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A Review Towards a Conceptual Model on Transactional Oriented Selling In High Involvement Purchases: Gem And Jewellery Industry in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this review paper is to analyze the repercussion of transactional oriented selling in high involvement purchase situation pertaining to Sri Lanka gem and jewelry industry (SLGJ hereafter). A conceptual framework concerning the characteristics of transactional selling and the effect of these characteristics on high involvement purchase in relation to current stance of selling were developed. The characteristics of professional selling needed in a revamped stance of selling were constructed. The current stance of selling is based on right set of circumstance theory of selling (situation-response theory), which incorporates the scrutinization of typology of communication, mode of handling objections and motivational factors relating to sales people's behavior. The relationship between the current stance of selling and sales people's behavior entails communication foci: rational influence, emotional influence, coercive influence and relational influence tactics, handling objections: creating strife, offsetting the objection, clarifying the objection, using miscellaneous objections and motivational factors: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The theoretical foundation of the revamped stance is the buying formula theory, which inquires the required nature of selling to raise the level of high involvement purchase situation. The revamped stance is in relation with possible approaches and of responsible industry best practices with execution of professional selling with a focus on customer orientation. The integration of characteristics of transactional selling in high involvement purchase situation in line with the situation-response theory with possible approaches and execution of industry best practices in accordance with buying formula theory leads to developing a conceptual model which underpins the current rippling of transactional oriented selling in SLGJ to practice and execute the industry best practices required to revamp and raise the selling standards of SLGJ industry. Authors adopted a systematic review of literature based on a deductive research approach in compiling this paper. A summarized version of discussion was developed towards the end together with the propositions to be considered in future research and the implications for practitioners.

Keywords: *Buying Formula Theory, High Involvement Purchasing, Professional Selling, Situation Response Theory, Sri Lankan Gem and Jewelry Industry, Transactional Selling*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of gem and jewellery (GJ) industry, Sri Lanka has been maintaining its reputation for GJ from ancient times, and from all over the world tourists found Sri Lanka a reputable destination for their GJ purchases (Export Development Board, Sri Lanka, 2022; Ariyaratne, 2013). Basically, the people involved in the SLGJ industry belong to the small and medium entrepreneurs' (SME) category with a number of millionaires as well. The retail sector of the SLGJ industry is handled by the private sector (Nayeem, 2016; Ariyaratna, 2013; Ekanayake & Abeysinghe , 2010) and as a result the GJ retail business of the SLGJ industry is existing as an unorganized retail business merely based on making profit which lacks intergrated framework (Nayeem, 2016). In fact this trade involves people as salespeople, (Nayeem, 2016) those who do not have a chance to be accepted by so many other sectors. In this background, salespeople's pay has been an extrinsic incentive or as sales commision based for decades, which has been the part of the SLGJ business culture.

An extrinsic motivation orientation suggests that people will expect external rewards to be attached to the tasks at hand (Mallin, et al., 2022) and activities motivated by extrinsic motivation can be explained by their sense of value-activities are perceived worthwhile. External motivation drives activities that are instrumental and extrinsically motivated salespeople expect that their efforts will be reflected in their performance and in exchange, rewards will be provided which they value (Mallin, et al., 2022). As per previous researchers that compensation seeking salespeople are more likely to expend higher efforts and as a result recognize higher sales performance and monetary rewards. Many research illustrate the undesired consequences that extrinsic incentives can have on salespeople and their activities, as well on customer and company results because they sell for and depend on, as money becomes the primary basis (Zoltners, et al., 2012). Extrinsic incentives encourage salespeople to engage in unethical and even illegal behaviours such as charging customers unnecessarily, somehow or other to sell the product, undercut other competitors and practice discount selling or price cutting stratergies (Zoltners, et al., 2012). Further Zoltners, et al., (2012) revealed, the undesired cosequenses that excesseive focus on extrinsic intensives could create within the sales force such as: salespeople with low organizational and industrial commitment, high sales force overturn, lack of teamwork, self-serving culture, less professional competence, hiring for experience rather than for talent, unethical behaviour, non-customer oriented behaviour, self-serving behaviour, salespeople woking hard not smart, avoidence of important nonselling tasks. Also Zoltners, et al., (2012) elucidated customer results as: customers buying solutions that do not meet their long-term needs, low customer trust and satisfaction, low customer loyalty and high customer churns. The researchers interpret company results as:low sales and profits, loss of market share, missed financial goals, unsustainable business model and lawsuits.

The SLGJ industry deal with a homogenous product and with so many SMEs, there is a dogged propensity among them to undercut the competitors and to practice discount selling or price cutting stratergy (Nayeem, 2016). Klarmann & Wouters, (2022) explicated that discount communication in selling as the extent to which the sales person communicates information about the low sales price. The salesperson provides both quantitative and qualitative information about the purchase price and related conditions of the offering, emphasizing how the purchase price is favorable to other offerings.

