

# A Mediating Role of Adaptive Selling Behavior: Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Sales Performance. Beverage Industry of Pakistan

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of this study is to investigate the mediating role of adaptive sales behavior to improve emotional intelligence and sales performance within the beverage industry. The population of this research comprised of the Beverage Industry of Pakistan. One hundred eighty employees were selected as the sample from the two big beverage companies in Pakistan. For this research, stratified random sampling technique were used. This study uses a cross-sectional and quantitative research design based on survey methods. The questionnaire has three parts and is used for data collection. Smart PLS-3 was used to evaluate the hypothesis of this study. The Results of this study highlighted the significance mediating the role of adaptive selling behavior to enhance emotional intelligence and sales performance. In contrast, emotional intelligence and sales performance have a significant correlation between each other.*

**Keywords:** Adaptive Selling, Emotional Intelligence, Sales Performance, Beverage Industry

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## **Introduction**

At present, marketing is becoming more sophisticated and exceedingly competitive as well as extensively demanding, which requires all the firms to try their best to have possession of numbers of best salespersons. Because it is evident that salespersons are essential in creating understanding between the firm and customers and building in good customer relationships. Good salespersons not only help in improving the generation of the sales but also helps in maintaining the customer relationships that are stronger and more loyal, resulting in causing an increase in the sales performance of the company or the firm (Wisker and Poulis, 2014). The main objective of the study was to assess the mediating role of adaptive sales between EI and sales performance sales staff those who work in the beverage industry. The model was taken from previous research (Zazli, Athanasios, 2015). Ricks (2003) noted that ignoring differences between countries is one of the biggest mistakes companies make. Therefore, this research was conducted in the Pakistani beverage industry. There are many research papers done by different researchers, but not many studies have been received, these studies are important enough to be part of the sales performance literature, because people think that the concept of adaptive sales has become more time. and it has become more critical in recent decades. The idea of adaptive sales is general terms as the amendment in the approaches, procedures, communal techniques, vocal communication, and corporeal look of the salespersons (Wisker and Poulis, 2014). There is considered a necessary change in sales performance, which is based on the circumstances of the sale. In adaptive sales, a tailored presentation is used in order to provide the information

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regarding that product accommodating to the requirements of the customers. In adaptive selling behavior, an appropriate sales strategy is considered necessary to be delineated of the successful sale of the product to the customer (Kaynak *et al.*, 2016). Sales behavior element is termed as a mediator of the relationship among self-efficiency, sales performance and the goal-setting of the sales process and there exists an empathetic connection between the salespersons of the firms and their customers that can be created via adapted selling behavioral process (Yang and Fang, 2004; Altuntas *et al.*, 2017).

## **Literature Review**

### **Sales Performance**

Seller performance is one of the critical factors affecting sales volume, productivity, customer loyalty, and unpredictable expenses. The performance of business personnel is crucial because they have to deal with essential data, products, and clients related to funds, which can be exchanged from one organization to another without any effort (Nazar, Ramzani and, Temoor Anjum, 2018). Therefore, the entrepreneur's inspiration and responsibility towards the organization is the fundamental variable of the long-term achievement of the organization. Knowledge of sales management practices is part of sales organizations, which have been highly effective until then (Anjum, 2018; Anjum *et al.*, 2018). Factors related to the performance of better sales personnel must be recognized to improve sales management or organizational behavior and establish the competitiveness of the company. Such efforts are invaluable in completing benchmarks that can be used to assess the performance of sales personnel in an organization against industry standards (Terho *et al.*, 2017). The seller's ability to think about relationships to create a positive atmosphere can affect sales performance. Sellers who are capable of generating a positive sales atmosphere are likely to improve sales performance, such as sales volume, the value of sales in monetary value created by the number of units sold and the growth of sales (Flaherty and Pappas, 2012; Spillecke and Brettel, 2013; Ferdinand and Wahyuningsih, 2018).

### **Emotional Intelligence and Sales Performance**

Emotional intelligence is essential for success. Several types of research are conducted to analyze the power of Emotional Intelligence. Social and emotional skills are necessary for the salespeople, as they work in a highly social and psychological environment. Their ability to manage socially and emotionally occurring problems can have a great influence on their performance. Emotional intelligence can also enhance a salesperson's performance, allow someone to establish their emotions to deal with stress, and perform well under pressure and can also help someone to adapt to organizational change (Sony and Mekoth, 2016; Ferdinand and Wahyuningsih, 2018). The consequences and failures of the emotional threats that are common in the lives of the salesmen, the salesmen with high emotional intelligence, are very capable of facing these situations (Rao and Sadam, 2019). In the meta-analysis, all three aspects of the study discovered the relationship between EI and job performance beyond cognitive, intellectual, and personality traits. They concluded that "EI represents an important predictor of job performance" (Gottman *et al.*, 2011).

