


**WAS COVID-19 THE END OF B2B SALES AS WE KNOW IT? UNDERSTANDING THE NEW SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF THE B2B SALESPERSON AFTER A DISRUPTION EVENT SUCH AS COVID-19**

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b></p> <p><b>Received</b> 03 April 2023</p> <p><b>Accepted</b> 04 July 2023</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> The aim of this study is to examine despite Covid-19 pandemic, several companies managed to grow their sales. This leads us to our research questions: what selling competencies make best salespeople post Covid-19 disruption? And, which of the sales competencies make to be most important toward their job performance?</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Sales Management; Personal Selling; PLS-SEM; Hybrid Sales; COVID-19.</p>	<p><b>Theoretical framework:</b> The B2B selling abilities post Covid-19 as the subject of this study has been little research by the academy and without a dominant theoretical framework, but rather a partial vision. This article contributes to integrating the scarce academic literature, which, as we demonstrate, is mainly empirical, with a theoretical domain.</p> <p><b>Design/methodology/approach:</b> The use of established generic scales capturing each of the constructs of interest by surveying Key Account Managers in a B2B industry setting. Descriptive statistics, psychometric properties, pairwise correlations, and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) where deployed.</p>
	<p><b>Findings:</b> The results suggests that there is a positive direct effect of salesperson bricolage, adaptive selling, resiliency, salesperson' self-efficacy, and psychological flexibility with salesperson post-disruption performance. Lastly, a negative indirect effect is found between learning orientation, salesperson creativity, and salesperson grit.</p> <p><b>Research, Practical &amp; Social implications:</b> The study has focused on the proposal of what are the new sales competencies that B2B key account managers must develop to achieve a better sales performance, so managers must train and coach their B2B Key Account Managers (KAM) considering the new abilities needed (salesperson bricolage, adaptive selling, resiliency, salesperson' self-efficacy, and psychological flexibility) for sales success.</p> <p><b>Originality/value:</b> The value of this study is a novel effort to understand what skills are needed to succeed in the post Covid-19 B2B selling environment.</p> <p>Doi: <a href="https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i7.2532">https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i7.2532</a></p>

**A COVID-19 FOI O FIM DAS VENDAS B2B COMO AS CONHECEMOS? ENTENDENDO AS NOVAS HABILIDADES E COMPETÊNCIAS DO VENDEDOR B2B NA ESTEIRA DE UM EVENTO DISRUPTIVO COMO A COVID-19**

**RESUMO**

**Objetivo:** o objetivo deste estudo é examinar se, apesar da pandemia de Covid-19, várias empresas conseguiram aumentar suas vendas. Isso leva às nossas perguntas de pesquisa: quais competências de vendas tornam os

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vendedores melhores após a disrupção da Covid-19? E quais competências de vendas são mais importantes para seu desempenho no trabalho?

**Quadro teórico:** As habilidades de vendas B2B pós-Covid-19, como o tema deste estudo, têm sido pouco pesquisadas pelo meio acadêmico e sem um quadro teórico dominante, mas sim uma visão parcial. Este artigo contribui para integrar a escassa literatura acadêmica que, como demonstramos, é principalmente empírica, com um domínio teórico.

**Projeto/metodologia/abordagem:** uso de escalas genéricas estabelecidas que capturam cada um dos construtos de interesse por meio de pesquisas com Gerentes de Contas-Chave em um cenário do setor B2B. Foram utilizadas estatísticas descritivas, propriedades psicométricas, correlações entre pares e modelagem de equações estruturais de mínimos quadrados parciais (PLS-SEM).

**Resultados:** os resultados sugerem que há um efeito direto positivo da bricolagem do vendedor, da venda adaptativa, da resiliência, da autoeficácia do vendedor e da flexibilidade psicológica no desempenho do vendedor após a interrupção. Por fim, observa-se um efeito indireto negativo entre a orientação para o aprendizado, a criatividade do vendedor e a coragem do vendedor.