As per Collet, et al., (2013) corruption is a big problem in the GJ industry, representing an obstacle for regulation. Gemstones pass borders through smuggling and are declared as originating in a different country. Smuggled gemstones are sometimes represented as originating from the country they are smuggled to, especially if that country is a prestigious producer of colored stones. Sapphires from Africa are often smuggled to Sri Lanka where they are sold as local "Ceylon sapphires" instead. African sapphires are often much cheaper, so re-designating them as "Ceylon sapphires" can turn a good profit (Anon., n.d.). Smuggling to Sri Lanka is reportedly particularly common for Madagascan gemstones. According to The Guardian newspaper, "about 70% of Madagascar's sapphire market is controlled by Sri Lankans, who smuggle the gems back to Sri Lanka to be cut and exported for sale as Ceylon gems or they are mixed with Ceylon gems in parcels. And their underlying cause may be more about systemic export difficulties than traders' desire to avoid taxes (Anon., n.d.). The report of Collet, et al., (2013) confirmed that the industry is mostly concerned with smuggling and fraud. Further, Hunter & Lawson (2020) in their research report divulgeed that it is worth noting that the lack of trade data and low numbers provided by Sri Lanka are in point of fact concerning. From 2014 to 2018, Sri Lanka recorded coloured gem-stone imports only from Madagascar in 2016, valued at US$1070. In contrast, during that same time period Sri Lanka reported exporting (including sales to foreign tourists) from US$86 million to US$153 million each year. While Sri Lanka is a gemstone producer, the reporting gaps and discrepancies in trade figures raise ared flag. In Thailand, Sri lankan sapphire traders are heavily represented in the coloured-gemstone trade but operate in secret. Sri Lankan traders take sapphire rough from Madagascar to Sri Lanka, where it is cut and polished and treated as Sri Lankan gemstone or it is taken to Bangkok where it is sold or exchanged for other coloured gemstones (Hunter & Lawson, 2020). Moreover, Cross et al. (2010) disclosed in their research report that there are, however, sources indicating that the coloured gemstone trade can be linked to support terrorism and suppression in a number of countries including Tanzania, Ethiopia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Pakistan while the specific locations and global networks may differ the social and political issues remain very much the same.

Moreover, Hunter, et al. (2021) conferred about the most coloured gemstonesare smuggled out of Mozambique through Malawi and Tanzania or directly from the airports in Nampula and Pemba to international transit and processing hubs in Thailand and Sri Lanka. It is reported that the VIP lounges in Nampula and Pemba airports are used to smuggle coloured gemstones. In Malawi, stones are smuggled out through Lilongwe, Kamuzu International Airport, which is a major conduit for gemstone smuggling. West african, Sri Lankan and Indian nationals can be found at the airport arranging shipments. Thai and Sri Lankan buyers are reported to be the most prominent coloured gemstone smugglers, accounting for much of the ruby trade. Sri Lanka is a primary destination for African gemstones and in 2019, gemstone exports peaked at US$150 million. This figure is thought to understate the true value of the sector (Hunter, et al., 2021). Therefore, SLGJ industry requires a shift in its selling approaches and need to revamp it to cater into the progressive and ethical global market place. So that, authors aim to describe how the selling does take place in a high involvement purchase situation in SLGJ industry and the required revamped stance for the industry in this paper.

2. MOTIVATION AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Ethics are everyone's business, according to the Ethical Trade Procedures Foundation. It takes a team effort including individuals from all areas of the company to integrate "doing the right thing" into the culture. Ethical trade practices are about making choices and acting in ways that create sustainable businesses, transparent business activities, take into account the demands of all stakeholders, and uphold one's moral and legal obligations business practices, decisions, and situations that deal with right and wrong (Rana & Kurien, 2023).

'Fair Trade', is an arrangement designed to help producers in developing countries achieve sustainable and equitable trade relationships. The Export Development Board of Sri Lanka (EDB), the Department of Commerce, the Fairtrade Network of Asia and Pacific Producers of Sri Lanka (FNSL), and the Fairtrade Network of Asia and Pacific Producers (NAPP), are currently in the process of signing the said Framework of cooperation for an advocacy project, in collaboration with the Fair-Trade Advocacy Office in Belgium. Thus, it is mandatory for SLGJ industry to follow 'fair trade' parctices (Anon., 2023) .

The esteemed Gübelin Gem Lab convinced that provable transparency and traceability empower trust, sustainability and fairness in the entire GJ industry and that consumers have a well-founded interest to learn more on the story behind the jewelry they desire. In this vision, all stakeholders should have the possibility to join the path of transparency (Anon., n.d.)

Due to a combination of reasons, the SLGJ industry lacks of prudent busines practices, which link up together to have a catastropic consequences on the trade with so many SMEs on the danger of dissapearing (Nayeem, 2016). With the slowdown in sales and tighting of margins and collections, the industry has already started to acquaintance with bad debts and bankrupcies in an unmatched scale (Nayeem, 2016). As per Nayeem, (2016) it is imparative that SLGJ industry stakeholders cleary understand the global dynamics and adopt a paradigm shift in business practices. To mitigate the collateral damage and to enable sustainable business practices the industry should the instill and formulate industry best practices. Further, knowledge sharing forums and educational programmes are essential for the industry to focus it's trade on its responsible business practises.

Hence that being the case Sri Lankan gem and jewellery industry needs more and more research in relevance to its sales practices to see how ethical and fair the selling is. Also the reviews and comments that are published on social nedia should be considered, because most of the foreign tourists express their unpleasent experience via social media, which is quite frequent. Also there is a paucity of research in the Sri Lankan context how the gem and jewellery shops carry out their pricing with the registration of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and how far the shops have been monited by the National Gem & Jewellery Authority and SLTDA, for their ethical and fair trade behaviour towards the foreign customers.

Furthermore, when it reaches the academia still there is a significant paucity in the research field of sales and marketing of gems and jewellery in Sri Lanka.

Worldwide GJ are known as luxury goods of high value nature. In marketing and selling of GJ direct interaction with the buyers, the face-to-face selling or personal selling (Kana, 2020), is carried out. In this core process the retail sales personnel do play a significant role in the organizational performance and hence the business and industry (George & Venkatapathy, 2016). Hence it is important to substitute the policies and game plans in sales management to attract more and more international GJ consumers in branding the Island as the "Hub of Gem and Jewelry in Asia" as per the effort of the Sri Lankan government (Anon., 2023).