Emotional intelligence can develop personal creativity and therefore help improve people's job performance. Emotional intelligence has the ability to explain people's performance in the workplace better. Its function is to change the attempts within the organization, the effectiveness of management, training and organizational performance. Emotional intelligence can improve the performance of personal work through the quality of social relationships, even if their cognitive skills are low (Mikolajczak *et al.*, 2007). Researchers provide some preliminary evidence: Compared to general intelligence (5.0%) and managerial competencies (6.1%), IE (9.2%) has the most significant contribution to overall performance. If job performance cannot be obtained through cognitive intelligence, job performance can be achieved through EI through a variety of complementary mechanisms (such as interaction with colleagues, supervisors, and support staff) (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2004; Côté, H. and Miners, 2006).

### **Adaptive Selling Behavior and Sales Performance**

The definition of the adaptive sale is being evolved overtime to reflect the philosophy of selling and marketing in the current era. In the '80s, the adaptive selling was defined as: "required persuasive techniques and the selection and use of appropriate methods" (Wisker and Poulis, 2014). The concept of adaptive sales is explained in the following words: Adaptive sales are modifications of sales behavior based on information about the nature of sales that customers perceive

when interacting with customers (Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986). While in today's era, it is defined as: "a complex process that emphasizes customized solutions to fit each buyer" (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan, 1986; Wisker and Poulis, 2014; Eshima and Anderson, 2017).

Managers' focus has always been to achieve rapid growth in sales performance, which is why they value sales staff and adaptive sales, which is considered the most critical aspect of maintaining a unique level of sales performance. Communication between the company and customers requires a group of excellent sales personnel who use the selected application and the sales performance method according to the sales situation and the customer situation; therefore, when determining and measuring sales performance or the sales process, adaptability The concept of sales is considered the most important or critical variable (Altuntas et al., 2017).

In addition, there is a causal relationship between sales performance and the company's sales control system, which is determined by the adaptive behavior of sales and the contribution of sales personnel (Caglio and Ditillo, 2008). At the time when the adaptive selling behavior was considered to be the first sales technique, the sales managers were forced to use the above-said procedure through the available internal and external motivational tools to enhance their firms' sales performance (Asghar, 2019). The adaptive selling behavior as a driver of the sales performance with its foundation on customer-oriented view; furthermore, a positive relationship is found between adaptive selling and the sales performance and the validity of the adaptive sales behavior can be measured through its effects on sales performance because this effect firmly belongs to features of both the salespersons' and situation (Verbeke, Dietz and Verwaal, 2010).

The adaptive sale as it has a positive impact on the needs of the customers and sales performance of a firm and its measurement and, for the salespersons to use the adaptive selling behavior, it is necessary to get the detailed information regarding their customers first (Park et al., 2010; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017). Also, the salesperson must have the knowledge of their competitors and the market or the sales situations as well while adapting the selling approaches and presentations that fit the customer's needs (Hughes, Le Bon, and Rapp, 2013). According to the adaptive selling behavioral model presented by Weitz et al. (1986), the acquisition of the information regarding the customers, competitors and market (which is precisely the information regarding the sales situation), through formal or informal ways, is the chance or the opportunity for the salespersons for adapting to different customers and sales conditions to present their offers most attractively (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan, 1986; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017).

Customers are founded to have favorable attitudes towards the salespersons having adaptive selling behavior as they considered that such salespersons can better comprehend what the customers want and can provide them with tailored solutions to solve their problems (Chena and Jaramillo, 2014; Itani, Agnihotri and Dingus, 2017).

### **Research Question**

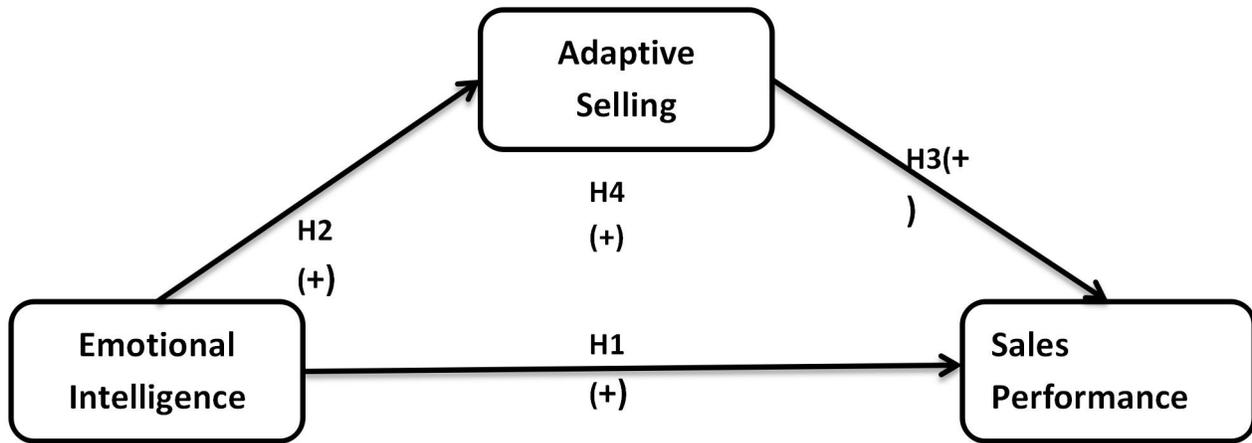
- Do salespeople use emotional intelligence to increase their sales performance?
- How does adaptive selling mediate the role between emotional intelligence and sales performance?