**Implicações para a pesquisa, a prática e a sociedade:** O estudo se concentrou em propor quais novas competências de vendas os gerentes de contas-chave B2B precisam desenvolver para obter um melhor desempenho de vendas, sendo que os gerentes precisam treinar e orientar seus gerentes de contas-chave B2B (KAMs) sobre as novas habilidades necessárias (bricolagem do vendedor, venda adaptativa, resiliência, autoeficácia do vendedor e flexibilidade psicológica) para o sucesso das vendas.

**Originalidade/valor:** o valor deste estudo é um novo esforço para entender quais habilidades são necessárias para ter sucesso no ambiente de vendas B2B pós-Covid-19.

**Palavras-chave:** Gestão de Vendas, Vendas Pessoais, PLS-SEM, Vendas Híbridas, COVID-19.

## ¿FUE COVID-19 EL FIN DE LAS VENTAS B2B TAL Y COMO LAS CONOCEMOS? COMPRENDER LAS NUEVAS HABILIDADES Y COMPETENCIAS DEL VENDEDOR B2B TRAS UN ACONTECIMIENTO PERTURBADOR COMO COVID-19

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** El objetivo de este estudio es examinar si, a pesar de la pandemia de Covid-19, varias empresas consiguieron aumentar sus ventas. Esto nos lleva a nuestras preguntas de investigación: ¿qué competencias de venta hacen mejores a los vendedores tras la disrupción de Covid-19? Y, ¿cuáles de las competencias de venta son más importantes para su rendimiento laboral?

**Marco teórico:** Las habilidades de venta B2B post Covid-19 como objeto de este estudio han sido poco investigadas por la academia y sin un marco teórico dominante, sino más bien una visión parcial. Este artículo contribuye a integrar la escasa literatura académica que, como demostramos, es principalmente empírica, con un dominio teórico.

**Diseño/metodología/enfoque:** Utilización de escalas genéricas establecidas que capturan cada uno de los constructos de interés mediante encuestas a Key Account Managers en un entorno industrial B2B. Se utilizaron estadísticas descriptivas, propiedades psicométricas, correlaciones por pares y modelos de ecuaciones estructurales por mínimos cuadrados parciales (PLS-SEM).

**Resultados:** Los resultados sugieren que existe un efecto directo positivo del bricolaje del vendedor, la venta adaptativa, la resiliencia, la autoeficacia del vendedor y la flexibilidad psicológica con el rendimiento del vendedor tras la interrupción. Por último, se observa un efecto indirecto negativo entre la orientación al aprendizaje, la creatividad del vendedor y el valor del vendedor.

**Investigación, implicaciones prácticas y sociales:** El estudio se ha centrado en la propuesta de cuáles son las nuevas competencias de ventas que los gestores de cuentas clave B2B deben desarrollar para lograr un mejor rendimiento de ventas, por lo que los gestores deben formar y entrenar a sus gestores de cuentas clave B2B (KAM) teniendo en cuenta las nuevas habilidades necesarias (bricolaje del vendedor, venta adaptativa, resiliencia, autoeficacia del vendedor y flexibilidad psicológica) para el éxito de ventas.

**Originalidad/valor:** El valor de este estudio es un esfuerzo novedoso por comprender qué habilidades se necesitan para tener éxito en el entorno de venta B2B posterior a Covid-19.