Thus, the research tries to revamp the stance of selling in the SLGJ industry in conducting the study and by bringing the industry people to the know that the industry should elevated to a level where industry best practices are encouraged to follow, for the industry to become ethical, customer centric selling technologies affiliated with trust and transparency. If so the country as a whole, could raise the reputation as a responsible GJ dealer in the global market place to establish its pathway toward the 'hub of gem and jewelry in Asia'.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research paper has been conducted as a systematic literature review analyzing the effects of transactional oriented selling in high involvement purchase situation in SLGJ industry, in order to construct a conceptual model by following the deductive research approach (Trochim W. M., 2006) . In order to achieve the predetermined review aim, an archival research method was applied. The archival research method facilitates the researchers to collocate a reliable knowledge base in this research area. This review finds a use for publications from the relevant text books, cited works, journal articles, websites and other research materials to effectuate the aim of the research paper. The main databases such as Sage, Academia.edu, Taylor and Francis Online, Springer Link, Science Direct, JSTOR, Wiley Online Library, Research Gate and Emerald were utilized for the purpose of reviewing (Arulrajah, 2016). Transfield

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et al.,(2003) specify a systematic review of literature produce evidence-informed contents in management research. In considering the aim of this research methodology proposed by Transfield et al., (2003) is evaluated as the most appropriate. Therefore the review on archival method was performed with three stages. The three stages are: planning the review, conducting the review and reporting and dissemination. (Arulrajah, 2016; Maheepala, et al., 2016; Transfield , et al., 2003).

3.1. The Process of Conducting the Review

Based on the study of Transfield *et al*., (2003) and the justifications provided by (Delbufalo (2012) and Irani (2006) this research follows a systematic literature review consisting of three stages as aforementioned:

Stage I - Planning the review process:

The first stage of review process is to plan the process. This point the objectives are developed. In this research the objectives are to:

- Understand the dimensions along the extent in which the sales force behaviour in relation to high involvement purchase situations in SLGJ industry
- Identify the theoretical emphasis, which underlie the sales force behaviour in high involvement purchase situations in SLGJ industry
- Understand the conducive conditions suggested by literature for revamping the selling situation in SLGJ industry.

Once the objectives are defined, a research protocol for the review is developed. The research protocol involves identifying the domain and proper conditions for the review. As the literature review focuses on exploring the sales force behaviour in high involvement purchase situation in relation to SLGJ industry and understanding the conducive conditions suggested by literature for revamping the selling situation in

SLGJ industry, it is necessary to consider both conceptual and empirical domains for the research study. The suitable conditions are determined in this study are:

The research was conducted by searching on Sage, Academia.edu, Taylor and Francis Online, Springer Link, Science Direct, JSTOR, Wiley Online Library, Research Gate and Emerald databases. Other document types consisted of the relevant text books, cited works, journal articles, websites, conference proceedings and other research materials. All the materials selected were published in English. Material acceptability was confirmed by selecting the materials that contained sales force behaviour in high involvement purchase situation as a key phrase throughout the review. Final substantive applicable materials were confirmed by reading with regard to their alignment with the objectives of the review.

Stage II - Conducting the review process:

In line with Transfield *et al*., (2003), Irani (2006) and Delbufalo (2012) the review process was conducted and key words were entered to the data bases. The keywords were sales force behaviour, high involvement purchase, and SLGJ industry. Also, with other review materials the same key words were applied. The selected material was further scanned to search for conceptual and empirical evidence through the criteria highlighted under the protocol.

Stage III – Reporting and dissemination of the overall research results:

The objectives of the review were kept in the mind while conducting the review. These objectives were supposed to contribute to the primary objective of the research study that is to develop a conceptual model which would facilitate transactional selling in high involvement purchase situation. The literature review was expected to support the operationalization of the variables. The results of stage III of the literature review are presented as results, under the heading of “Literature Review” in line with the objectives of the review.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. Level of Involvement in Purchase of Gems and Jewelry

Consumer involvement is considered as an important variable that can help to explain how consumers process the information and how this information might influence their purchase or consumption related behavior. The degree of involvement has a very significant effect on consumer behavior (Jain, 2019). Level of involvement can effect on information process, decision making and reaction to advertising (Ghafelehbashi, et al., 2011). While there is no precise definition of involvement in marketing, there is a common view that involvement is a personal level and internal variable that refer to personal dependency and purposes (Ghafelehbashi, et al., 2011). A product is considered highly involving (HI) when consumers make careful relevant consideration and purchase decision when selecting HI product. Such HI products are commonly associated with economic and social risk, emotionally appealing and functional evident as well as for retailing service landscape. This is particularly true in event of non-essential luxury product such as GJ (Jee, 2018).

When purchasing GJ, consumers tend to spend more time and effort in choosing and comparing (Jee, 2018) because by distinction HI products carry a high risk to consumers if they fail, or have high–value tags. Goods such as GJ aren't purchased often and consumers do not have routine response behavior in purchasing such HI merchandise. Instead consumers get engaged in extended problem solving, where they pay plenty of time comparing the options of the merchandise, prices and warranties, so forth (Jain, 2019).

4.2. Salesperson's Communication in High Involvement Luxury Selling

Luxury firms heavily depend on the sale strategies and on sales people's behaviour owing to the prevalence of personal selling and 63% of all luxury purchases are conducted in physical stores involving sales people (Alavi, et al., 2021).

Face-to-face sales promotion activities (personal selling) are personal presentations carried out by the sales force to make sales and build relationships with customers. Face-to-face selling is a direct interaction between one or more potential buyers in order to make presentations, answer questions and take orders. Personal selling (Agayapong, et al., 2016) consists of personal interactions with customers and prospects to make sales and maintain relationships with customers (Kana, Face toFace Selling and Sales Promotions have a Positive Effect on Gold Jewellery Purchasing Decisions, 2020).