### **Research Objective**

1. To evaluate the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on sales performance in the beverage industry of Pakistan.
2. To evaluate the mediating effects of adaptive selling on the association between EI and sales performance in the beverage industry of Pakistan.

### **Study Framework**

Based on the above literature, the following research model proposed for this study.



**Hypothesis**

To summarize the above discussion and on the support of the study framework, we have proposed the following hypothesis:

- H01. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and sale performance.
- H02. There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and adaptive selling behavior.
- H03. There is a positive relationship between adaptive selling behavior and sale performance.
- H04. Adaptive selling behavior plays a positive mediating effect on the relationship between sales performance and emotional intelligence.

**Research Methodology**

In this section, the method used in this study will be clearly explained. For the constructs of the study, emotional intelligence is used as an independent variable and sale performance as a dependent while adaptive selling behavior as mediator. For research purposes, quantitative methods have been used. This study used a questionnaire to collect raw data. The questionnaire was designed to extract information on the role of the salespeople in sales performance. The research uses survey methods, and 180 questionnaires were distributed to employees in soft drink companies in Pakistan. Their job function is generally characterized by a high degree of interaction with clients. Smart PLS-SEM-3 was used for measurements and structural models to evaluate the hypothesis of this study.

**Demographic Traits**

Below given graphs are the representation of the demographic traits of the respondents, which will provide us with a real idea of who they were and their positions. As the above graphical representation shown that 83% of the respondents that considered for this research study are male and 17% of them are female out of which 3.3% of the respondents belong to the age group of 20-25 years, 12.8%, 35%, 32.8%, and 16.1% belong to the age group of 26-30 years, 31-35 years, 36-40 years and above 41 years of age respectively. The graphical representation also explains the educational traits or levels with which the respondents belong. As shown in the graph, 8.9%, 37.8%, and 53.3%, that of the respondent's diploma and bachelor degree holders and post-graduated, respectively. Professional traits as 1.1% are a national sales manager, and other respondents are 10.6%, 26.1%, and 62.2% of regional sales manager, sales team leader, and sales executives by profession.

GENDER					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	MALE	150	83.3	83.3	83.3

	FEMALE	30	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

AGE					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-25	6	3.3	3.3	3.3
	26-30	23	12.8	12.8	16.1
	31-35	63	35.0	35.0	51.1
	36-40	59	32.8	32.8	83.9
	41 AND ABOVE	29	16.1	16.1	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

EDUCATION					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DEPLOMA	16	8.9	8.9	8.9
	BECHOLAR DEGREE	68	37.8	37.8	46.7
	POST GRADUATE	96	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

DESIGNATION					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NATIONAL SALES MANAGER	2	1.1	1.1	1.1
	REGIONAL SALES MANAGER	19	10.6	10.6	11.7
	SALES TEAM LEADER	47	26.1	26.1	37.8
	SALES EXECUTIVE	112	62.2	62.2	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

### Data Analysis and Findings

#### Descriptive Statistics

Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation
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Emotional Intelligence	5.06	1.09
Adaptive Selling Behavior	4.94	1.31
Sales Performance	5.25	1.13

The descriptive analysis used to investigate the average value of the measurement scale of the study. In this study, seven (7) points likert scale was used to determine the response of the participants. Hence, 3.5 are suggested to the average value of the scale. In this study, all the variables indicate the mean value more than cut score 3.5; it indicates that all the variables are moderate. The findings are shown in the above table.

### Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was assessed to evaluate the coefficient value, loading, and Mean value of the indicators and variables of the research. It was assessed by computing Smart PLS-3. Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009) and Hair Jr *et al.*, (2017) recommended the coefficient 0.7 or more and Mean 0.5 or higher, Chin (1998) loading 0.6 or above are acceptable values(Chin, 1998; Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009b; Hair Jr *et al.*, 2017).