**Palabras clave:** Gestión de Ventas, Venta Personal, PLS-SEM, Ventas Híbridas, COVID-19.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the end of year 2019, COVID-19, the new coronavirus, has spread throughout the world. To prevent its spread, most countries have implemented unprecedented restrictions such as closing national borders, limiting public gatherings, and closing universities, schools, shops, and restaurants. In some cases, cities and regions are being confined (Inoue & Todo, 2020) which has generated serious consequences for the economies of countries, companies, and consumers. While many governments were struggling financially before the coronavirus outbreak, falling tax revenue seriously threatens states' ability to both continue to respond to the virus and their ability to remain solvent (Boone et al., 2019). Without a doubt, the crisis generated by Covid-19 has brought about a great change in the way consumers and companies are carrying out their purchasing processes. During disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the resilience of any sales organization becomes a critical characteristic. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed how salespeople interact with customers and with business-to-business (B2B) organizations. Organizations must confront the shifts in how their salespeople operate. Recent research recommends firms develop an adaptive sales force to address disruptions like a pandemic and be prepared to meet such challenges in the future. Based on interviews with marketing and sales executives, we explore how firms have responded to these interconnected changes during the Covid-19 pandemic and offer insight into best practices deployed across industries. Despite Covid-19, several companies managed to grow their sales, and this also happened with B2B sellers in various industrial sectors (Bullemore-Campbell, Cristóbal-Fransi, 2021). This leads us to our research questions: what selling competencies make best salespeople post Covid-19? And, which of the sales competencies make to be most important toward their job performance?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature review lacks a comprehensive body of evidence to draw definitive conclusions regarding the specific sales competencies that contribute to the effectiveness of Key Account Managers in the B2B context. While certain differentiating characteristics have been identified, a holistic understanding is yet to be established. These differentiating factors include adaptive selling (Alavi et al., 2019), Resilience (Smith et al., 2008), flexibility and adaptation (Ruiz & Odriozola-González, 2017), self-efficacy (Alyahya et al., 2020), and bricolage (Epler & Leach, 2021).

Sharma et al. (2018) conducted a study to examine the effect of sales agents' perceived cannibalization on insurance agents' performance in an emerging economy context. The key constructs considered in this study were sales agents' perceived cannibalization, relational capital, perception of fairness, job performance, and client professionalism. The researchers used a survey and employed confirmatory factor analysis and structural modeling as their methodology. The key findings of this study indicated that sales agents' perceived cannibalization negatively affected salesperson performance and client professionalism. Furthermore, relational capital was found to moderate the relationship between sales agents' perceived cannibalization and job performance (D. Sharma et al., 2018).

Alavi et al. (2019) aimed to generate actionable advice for practitioners regarding adaptive selling strategies. They used generic scales for adaptive selling and identified adaptive behavior and bases of adaptation as key constructs. These bases of adaptation included customer's needs, personality, social status, communication style, body language, and relationship length. The researchers employed a semi-structured interview and survey methodology, and their structural model revealed that salespeople adapt their selling strategies based on the perceived customer attributes mentioned earlier. The variance of the scales used in the study was largely explained by salespeople adjusting their argumentation and communication style to match customers' needs, personality, and body language (Alavi et al., 2019).

Singh et al. (2019) conducted a literature review to develop concepts, priorities, and research questions for future studies in the age of sales digitization and artificial intelligence technologies. The authors focused on three main areas: sales profession and value creation, sales professional and organizational issues, and sales professional and individual-level issues. They highlighted that the influence of sales digitalization technologies, including digitization and artificial intelligence, is likely to be more significant and far-reaching than previous sales technologies (Singh et al., 2019).

Bharadwaj & Shipley (2020) aimed to provide a starting point to assess salesperson communication effectiveness in modern selling channels. The key constructs examined in their literature review were auditory cues, visual cues, customer mindset, and behavioral outcomes. The authors identified five research areas: the cues shaping customers' perceptions of salesperson's digital communication effectiveness, training and recruiting digital salespeople, organizational strategy, and structure to support digital selling transformation, the suitability of

digital selling, and potential negative effects of digital sales interactions (Bharadwaj & Shipley, 2020).

Hofacker et al. (2020) conducted a literature review to focus scholarly attention on the implications of digitalization on B2B relationships. The key constructs they explored were cooperation, value co-creation, B2B branding, servitization, innovation networks, relationship dynamics, power, and trust. The authors described seven domains to highlight the instrumental role of digitalization in B2B relationships. They also emphasized the potential for future research in the intersection between B2B and digitalization (Hofacker et al., 2020).