Purchaing luxuries is a fundementally different psychological experience for customers compared to purchasing other products because luxury goods provide emotional value (Kana, Face toFace Selling and Sales Promotions have a Positive Effect on Gold Jewellery Purchasing Decisions, 2020) to consumers and consumer’s perception of a luxury product is dominated by a hedonic focus. Hence the sales people should adopt their communication when selling a product that constitutes a luxury for a customer (Alavi, et al., 2021). Futher Alavi, et al., (2021) focused on one of the most basic, while crucial, typologies of a sales person communication, that is informative sales person’s communication. As per Alavi, et al., (2021) informative salesperson communication provides justification for the consumer’s purchase decision, and there by improve consumer’s value perceptions of a product and purchase intentions. Further these researchers reveal that informative sales person comunication is particularly effective for hedonic and relatively high price level products perceived as luxurious. As cited by Mcfarland, Challagalla and Shervani, Alavi, et al., (2021) make understand that informative sales person communication as the extent to which sales people provide consumers knowledge about product attributes and convey product- related information with the goal of positively influencing customer’s perceptions about the benefits of the sales person’s offerings.Importantly, pure informative sales person communication only comprises educating consumers about product attributes and does not include extering pressure or making specific specific recommendations to consumers. One goal of informative communication is to shape consumer’s perceived value, defined as to total level of benefits associated with a specific product.Thereby when consumers perceive a higher degree of luxury, informative salesperson communication is more instrumental in increasing a consumer's perceived value (Alavi, et al., 2021).

According to previous researchers, informative salesperson communication is particularly conducive to justify the purchase decision, because arguments conveyed through informative communication tend to be concrete, quantifiable and evaluable, which might allow consumers to more effectively rationalize their purchase. In addition informative communication exhibits little focus on indulgence-related aspects of the product. Hence consumers may develop a more positive view of the value of the product under consideration (Alavi, et al., 2021).

4.3. Consumer's Decision Making Under High Involvement Situations

HI decisions are made after careful consideration and lots of thoughts. There are three important characteristics of HI buying decisions : they are risky,they are complex and they are expensive (Jain, 2019). The risk of faliure is always high in the case of HI decisions. Such decisions are complex and routine response behavior cannot be expected in such decisions. Consumers would do their research, evaluation and comparison of prices before they make the final purchase of GJ. Quality becomes an importanr major factor in HI decisions (Jain, 2019).

Nayeem & IpSooching (2022) claimed that he decisions made with HI product such as GJ are closely tied to the consumer's ego and self-image. Also they may include financial risk (highly priced items), social risk (products that are important to the peer group), or psychological risk (the wrong decision may cause the consumer some concern and anxiety). In making these decisions, consumers generally feel it is worth the time and energy needed to do research and consider solution alternatives carefully. In the case of HI product GJ purchase consumers gather extensive information from multiple sources, eveluate many alternatives and invents substantial efforts in making the best decision (Nayeem & IpSooching, 2022). This effort of researching in HI purchase is called as extended problem solving (Jain, 2019). If a HI purchase fails, it may give birth to a lot of anxiety. The anxiety felt by the consumer by making a wrong purchase decision is called post purchase dissonance (Nayeem & IpSooching, 2022). Personal selling becomes a important method of customer engagement and persuasion in case of HI products because companies use their sales people to convince their customers and consumers about the superiority of their product's features (Jain, 2019).

4.4. Transactional Selling or Traditional Selling Method

The growing competetion in the business scenario, and cut throat marketing in the modern market, has been generating opportunities for the producers who in turn start using emotions as their tool of winning a sale. On the other hand increased purchasing power of customers has attracted the attention of marketers towards selling techniques. Thus it is said that marketing and sales should work hand in hand simultaneously. Basically marketing is everything we do reach and persuade prospects and sales process is everything that we do to close the sale and a signed agreement or contract. And for succesful business both are necessary (Srivastava, et al., 2014). In reviewing previous literature, the well-known 'Marketing Mix'continues as the main concepet offered by the managerial school as an instrument for understanding how transactions are created under value perception (Hultman & Shaw, 2003).

Under value perception, sales efforts has been characterized by one-way communication within the customer exchange with an emphasis on tactical goals and objectives tied to stimulate customer needs rather than satisfying them. These transactional mind-sets were reinforced with product-centric focus within the organization and control systems that focused and rewarded unilateral short-term traditional light of "generating revenue" (Hughes & Ogilvie, 2020).

Some marketers have positioned their products with the price stratergy and the goal is to earn a small profit margin on a large sales volume. The sales people those who practice this traditional method are empowered to use various low-price stratergies such as quantity discounts, trade discounts, seasonal discounts and promotional discounts and also to match the price of any competitor. Transactional selling (TS) is a sales process that matches the needs of the buyer who is primarily interested in price (Manning & Reece, 2007).

TS is a traditional sales process that most effectively matches the needs of the value-conscious buyer who is primarily interested in price and convenience.Because the tranaction-based buyer tends to focus primarily on low price, some marketers adopt lower-cost selling channels. These low cost salling channels include telesales, direct mail, and Internet. This approach of selling is usually used by marketers who do not see the need to spend very much his approach of selling time on customer need and assessment, problem solving, relationship building or sales follow up. It is an unattractive selling in situations involving products with HI, which have relatively long and complex decision making process (Manning & Reece, 2007).

4.5. Consultative Selling

The approach of consultative selling (CS) emphasizes need identification, which is achieved through effective communication between the sales person and the customer, The sales person establishes two- way communication by asking appropriate questions and listening carefully to the customer’s responses. The sales person assumes the role of consultant and offers well-considered recommendations.Sales person will be negociating and sets the stage for a long-term partnership. Salespeople who have adopted consultative selling possess a keen ability to listen, define the customer’s problems and offer one or more solutions (Hughes & Ogilvie, 2020)

The consultative sales person (CSP) follows customer centered stratergies.The customer is treated as a person to be served, not a prospect to be sold. The sales person believes that his/her function is to help the customer to make an intelligent decision. They work on the four step process of, need discovery, selection of the product, a need-satisfaction presentation and servicing the sale. The CSP does not try to overpower the customer with a high-pressure sales presentation. But the needs of the customer are identified through two-way communication. The CSP ask questions in an attempt to learn as much as possible about the customer's needs. CS emphasizes on information giving, problem solving and negociation instead of manipulation. The approach of CS leads to a more trusting relationship between buyer and seller. It helps the customer to make informed and intelligent buying decision, that adds value to the sales process. CS emphaszies service after the sale. The buyer-seller relationship intensifies because the customer has higher expectations after the sale (Manning & Reece, 2007). Through this CS lens, value creation unfolds between actors within the exchange in complex and dynamic systems of value creation (Hughes & Ogilvie, 2020) offering insights and seeking solutions for the customer and providing a constant and consistently intertwined service and sales interface at the point of the customer exchange (Hughes & Ogilvie, 2020).

