (1998) is presented at the following figure (see Figure 3).

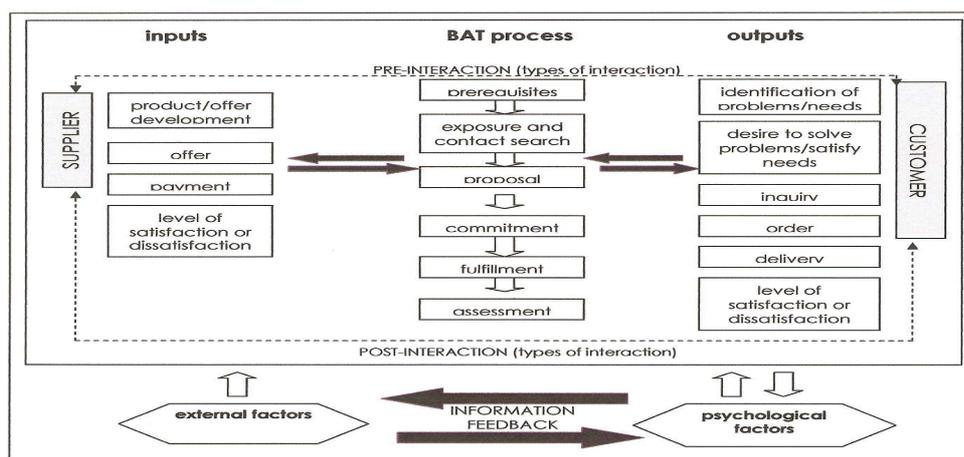


Figure 3: Extended model of the socio-instrumental pragmatism view of communication actions for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system based on Lind's & Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl's (1998) B.A.T. perspective and the literature review findings

IV. Discussion

This paper examined the possibility of an extension of Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization of business transaction (in terms of Business Action Theory, B.A.T.), in order to examine the value of a socio instrumental pragmatism view of communication actions for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Such an approach allows us to introduce clear propositions for strengthening sales representatives' productivity.

Degree of answering the research question and the support of the initial assumptions

Our organized literature review led us on an initial judgmental sample of fifty (50) published research works (selected at the first stage of the literature review), in order to be scanned and reached at one to forty-two (42) research works and the findings showed us that:

- § Promotion and sales managers must realize that in such a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system delivering a message to a customer, there can be a piece of message consisting of delivery information. This piece of information, which represents a part of the world referred to, can be part of different communicative acts. It can be part of customer's queries for possibilities to deliver the item, an offer from a supplier or order from a customer, or part of an order confirmation from the supplier. It can also be part of a delivery slip following the goods or an invoice to the customer or a reclaim from the customer. Not all these communicative acts can be reduced to a transfer of information about some universe of discourse. They are all different acts involving different types of relationships and interactions in each phase of BAT between the sender and receiver of the message.
- § Promotion and sales managers may see many benefits of an extension of BAT to be raised, if they realize that all communication in a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system should be seen as action and every such act consists of two (2) parts: a) *propositional* part and b) the illocutionary (or performative) part, which can be assessed and evaluated based on the inputs and the outputs of the system.
- § A systemic approach is crucial for the extension of BAT phase model considering critical inputs and outputs and critical success factors of a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Promotion and sales managers have an instrument for analyzing interaction and the outcome of this analysis can be then used for improving sales' representatives' productivity and serve as a ground for developing a suitable B2B face-to-face sales interaction system.

As a conclusion, the findings arisen from: a) the study of international empirical evidence and b) their interpretation (based on the theoretical framework) revealed us very new constructs and established an initial understanding of the constructs and their relationship to other Goldkuhl's B.A.T perspective regarding to the business transaction between a supplier and customer. Such an approach allowed us to understand it as a framework of a socio instrumental pragmatism view of communication actions for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system's assumptions and best practices in terms of control and evaluation of promotion campaigns.

Based on the above, we can accept the initial assumptions that: a) approaching B.A.T. by Goldkuhl from B2B face-to-face sales management aspect, its conceptualization in promotion management can contribute to a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system framework and b) the extended B.A.T can be considered as a control tool for analyzing and evaluating two parties' (a seller and a buyer) interaction in a business relationship. The outcome of this analysis can then be used for improvements of interaction and serve as a ground for developing a suitable B2B face-to-face sales interaction system.