Ohiomah et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis to identify the dimensions and determinants of B2B sales success. The researchers considered individual and organizational factors as key constructs. Individual factors included adaptive selling, customer orientation, self-efficacy, and effort, while organizational factors encompassed technological usage. The findings of the meta-analysis revealed the high importance of cognitive competencies such as technical skills, functional competencies like interpersonal skills and adaptive selling, and meta-competencies such as self-efficacy in achieving B2B sales success (Ohiomah et al., 2020).

Rangarajan, Hochstein, et al. (2021) aimed to introduce the concept of sales enablement to a broader academic audience and outline a research agenda for sales researchers. The key construct they focused on was the sales enablement process, comprising people, process, and performance. Through a literature review, the authors generated twenty-four research questions aligned with the People, Process, and Performance Framework (Rangarajan, Hochstein, et al., 2021).

Rustholllkarhu et al. (2020) offered a novel conceptualization of the connection between value creation and B2B sales, indicating practical implications and building an agenda for future research. The authors identified key constructs such as value proposition creation (VPC), value co-creation, and value idea emergence (VIE). Through conceptual development and anecdotal evidence, they concluded that value (co-)creation in ecosystems occurs through the intertwining of VIE with the process of value proposition creation (Rustholllkarhu et al., 2020).

Bongers et al. (2021) aimed to explore the challenges arising for salespeople from the introduction of digital sales channels and identify contextual boundary conditions that help salespeople cope with this change. The researchers used semi-structured interviews and thematic coding. They identified three main challenges faced by salespeople: the amplification of professional purchasing's strategic reorientation, the threat of purchasers pitting personal and digital sales channels against each other, and tightrope acts in buyer education. They also

highlighted two boundary conditions: sales buy-in for e-commerce and sales empowerment for multichannel selling (Bongers et al., 2021).

Corsaro & Maggioni (2021) offered a conceptualization of sales transformation, considering the key constructs of people, digitalization, integration, and acceleration. Their methodology included semi-structured interviews and surveys, and their structural model revealed that sales transformation is a multidimensional construct comprising four higher-order dimensions with 16 sub-dimensions. The four dimensions enabling sales transformation were identified as process, digitalization, people, and acceleration process (Corsaro & Maggioni, 2021).

Corsaro et al. (2021) explored how sales and marketing automatization generate value for companies in the post-COVID-19 scenario. They identified sales and marketing automatization benefits and sacrifices, including customer-centricity, integration, and operational product-related aspects. The researchers used semi-structured interviews and surveys, employing latent class analysis. Their findings emphasized that sales and marketing automatization should be conceptualized as a multidimensional and holistic process involving multiple actors. They also highlighted the importance of higher integration to cope with uncertainty and complexity (Corsaro et al., 2021).

Epler & Leach (2021) investigated how the meta-adaptive concept of "bricolage" influences sales performance when facing environmental challenges. They examined salesperson bricolage, salesperson creativity, learning orientation, salesperson grit, salesperson post-disruption performance, and perceived COVID-19 disruptiveness. The researchers used semi-structured interviews and surveys, and their structural model revealed several key findings. They found that creativity enhances sales performance, sales bricoleurs benefit from a learning orientation, and gritty salespeople are more likely to engage in bricolage (Epler & Leach, 2021).

Guenzi & Nijssen (2021) studied digital transformation as an organizational change process with a major influence on sales individuals. They examined key constructs such as DT-related excessive workload, DT-related uncertainty reduction initiatives, DT-related stress, DT usefulness, and DT integration. Their survey-based structural model indicated that perceived DT-related uncertainty reduction initiatives negatively affect DT-related demands, while perceived DT-related uncertainty increases the perception of DT usefulness. They also found that perceived DT-related uncertainty negatively affects perceived DT-related stress, and the

direct effects of perceived DT-related stress and DT usefulness on DT integration are negative and positive, respectively (Guenzi & Nijssen, 2021).