Salespeople who follow CS, are no longer sell just "product"; instead they provide valuable "solution" to customer problems (Rapp, Agnihortri, & Forbes, 2013). Further citing Anderson and Dubinsky, Rapp, et al. (2013) discussed the concept of consultative selling, where a salesperson acts as an expert and provides customized solutions as a customer-focused sales person and consultative selling agent (Hughes & Ogilvie, 2020). This role involves salespeople developing a technological orientation to access, analyze and communicate information in order to establish a strong relationship with customers. CSP answers the queries of the customers effectively to provide competent solutions (Rapp, Agnihortri, & Forbes, 2013).

CSP have greater needs to understand customers' businesses, craft solutions that fit customer needs, orchestrate between supplier and customer stakeholders, and maintain a continuous relationship with customers (Salonen, et al., 2021). CS stratergy sets the stage for a value-added form of selling that is more structured, more focused and more efficient resulting more time allocation, more precious problem solving and provides a greater chance to create a match between the product and the customer's needs (Manning & Reece, 2007). The CS sales people acts as business consultants.They professionally provide information to customers to take intelligent actions to achieve their objectives. In this type of CS the sales person plays the role

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of a consultant who assists the buyer in identifying customer needs and then suggesting products that satisfy those needs. CS is about finding the prospect's needs and gaining a greater understanding of those needs. The sales professional is a valued advisor and a problem solver rather than persuader or someone merely promoting a particular product. During this process of developing the customer stratergy the salesperson needs to ensure that the customer feels satisfied with whole purchase experience (Suomola, et al., 2012) because the stratergy is based on the fact that success in CS depends on the salesperson's ability to learn as much as possible about the prospect. This issue involves a collection and analysis of specific information on each customer. In building the customer stratergy the salesperson should develop a broad understanding of buying behavious, discover individual customer needs and build a strong prospect base (Manning & Reece, 2007).

In this process of CSP needs to develop a product strategy, because products and services represent problem solving tools. Developing a product strategy helps salespeople to make correct decisions concerning the selection and positioning of products to meet already identified customer needs. The three keys for the development of the product stratergy are: become a product expert, sell benefits and configure value added solutions (Manning & Reece, 2007).

A well conceived product strategy requires product positioning,which refers to the decisions, activities and communications that are establish and maintain a product concept in customer's mind to meet the need of the customer. Meeting the customer's needs and adding value to their daily life increases the likelihood of a repeat purchase and customer loyalty. When a mutually beneficial result has been achieved, the act of closing a deal can be anticlimactic: it does not necessarily require a specific technique if the customer has already received value in the previous phases of the selling process (Suomola, et al., 2012; Manning & Reece, 2007).

Success of CS depends heavily on salesperson's ability to develop, manage and enhance intererpersonal relations with the customer and in this respect CSP acknowledge that the process is about building a business relationship that may later result in a repurchase (Suomola, et al., 2012). A relationship stratergy is a well-thought-out plan for establishing, building, and maintaining quality relationships. Planning a relationship stratergy is essential for success in marketplace, because customer loyalty depends on quality relationships as well as quality products.In CS the relationship stratergy encompasses every aspect of selling from the first contact with a prospect to servicing the sale once this prospect becomes an established customer. The primary goal of relationship stratergy is to create rapport, trust and mutual respect, which ensures a long-term partnership. Therefore, CS focuses on ensuring that the newly founded relationship with the customer will continue after the customer walks out of the store (Suomola, et al., 2012). To establish this type of relationship CSP adopt a win-win philosophy; that is if the customer wins, I win; that projects a professional image and mintain high ethical standards (Salonen, et al., 2021; Suomola, et al., 2012; Manning & Reece, 2007).

4.6. Nature of selling required in SLGJ industry to revamp the level of selling in HI situation

GJ being the paramount luxury product of Sri Lanka , the country spearheads its efforts to solidify its place as a key source market for gemstones and jewellery and to become the industry hub in Asia (Group, 2015). Further the Aaos Group (2015) confirmed that Sri lanka will have to dig deep to win back its status as an industry hub.

The tourism industry brings new opportunities for the GJ industry as large numbers of tourists show a keen interest in purchasing a genuine Sri Lankan gem or an authentic piece of jewellery as a keepsake or souvenier or as an investment and the industry currently generates a total of about $350 million worth of foreign exchange on an annual basis and rising buying by tourists (Anon., 2018; Anon., 2017; Francis, 2016; Anon., 2015). Yet (Group, 2015) the traders face a difficult operating environment industry wise, weighed down by the broader economic slump and weaker currency rates in several key purchasing markets. Gems are the first to be affected by a crisis and the last to recover, claimed (Group, 2015).