Relating the findings to earlier work

Quite recently, the research topic of the B2B interaction system seems to gain the appropriate focus by marketing scholars considering the recent invitation of the *Industrial Marketing Management* (2010) for a special issue with the title: "Time and process in business network research" focusing on the interactive nature of B2B relationships. According to our review, (see analytically in the Introduction subsection: "originality of the paper – contribution to knowledge") there was a significant literature in information systems regarding Goldkuhl's B.A.T. process in a B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. No study, till now, has offered a new perspective for promotion and sales managers of business transaction between a supplier and a customer based on B.A.T. assumptions, which can directly and implicitly be equated with new assumptions and best practices in terms of an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system advancing sales' representatives productivity. As a result, promotion and sales managers may gain a deeper and sharpened understanding of the impact of a promotion campaign based on personal selling promotion activity. We also believe that this research topic will receive a significant attention in the marketing literature, in the next years.

Theoretical implications

In accordance to the assumptions of Goldkuhl's conceptualization of B.A.T. process, we could summarize some implications of the underlined theory to our proposition for sales' productivity strengthening through the socio instrumental pragmatism view of B2B face-to-face sales interaction system in the promotion field:

- § Goldkuhl's conceptualization on business transaction between supplier and customer can be proven an emerging fundamental concept, with valuable implications in the promotion management literature. It is a conceptualization of high value, which can offer a new interpretation of sales' representatives' productivity through an integrated B2B face-to-face sales interaction system, as a framework of evaluation and analysis for sales and promotion managers.
- § Our extended model can be considered as of high value control tool for analyzing and evaluating two parties' (a seller and a buyer) interaction in a business relationship. The outcome of this analysis can then be used for improvements of interaction and serve as a ground for developing a suitable B2B face-to-face sales interaction system.

Practical implications

Through the extension of Goldkuhl's conceptualization of business transaction between supplier and customer, promotion and sales managers can gain a deeper and sharpened understanding of the impact of B2B face-to-face sales interaction system to sales representatives' productivity. In addition, promotion managers and sales managers may deepen the understanding of what might become important to look at more extensively in future promotion and sales research.

Further research

We would strongly recommend the following, in order to strengthen B2B face-to-face sales interaction system to promotion and sales management through Goldkuhl's BAT process: a) further theoretical examination of our new proposition for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system under the prism of organization's overall marketing planning and b) further investigation of our new proposition for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system strengthening sales' representatives' productivity, examining real-life application of critical case studies of our extended model, as a control tool by promotion and sales managers.

Conclusion

This paper examined the possibility of an extension of Lind's and Goldkuhl's (2005) and Goldkuhl (1998) conceptualization of business transaction (in terms of Business Action Theory, B.A.T.), in order to examine the value of a socio instrumental pragmatism view of communication actions for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Such an approach allowed us to introduce clear propositions for strengthening sales representatives' productivity. First, it attempted to do this by categorizing 42 (forty-two) identified empirical papers of the last decade (2000-2010) into Lind's and Goldkuhl's assumptions for B.A.T. in order to view communication as action. These assumptions were directly and implicitly equated with the assumptions and best practices of B2B face-to-face sales interaction system. Second, the occurrence of each category was presented in three (3) sections; the paper provided some summary points and interpretive claims. Ending, it seems that the extension of Goldkuhl's conceptualization of business transaction can become one of the most promising theories for B2B face-to-face sales interaction system in the promotion management literature.

References

- Alt, R., Grünauer, K. and Reichmayr, C. (2000). "Interaction of electronic commerce and supply chain management? Insights from "The Swatch Group"". *Proceedings of the 33rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences - HICSS*, Vol.6.
- Archer, N. and Yuan, Y. (2000). "Managing business-to-business relationships throughout the e-commerce procurement life cycle". *Internet Research*, Vol.10, No.5, pp.385-395.
- Austin, J. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Axelsson, K., Melin, U. and Goldkuhl, G. (2002). "Understanding B2B interaction – A model to accentuate inter-organisational systems design issues". *Proceedings of the 10th European Conference on Information Systems*, pp. 541-550.
- Baglieri, E., Secchi, R. and Croom, S. (2007). "Exploring the impact of a supplier portal on the buyer-supplier relationship. The case of Ferrari Auto". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.36, No.7, pp.1010-1017.