Habel et al. (2021) examined the effect of a salesperson's relational-selling orientation on the promotion of e-commerce to customers. The key constructs in this study were salesperson's relational-selling orientation, customer's attitude toward e-commerce, competitor's personal selling focus, salesperson's e-commerce promotion, and customer's e-commerce revenue share. The researchers employed a survey and utilized a multilevel path model. Their findings revealed that salespeople who are more relational-selling oriented are less likely to promote the use of e-commerce channels, as they perceive e-commerce as a threat to their customer relationships (Habel et al., 2021).

Kalra et al. (2021) aimed to explore the antecedents and consequences of salesperson creative selling. They examined emotional intelligence, competition inspired by co-workers, creative selling, and sales-services performance. Their methodology included a survey and a structural model. The findings showed that emotional intelligence is positively related to creative selling, competition inspired by co-workers is positively related to creative selling, and contextual intrinsic competition negatively moderates the relationship between emotional intelligence and creative selling (Kalra et al., 2021).

Mattila et al. (2021) offered novel means for rethinking contemporary business-to-business (B2B) sales operations and the assumptions underlying them in the digital era. They focused on enabling cognitive unlearning in B2B sales through semi-structured interviews and thematic coding. The authors identified four phases: identifying the need for unlearning, identifying what needs to be unlearned, discarding old sales managerial processes, and instilling change throughout the sales organization (Mattila et al., 2021).

Rangarajan, Sharma, et al. (2021) investigated how sales organizations have responded to changes in customer behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They examined the selling process and COVID-19's impact on B2B sales through semi-structured interviews and thematic coding. Three main themes emerged: customers' move to reduce in-person interactions, customers' increased use of digital technologies, and customer information overload and the need for personalized content (Rangarajan, Sharma, et al., 2021).

Rangarajan, Hochstein, et al. (2021) explored how sales managers respond to challenges affecting their sales teams. They examined value appropriation and task complexity using semi-structured interviews and thematic coding. The findings indicated that sales managers face two

main challenges: the increasing complexity of the sales process and ensuring that their sales force captures customer value effectively (Rangarajan, Hochstein, et al., 2021).

From the research of Rangarajan et al. 2021 the following impacts of Covid-19 can be highlighted: Changes in consumer behavior like decreased face-to-face interactions, customers use more digital technologies, and information overload for consumers and the need to personalize content. Being a new and developing topic, in the academy there is no definition as such of what hybrid sales is. Only the research by Epler and Leach (2021) reviews how B2B sales changed during the pandemic. At the level of "practitioners" there are many reports, without scientific rigor, but that illuminate from the intuitive point of view. For example, the joint report developed by Janek Performance Group and Selling Power magazine. The second area is an improvement of the adaptiveness of scale in which sales functions can be rapidly insourced or outsourced. The final area is technology adaptiveness, in which the salesforce adopts the use of technologies that are most relevant to customers. Implications for the firm, sales function, and individual salespeople are also derived.

COVID-19 has proven to be a disruptive, world-altering event that has forced professional sellers to rapidly change the way they do business. Therefore, this pandemic opens the importance of understanding the characteristics and behaviors of sellers that enable sales success in disruptive environments. Epler and Leach's (2021) study identifies COVID-19 as a critical sales event and introduces the concept of "Bricolage". Bricolage is a combination of "getting by" in resource-limited environmental conditions and is characterized by a vendor's ability to use available resources effectively. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative research, this study identifies a salesperson's creativity, learning orientation, and determination as three important antecedents of a salesperson's bricolage. Additionally, this study shows that salesperson Bricolage is positively related to sales performance.

Based on the literature review, we have formulated hypotheses regarding the relationship between various attitudes and characteristics of salespeople (such as learning orientation, salesperson's creativity, salesperson's grit, resiliency, salesperson's self-efficacy, and salesperson's psychological flexibility), their adaptive selling behavior, perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness, and their post-disruption performance. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the hypothesis and model tested in our research. The following hypotheses were tested:



**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** There is a positive relationship between salesperson bricolage and salesperson post-disruption performance.