Anyhow Fernando (2018) pointed out that Sri Lankan jewellers are no longer selling jewellery and gems to tourists at a competitive price and tourists will find gold jewellery and gems at much cheaper prices in Hong Kong, UAE, China and Thailand and this previous researcher warns that the industry is on the verge of losing its transparancy in tranactions and further fears that the industry may resort to unlawful practices. Nayeem (2016) exposed that with so many small to medium sized players, there is a persistent tendency amongst gem traders to cut prices and compete and most do not realize that by undercutting each other on price they are actually locked in on a race to the bottom and he points out that SLGJ industry further needs to recognise the importance of safeguarding the image of the luxury product. Further pointing out the importance of the tourist market the researcher (Nayeem, 2016) claimed that the tourists should not be hasseld with their gems and jewellery purchases, but to practice sustainable effective marketing and sales methods.Thus the industry should educate and nuture industry best practices with responsible selling and business practises to avoid any irreparable damage to the industry (Nayeem, 2016).

Complex HI B2C sales enviornments of involve face-to-face interactions between customers and sales people with limited previous history or recurrence. Typically these interactions include a salesperson trained in selling (Hochstein, et al., 2018) to the sporadic nature of many B2C sales relationships for complex products such as gems, diamonds or jewellery (e.g., years often pass between diamond, gems and jewellery purchases) and B2C sales people should engage in with such “informed customers” to continue to play a positive, value adding role (Hochstein, et al., 2018), where the consumer is making a non-routine, typically characterized by high consumer involvement purchase.

Customer centricity is defined as, putting customers’interests at the center of a firm’s actions (Habel, et al., 2020) and the researchers claim that the customers’perceptions of customer centricity crucially depend on specific behaviors of a firm and its salespeople. Customer- oriented salespeople focus on the understanding of customer needs, low-pressure selling and problem-solution selling approches, and salespeople are considered as the key intermediary between the firm and customers, they have the crucial role to cater to customers' interests throughout the sales process (Habel, et al., 2020), which is really cruicial in HI situation.

5. THEORETICAL LENS

One theoretical foundation for this study is right set of circumstance theory of selling (Dhiman, 2013), which is also called as the situation-response theory. It had its psychological origin in experiments with animals. The major emphasis in the theory is that particular circumstance prevailing in a given selling situation will cause the prospect to respond in a predictable way. The set of circumstance can be both internal and external to the prospect. This theory explains the fact that all the circumstances, which led to the sales were appropriate for the sales to have taken place. If the salesperson succeeds in securing the attention and gaining the interest of the prospect, and if the salesperson presents the proper stimuli or appeals, the desired response (that is, the sale) will result. According to Dhiman (2013) this is a seller-oriented theory. It stresses the importance of the sales person controlling the situation, does not handle the problem of influencing factors internal to the prospect, and fails to assign appropriate weight to the response side of the situation-response interaction (Vskills Tutorials, 2020).

To explain the theory of right set of circumstance, in simple terms; the circumstance includes the factors external and internal to the prospect. To use a simple example, suppose the salesperson in a GJ showroom says to the prospect (in this case GJ consumer) "Now let's go outside and look at the color of the gem stone under daylight". The salesperson and the remark are external factors. But at least five factors internal to the prospect affect the response: 1) to go outside 2) to go outside now, 3) going outside with the salesperson, 4) to look at the gemstone 5) to look at under sunlight.

Proponents of this theory tend to express external factors and at the expense of internal factors. They seek selling appeals that evoked desired responses. Sales people who try to apply the theory experience difficulties traceable to internal factors in many selling situations. But the internal factors are not readily manipulated. This is a

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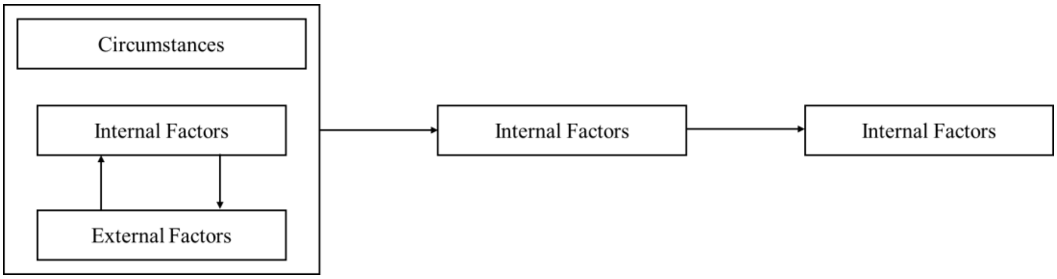
seller-oriented theory and it stresses the importance of the salesperson controlling the situation, does not handle the influencing factors internal to the project, and fails to assign appropriate weight to the response side of the situation-response interaction (Anon., 2020; Ahinful & Asomaning, 2017; Dhiman, 2013). Figure 1 illustrates a schematic overview of the theory.

Figure 1: Right Set of Circumstance Approach

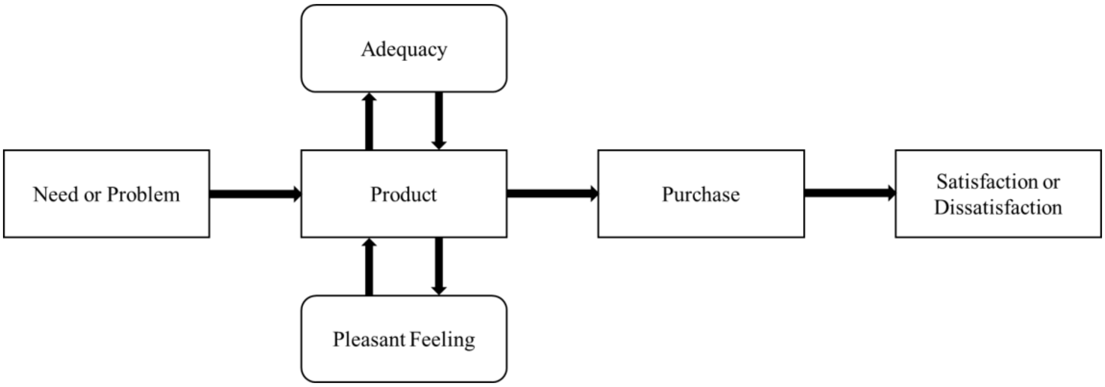


Source: Malik (2014), p.34

Buying formula theory is also applied in the theoretical foundation in contrast to the previous theory, which emphasizes the buyer's side of the buyer-seller dyad. The buyer's needs or problems receive major attention, and the salesperson's role is to help the buyer find solutions (Dhiman, 2013). This theory purports to answer the question: What thinking process goes on in the prospect's mind that causes the decision to buy or not to buy? The buying formula is a schematic representation of a group of responses, arranged in psychological sequence. The buying formula theory emphasizes the prospect's responses (which, are strongly influenced by internal factors) and de-emphasizes the external factors, on the assumption that the salesperson, being naturally conscious of the external factors, will not overlook them. Since the salesperson's normal inclination is to neglect the internal factors, the formula is a convenient way to help the salesperson remember.