- Bigne, E., Aldas, J. and Andreu, L. (2008). "B2B services: IT adoption in travel agency supply chains". *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol.22, No.6, pp.454-464.
- Bunduchi, R. (2008). "Trust, power and transaction costs in B2B exchanges — A socio-economic approach". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.37, No.5, pp.610-622.
- Byrnes, T. and Mujtaba, B. (2008). "The value of B2B face-to-face sales interaction in the United States, Canada and Latin America". *International Business & Economics Research Journal*, vol.7, no.3, pp.79-90.
- Cagliano, R., Caniato, F. and Spina, G. (2005). "Reconsidering e-business strategy and the impact on supply chains". *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, Vol.25, No.12, pp.1328-1332.
- Castro-Lacouture, D., Medaglia, A. and Skibniewski, M. (2008). "Supply chain optimization tool for purchasing decisions in B2B construction marketplaces". *Automation in Construction*, Vol.16, No.5, pp.569-575.
- Chakraborty, G., Lala, V. and Warren, D. (2002). "An empirical investigation of antecedents of B2B websites' effectiveness". *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol.16, No.4, pp.51-72.
- Cullen, A. and Webster, M. (2007). "A model of B2B e-commerce, based on connectivity and purpose". *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp.205-225.
- Dan, W. and Song, M. (2009). "Multi-agent systems set for B2B e-commerce systems". *Proceedings of the 2009 International Conference on Management of e-Commerce and e-Government*.
- Deeter-Schmelz, D. and Kennedy, K. (2002). "An exploratory study of the Internet as an industrial communication tool: Examining buyers' perceptions". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.31, No.2, pp.145– 154.
- Denning, P. and Medina-Mora, R. (1995). "Completing the loops". *Interfaces*, Vol.25, No.3, pp.42-57.
- Dietz, J. (1999). "Understanding and modeling business processes with DEMO". *Proceedings of the 18th International Conference on Conceptual Modeling (ER '99)*, pp. 188-202.
- Dietz, J. and Habing, N. (2004). "The notion of business process revisited". In: R. Meersman and Z.Tari, *Proceedings CoopIS 2004*, pp.85-100.
- Dixon, A. and Comer, J. (2002). "Measuring source-risk framing among sales reps". *Proceedings of the 2002 Summer Educators Conference*, pp.327-328.
- Easton, G. (1995). "Methodology and industrial networks". In Kristian Möller and David Wilson (eds.), *Business marketing: An interaction and network perspective*, Kluwer, Boston, pp. 411-492.
- Eid, R., Trueman, M. and Moneim Ahmed, A. (2002). "A cross-industry review of B2B critical success factors". *Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy*, Vol.12, No.2, pp.110-123.
- Ford, D. and Håkansson, H. (2006). "The idea of business interaction". *The IMP Journal*, Vol.1, No.1, pp.4-27.
- Goldkuhl, G. (1996). "Generic business frameworks and action modeling". *Proceedings of the First International Workshop on Communication Modeling, Electronic Workshops in Computing*.
- Goldkuhl, G. (1998). "The six phases of business processes - business communication and the exchange of value". *Proceedings of the twelfth biennial ITS conference*.
- Goldkuhl, G. (2002). "Anchoring scientific abstractions – ontological and linguistic determination following socio-instrumental pragmatism". *Proceedings of the 2002 European Conference on Research Methods in Business and Management (ECRM 2002)*.