### Internal Consistency

Constructs	Indicators	Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE
Emotional Intelligence	EI1	.712	.713	.632
	EI2	.743		
	EI3	.690		
	EI4	.782		
	EI5	.831		
	EI6	.709		
Adaptive Selling Behaviour	ASB1	.773	.748	.698
	ASB2	.768		
	ASB3	.698		
	ASB4	.798		
Sales Performance	SP1	.809	.789	.659
	SP2	.754		
	SP3	.742		
	SP4	.769		
	SP5	.718		

Additionally, for evaluating the discriminant validity Fornell and Larcker criterion were conducted. It proposed the highest value of the constructs should be greater than all the values of other variables(Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009a; Hair Jr *et al.*, 2017).

Table : Fornell and Larcker's Assessment

Constructs	Emotional	Adaptive	Selling	Sales
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	Intelligence	Behavior	Performance
Emotional Intelligence	<b>.794</b>		
Adaptive Selling Behavior	.479	<b>.835</b>	
Sales Performance	.561	.492	<b>.812</b>

### Structural Model Assessment

The structure model assessment is used to evaluate the relationship among the latent constructs and check the strength of the conceptual model. For this concern, the direct (path coefficient) and mediating (specific indirect) effect was investigated between the constructs. T-value should be higher than 1.69 and p-value that should be less than .05 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics, 2009b; Hair Jr *et al.*, 2017)

### Path Coefficients

	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	T	P	Decision
H1	There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and sale performance.	0.35	3.33	.02*	Accepted
H2	There is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and adaptive selling behavior.	0.23	3.90	.01*	Accepted
H3	There is a positive relationship between adaptive selling behavior and sale performance.	0.60	4.10	.02*	Accepted

Specific indirect effect (Mediating effect)

	Hypothesis	Beta	T	P	Decision
H4	Adaptive selling behavior plays a positive mediating effect on the relationship between sales performance and emotional intelligence.	0.21	4.12	.02*	Accepted

### Coefficients of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

The examination of the (R<sup>2</sup>), the endogenous latent variables grounded on the threshold of acceptable values of R<sup>2</sup>, is 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 indicated weak, moderate, and strong, respectively (Chin, 1998; Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009a).

Table : Coefficients of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	Range
Sales Performance	.41	Moderate

### Effect Size (f<sup>2</sup>)

Where *R<sub>included</sub>*<sup>2</sup> is the R<sup>2</sup> value of the endogenous construct when a specific exogenous variable is included, and *R<sub>excluded</sub>*<sup>2</sup> is the value of such endogenous variable when that particular exogenous variable was omitted from the model. Therefore, f<sup>2</sup> values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are proposed as weak, moderate, and energetic effects (Cohen, 1988; Hair *et al.*, 2014).

Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

Endogenous	Exogenous	$f^2$	Effect size
Sales Performance	Emotional Intelligence	.41	Strong
	Adaptive Selling Behavior	.23	Moderate

### Predictive Relevance Value ( $Q^2$ )

Used by the Stone-Geisser criterion to manage the  $Q^2$  value blindfolded to assess the strength of the model;  $Q^2$  value must be  $> 0$  (Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics, 2009a; Hair *et al.*, 2014).

### Predictive Relevance Value ( $Q^2$ )

Total	SSO	SSE	1-SSE/SSO
EI	563	359.31	.381

### Conclusion

This study aims to examine the factors that affect sales performance. The results show that there is a positive correlation between EI and sales performance. In addition, adaptive sales behavior plays a significant intermediate role between EI and sales performance. This finding demonstrates that the adaptive sales behavior has a significant positive impact, thereby strengthening the theoretical relationship between EI and sales performance. The results also show that EI can improve people's understanding of sales skills and abilities, and thus have a positive impact on sales performance. These findings are consistent with previous recommendations that "trusted sellers will be more willing to adapt and try different methods than less confident sellers" (Ahearne, Bhattacharya and Gruen, 2005).

In this study, only two beverage companies were selected to collect data. Therefore, this study does not cover all the beverage industries in Pakistan. The data was obtained from a small number of sales team that working in the beverage industry of Pakistan. In the data collection year, the summary of results may be limited to this group of providers. Therefore, future studies that collect data from a large number of supplier samples are needed to determine a broader range of results. In addition, future research will need to compare the role of EI in different region or countries to make the degree of cultural differences more obvious.

### Practical Contribution

This study also provides practical assistance for other companies that aim to increase their sales force capabilities to be more effective in cross-cultural sales tasks. Considering that fierce global competition requires the company to have a sales team with cultural heritage to support the development of international companies, training program has to design to improve emotional intelligence, which can generate significant benefits for organizations of sales seeking to improve their competitiveness in the market. Thus improving its competitiveness in the market and opportunity to achieve organizational objectives.

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