This theory is a buyer-oriented theory as the focus is on the need or problems of the buyers. Hence, the aim of the salesperson is to understand the buyer's need and problems. A salesperson is required to help them in finding the solution to the problems. As per the theory the internal factors influence the responses of the prospects and it is assumed that the external factors are not being overlooked by the salesperson. E. K. Strong Jr. gave it the name “Buying Formula”. When a buyer recognizes a need or a problem related to a product/service, then ultimately the salesperson needs to find the solution for the same. Once the buyer is given the solution, he acts by purchasing the product/service. The solution given by the salesperson can be in the form of a product/service or brand name or both. After providing the solution, it is quite possible that the prospect will develop some relationship with the salesperson, which may lead to the satisfaction of the prospect. Also, when the prospect feels the need he becomes aware of the deficiency of satisfaction as well and the salesman should always look to convert this deficiency into adequate satisfaction. In order to induce the prospect to make a purchase, the salesperson needs to ensure that the prospect considers the “Product/service or brand name or both” as adequate. Also, he needs to make sure that the prospect experiences the pleasant feeling of awaited satisfaction. The prospect must have a pleasant feeling while thinking about the product or brand. The theory can be understood by looking at the Figure 2, where for any need or problem, the solution is given in terms of product/service or brand or both. The solution is considered as adequate and it gives the pleasant feeling to the prospect when he thinks about it. After that, the prospect makes the purchase and derives satisfaction out of it (Ahinful & Asomaning, 2017; Dhiman, 2013).

Figure 2: The Model of Buying Formula Theory



Source: Ahinful & Asomaning (2017)

If the theory is explained in simpler terms with an example, a foreign tourist wishes to purchase a souvenir for his wife during his visit to the Island. A salesperson provides him a solution by telling him to purchase a Sri Lankan gem. Here, the "product" is the "gem". If the salesperson advices him to buy a Sri Lankan blue sapphire, then the "(brand) name" here is "Sri Lankan blue sapphire". The salesperson is required to make sure that the solution he is giving is adequate to the problem and the foreign tourist feels pleasant while thinking about the blue sapphire. Thereafter, the tourist purchases the gem and derives satisfaction by gifting it to his wife and by building a relationship with the seller.

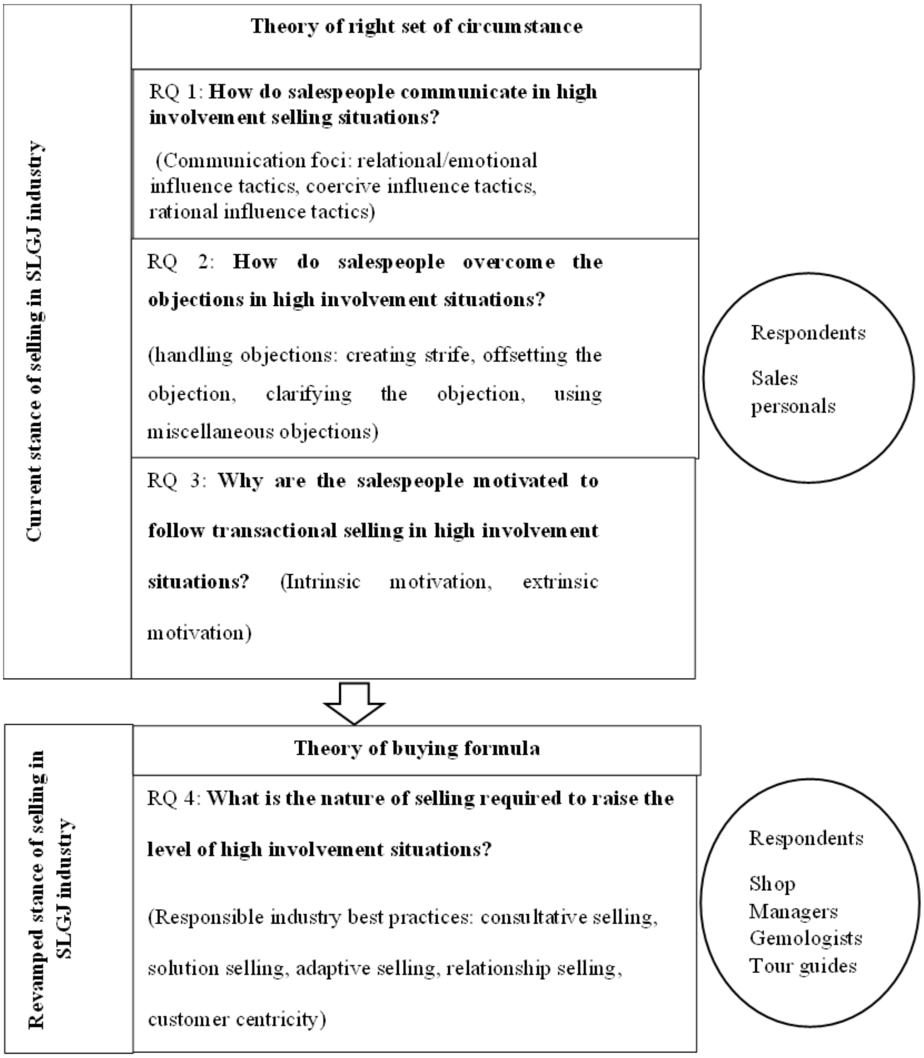
For a salesperson, the answer to each selling problem lies in the buying formula. There can be differences in the answers which again depend on the differences in emphasis placed on the elements in the formula. The differences in emphasis placed on the elements in turn, depend on the circumstances, which can be as follows:

- When a prospect does not feel the need or recognize a problem then the emphasis is placed on the need or problem.
- When a prospect does not think of a product/service while thinking about the need or problem, then the salesperson needs to put the emphasis on the association between the need and product.
- When a prospect does not think of a brand name while thinking about the product/service, then the salesperson needs to put the emphasis on the association between the (brand) name and product.
- When the need or problem, product/service, and brand name are well associated then the emphasis is put on facilitating purchase.
- In case of competition the salesperson needs to put the emphasis on developing the adequacy of the product/service or (brand) name or both and pleasant feeling around it.
- In case of a new prospect the salesperson needs to put the emphasis on each element in the formula mentioned above.

6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following framework depicted, that the right-set of circumstance theory (Ahinful & Asomaning, 2017; Dhiman, 2013) is interrelated to the sales force behaviors interrelated with customers: communication foci (Klarmann & Wouters, 2022), handling objections (Moncrief & Marshal, 2005) and motivation of selling (Mallin, et al., 2022). Further the association of sales force behavior towards high involvement purchase situation (Hochstein, et al., 2018).

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework



Source: Compiled by authors

7. A PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR TESTING THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL EMPIRICALLY

The above model constructed, based on a literature review could be applied in empirical research that aims at studying the transactional selling in high involvement situations. A qualitative methodology could be adopted by a researcher who tries to apply the model. A questionnaire could be developed along the different dimensions of the variables and interviews could be conducted to gather data along with the grounded theory approach. The data may be analyzed in line of the data analysis method in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

8. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Malik (2014) disclosed that the right set of circumstance theory suggested a persuasive-selling situation should be created by salespeople to influence the prospects in their favor. Based upon the theory of right set of circumstance (Ahinful & Asomaning, 2017; Dhiman, 2013), the communication foci of sales people, how do sales salespeople communicate in high involvement situation is being addressed (Klarmann & Wouters, 2022). As per previous researchers upload as true, sales people can be persuasive by providing rational arguments the customer finds helpful for decision making, because these arguments fit their informational challenge. Rational arguments involve information exchange and consist of a communication process that the seller uses to educate the buyer about the products and services he has to offer, make product demonstrations and gain information from the buyer about any needs or problems they or their company are experiencing. Rational arguments also extend to making recommendations that explain the benefits of a purchase. This may include comparisons with competitors' products, conducting cost-benefit analyses, overcoming buyer objections. The next phase of sales force behavior has been explored by questioning how do sales people overcome the objections in HI situations (Moncrief & Marshal, 2005). The researchers vindicate the key importance of handling objections by recognizing the objection, which does not mean personal rejection, where they justify, prospects give off buying signals to indicate that they want to learn more and researchers establish the salesperson's expertise increase purchase intention. Thirdly why are the sales people motivated (Mallin *et al*., 2022) to follow transactional selling in a HI situation has been subjected in the argument. The researchers justify that an individual may define themselves in terms of their connection to another significant other, and in turn develops sense of self based on the values and goals that the other exemplifies. Standing in line with the theory of buying formula, which exposes that selling sustains through establishing relationship with the customers on a continuous basis (Ahinful & Asomaning, 2017) and by exploring the sales force behavior in HI situation and by questioning what is the required nature of selling to raise the level of high involvement situations, the study intends to revamp the level of selling of HI situation in SLGJ industry. By doing so the study intends to minimize the customer complaints (Suomola, et al., 2012) and to have a customer centric (Alavi, et al., 2021), ethical, trustworthy, transparent (Nayeem, 2016) selling, where the customer finds solutions (Salonen, et al., 2021) for his problems. This would lead to an enhancement of the image of the country globally, which would be beneficial to build the reputation to achieve the level of "Hub of gem and jewelry in Asia" (Anon., 2023).

9. CONCLUSION

Revamping the current sales strategies of SLGJ industry uncover greater potential and opportunities to an enhancement of the image of SLGJ market. Industry sales strategies should be in par with the mechanism of industry best practices to empower trust, fairness and sustainability in the global GJ market. Based on this review the authors conclude that by practicing ethical sales strategies and by the SMEs and also other organizations those who are involved in the GJ business can create and maintain fair and sustainable business environment. Maintaining an ethical and transparent business practices leads to industry sustainability and this is useful to differentiate the SLGJ industry from the intense global competition in the GJ industry.

In considering the review theme and concepts, research propositions are related to the current stance of selling, and to the revamped stance of selling in the SLGJ industry.

Exploration in these areas is recommended to study the proposed research propositions and developed conceptual model by applying qualitative methods (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2013) in order to obtain more socially robust and reliable results.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of SLGJ industry is still in its infancy stage. Although there are some industry initiatives, there are currently no operational sector-wide initiatives or standard systems that aim to address sustainability issues throughout the colored gemstone supply chain. Thus, this review could be a pathway to open up the research world to the SLGJ industry. As few research propositions in CSR activities, ethical certification of trading of gemstones, fair trade standards for gems and jewellery, ethical colored gemstones could be mentioned. Further, future research may open up to investigate the policies of the government and how they are likely to be applied by the colored gem and jewellery industry. Hence research is needed to establish how the current stance is affecting the transparency of the industry in the global market and the necessary measures to be taken to revamp the industry sales strategies to raise the bar of the industry.

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