- Goldkuhl, G. and Lind, M. (2004). "Developing e-interactions – A framework for business capabilities and exchanges". *Proceedings of the 12th European Conference on Information Systems*.
- Goldkuhl, G. and Lind, M. (2008). "Coordination and transformation in business processes: towards an integrated view". *Business Process Management Journal*, Vol.14, No.6, pp.761-777.
- Gounaris, S. (2005a). "Measuring service quality in B2B Services: An evaluation of the SERVQUAL scale vis-à-vis the INDSERV scale". *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 19, No. 6, pp.421-435.
- Gounaris, S. (2005b). "Trust and commitment influences on customer retention: Insights from B2B services". *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 58, No.2, pp.126-140.
- Gounaris, S. and Venetis, K. (2002). "Antecedents of trust in industrial service relationships and the moderating effect of the duration of the relationship". *Journal of Service Marketing*, Vol.16, No.7, pp.636-655.
- Gummesson, E. and Polese, F. (2009). "B2B is not an island!". *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, Vol.24, No.5, pp.337-350.
- Gurau, C. (2007). "Digital B2B interactions in Romania: An exploratory study of the level of satisfaction of client organisations". *International Journal of Emerging Markets*,
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action 1 - Reason and the rationalization of society*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Halinen, A. and Törnroos, J.-Å. (2005). "Using case methods in the study of contemporary business networks". *Journal of Business Research*, Vol.58, No.9, pp.1285-1297.
- He, W., Tan, P., Goh, C., Lee, S. and Lee, E. (2007). "An investigative approach on improving B2B interactions and communication capabilities for enterprise integration using Web 2.0 technologies". *Proceedings of the 2007 IEEE Conference on Emerging Technologies and Factory Automation*, pp. 330–335.
- Helander, A. and Möller, K. (2007). "System supplier's customer strategy". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.36, No.6, pp.719-730.
- Henneberg, S., Gruber, T., Reppel, A., Ashnai, B. and Naudé, P. (2009). "Complaint management expectations: An online laddering analysis of small versus large firms". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.38, No.6, pp.584–598.
- Honeycutt, E. Jr. (2005). "Technology improves sales performance—doesn't it? An introduction to the special issue on selling and sales technology". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.34, No.4, pp.301-304.
- Ivens, B. and Pardo, C. (2007). "Are key account relationships different? Empirical results on supplier strategies and customer reactions". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.36, No.4, pp.470–482.
- Jalkala, A. and Salminen, R. (2009). "Communicating customer references on industrial companies' web sites". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.38, No.7, pp.825–837.
- Jap, S. (2001). "The strategic role of the salesforce in developing customer satisfaction across the relationship lifecycle". *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol.37, no.2, pp.95-108.
- Johansson, B.-M. and Axelsson, K. (2005). "Analyzing communication media and actions - Extending and evaluating the business action matrix". *Proceedings of the 2005 ECIS* (paper 15).
- Kern, R. and Frederick, G. (1986). "Survey of selling costs: Onward and ever upward". *Sales and Marketing Management*, 3 (February).
- Kethers, S. and Schoop, M. (2000). "Reassessment of the action workflow approach: Empirical results". *Proceedings of the Fifth International Workshop on the Language-Action Perspective on Communication Modelling (LAP 2000)*, pp. 151-169.

- Kim, N., Pae, J., Han, J. and Srivastava, R. (2010). "Utilization of business technologies: Managing relationship-based benefits for buying and supplying firms". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.39, No.3, pp.473–484.
- Lehtinen, E. and Lyytinen, K. (1986). "An action based model of information systems". *Information Systems*, Vol.11, No.4, pp. 299-317.
- Lind, M. (2003). "The diversity of work practices - Challenging the existing notion of business process types". *Proceedings of the 2003 Action in Language, Organisations and Information Systems Conference (ALOIS '03)*,
- Lind, M. and Goldkuhl, G. (2001). "Layered patterns for business interaction". *SIGGROUP Bulletin*, Vol.22, No.2.
- Lind, M. and Goldkuhl, G. (2005). "Designing business process variants". Business Process Design Workshop at the Third International Conference on Business Process Management, Nancy, France.
- Lind, M. and Goldkuhl G. (2006). "How to develop a multi-grounded theory: The evolution of a business process theory". *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*, Vol.13, No.2, pp.69-85.
- Lind, M., Hjalmarsson, A. and Olausson, J. (2003). "Modelling interaction and co-ordination as business communication in a mail-order setting". *Proceedings of the 8th International Working Conference on the Language-Action Perspective on Communication Modelling (LAP 2003)*, pp. 161-186.
- Lindgreen, A., Palmer, R., Vanhamme, J. and Wouters, J. (2006). "A relationship-management assessment tool: Questioning, identifying, and prioritizing critical aspects of customer relationships". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.35, No.1, pp.57 – 71.
- Lynch, J. and De Chernatony, L. (2007). "Winning hearts and minds: Business-to-business branding and the role of the salesperson". *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.23, no.1&2, pp.123-135.
- Madaleno, R., Wilson, H. and Palmer, R. (2007). "Determinants of customer satisfaction in a multi-channel B2B environment". *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, Vol.18, No.8, pp.915-925.
- Marthandan, G. and Tang, C. (2010). "Information technology evaluation: issues and challenges". *Journal of Systems and Information Technology*, Vol.12, Vol.1, pp.37-55.
- Medlin, C. (2004). "Interaction in Business Relationships: A Time Perspective". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 33, No.3, pp.185-193.
- Melin, U. and Axelsson, K. (2004). "Emphasising symmetry issues in business interaction analysis and IOS". *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Electronic Commerce (ICEC'04)*, Vol. 60.
- Narayandas, D., Caravella, M. and Deighton, J. (2002). "The impact of internet exchanges on business-to-business distribution". *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol.30, No.4, pp.500 - 505.
- Nickels, W., McHugh, J. and McHugh, S. (2008). *Understanding Business*, 8th ed.. Boston : McGraw Hill.
- Parente, D., Venkataraman, R., Fizel, J. and Millet, I. (2004). "A conceptual research framework for analyzing online auctions in a B2B environment". *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*, Vol.9, No.4, pp.287-294.
- Penttinen, E. and Palmer, J. (2007). "Improving firm positioning through enhanced offerings and buyer–seller relationships". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.36, No.5, pp.552–564.
- Powell, J. and Swart, J. (2010). "Mapping the values in B2B relationships: A systemic, knowledge-based perspective". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.39, No.3, pp.437–449.