**H1 (a):** Learning orientation has a positive indirect effect on salesperson post-disruption performance.

**H1 (b):** Salesperson creativity has a positive indirect effect on salesperson post-disruption performance.

**H1(c):** Salesperson grit has a positive indirect effect on salesperson post-disruption performance.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** There is a positive relationship between perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness and salesperson post-disruption performance.

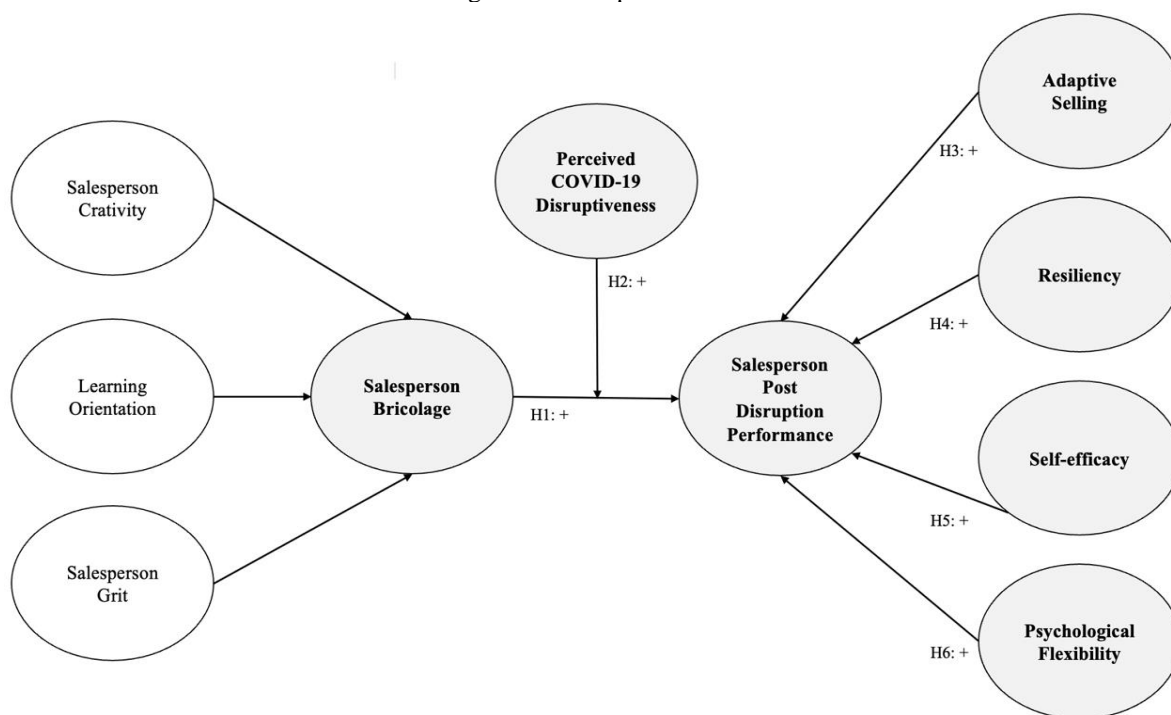
**Hypothesis 3 (H3):** There is a positive relationship between adaptive selling and salesperson post-disruption performance.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4):** There is a positive relationship between resiliency and salesperson post-disruption performance.

**Hypothesis 5 (H5):** There is a positive relationship between salesperson's self-efficacy and salesperson post-disruption performance.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6):** There is a positive relationship between psychological flexibility and salesperson post-disruption performance.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection and Sample

In our study, we conducted a survey among salespersons using well-established generic survey scales to measure the various constructs of interest. These scales encompassed the following: salesperson bricolage, salesperson creativity, salesperson learning orientation, salesperson grit, salesperson self-efficacy, salesperson post-disruption performance, and perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness (Epler & Leach, 2021);

Additionally, we employed scales to measure adaptative selling (Alavi et al., 2019), resiliency (Smith et al., 2008), and psychological flexibility (Ruiz & Odriozola-González, 2014). Our initial sample consisted of fifty-two B2B salespersons in Latin America, with 67.31% of the respondents identifying as male and an average age of 37.48 years. We recruited participants through an online survey platform (Alavi et al., 2019). In terms of industry representation, 17.31% of the respondents worked in the forestry sector, 13.46% in agriculture, and 11.54% in oil and gas. The remaining participants were spread across various other industries, including finance, consulting, and retail.