- Reid, D., Bolman Pullins, E. and Plank, R. (2002). "The impact of purchase situation on salesperson communication behaviors in business markets". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.31, No. 3, pp.205– 213.
- Rittgen, P. (2006). "Towards a language for business action theory. Action in language, organisations and information systems". Proceedings of the 4th International Conference (ALOIS 2006).
- Rittgen, P. (2009). "Self-organization of interorganizational process design". *Electronic Markets*, Vol.19, No.4, pp.189-199.
- Rodríguez-Ardura, I., Meseguer, A. and Vilaseca, J. (2008). "Factors influencing the evolution of e-commerce: an empirical analysis in a developed market economy". *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 18-29.
- Ryu, S. and Eyuboglu, N. (2007). "The environment and its impact on satisfaction with supplier performance: An investigation of the mediating effects of control mechanisms from the perspective of the manufacturer in the U.S.A.". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.36, No.4, pp.458–469.
- Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Sharma, A. (2007). "The shift in sales organizations in business-to-business services markets". *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol.21, No.5, pp.326–333.
- Skarp, F. and Gadde, L. (2008). "Problem solving in the upgrading of product offerings – A case study from the steel industry". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.37, No.6, pp.725–737.
- Su, Q., Li, Z. and Chen, S. (2005). "A framework for e-business quality modeling based on process interaction". Proceedings of 2005 International Conference on Services Systems and Services Management (ICSSSM '05), Vol. 1, pp.476-481.
- Sujan, H., Weitz, B.A. and Kumar, N. (1994). "Learning orientation, working smart and effective selling". *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58, No.3, pp.39-52.
- Ticehurst, G. and Veal, A. (2000). *Business research methods: A managerial approach*. Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education.
- Ulaga, W., Sharma, A. and Krishnan, R. (2002). "Plant location and place marketing: understanding the process from the business customer's perspective". *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.31, No.5, pp.393.
- Umapathy, K. and Purao, S. (2007). "A theoretical investigation of the emerging standards for web services". *Information Systems Frontiers*, Vol.9, No.1, pp.119-134.
- Williams, J., Everett, R. and Rogol, E. (2009). "With the human factors of relationship selling survive in the twenty-first century?". *International Journal of Commerce and Management*, Vol.19, No.2, pp.158-175.
- Winograd, T. and Flores, F. (1986). *Understanding computers and cognition: A new foundation for design*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Zallocco, R., Bolman Pullins, E. and Mallin, M. (2009). "A re-examination of B2B sales performance". *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol.24, No.8, pp.598-610.
- Zhang, X. and Wang, H. (2005). "Study on recommender systems for business-to-business electronic commerce". *Communications of the IIMA*, Vol.5, No.4, pp.53-61.