### Measures

#### Main variables

The main variables in our study were measured using established scales. Salesperson bricolage was assessed using a seven-item scale adapted from the work of Epler & Leach (2021). An example item from this scale is "I usually find workable solutions to new challenges by using our existing resources." Salesperson creativity was measured using a five-item scale, also derived from Epler & Leach (2021). A sample item from this scale is "Generating and evaluating multiple alternatives for novel customer problems." We used a five-item scale to measure salesperson learning orientation, again adapted from Epler & Leach (2021). An example item from this scale is "An important part of being a good salesperson is continually improving your sales skills."

Salesperson grit was assessed using a five-item scale from the same source. A sample item from this scale is "I finish whatever I begin." To measure salesperson post-disruption performance, we employed a five-item scale also developed by Epler & Leach (2021). A sample item from this scale is "I have been able to exceed sales targets and objectives for my territory better than other salespeople in my organization have." Lastly, we measured perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness using a four-item scale, once again adapted from the work of Epler & Leach

(2021). An example item from this scale is "Covid-19 drastically changed how I approach my business." All items were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

We assessed adaptive selling using a widely used scale consisting of six items found in the existing literature (Alavi et al., 2019). An example item from this scale is "Each customer requires a unique sales approach." Furthermore, we measured resiliency (Smith et al., 2008) using a six-item scale. A sample item from this scale is "I usually come through difficult times with little trouble."

Salesperson's self-efficacy, based on the work of Epler & Leach (2021), was measured using a three-item scale. A sample item from this scale is "When faced with a problem, I can usually find several solutions." (Epler & Leach, 2021). Lastly, we employed a seven-item scale to measure psychological flexibility, as proposed by Ruiz & Odriozola-González (2014). A sample item from this scale is "I am able to work effectively even when I have personal concerns." (Ruiz & Odriozola-González, 2014).

#### Control variables

To mitigate omitted variable bias, we accounted for the salesperson's age, gender, and experience (Alavi et al., 2019; Habel et al., 2021). Descriptive statistics and psychometric properties of the variables are presented in Table 1.

To assess the reliability and convergent validity of our measures, we employed various methods including Chronbach's alpha, Raykov's factor reliability coefficient, and confirmatory factor analysis. The Raykov's factor reliability coefficient surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunally & Bernstein, 1978) for Salesperson post disruption performance, Learning Orientation, Salesperson creativity, Salesperson Grit, Salesperson bricolage, Resiliency, and Psychological Flexibility. However, the Raykov's factor reliability coefficient did not meet the recommended threshold for Perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness and Salesperson's self-efficacy.

Table 2 displays the results of the Rho\_A coefficient and analysis of variance (AVE), which indicate convergent validity ( $> 0.5$ ) for Salesperson post disruption performance, Learning Orientation, Salesperson creativity, Salesperson Grit, Salesperson bricolage, Resiliency, Salesperson's self-efficacy, and Psychological Flexibility. However, Perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness and Adaptive selling (generic scales) did not demonstrate convergent validity as their AVE values were  $< 0.5$ . To assess discriminant validity, we conducted an

analysis of the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT < 1), where all variables performed below the recommended threshold (Hair et al., 2012).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, and psychometric properties

Construct	M	SD	Items	$\alpha$	Rho_A	RRC	AVE	CR
V1 Salesperson post disruption performance	5,274	0,876	3	0,842	0,843	0,850	0,683	0,895
V2 Learning Orientation	6,023	0,758	5	0,788	0,779	0,815	0,842	0,518
V3 Salesperson creativity	5,496	0,897	5	0,858	1,182	0,863	0,585	0,873
V4 Salesperson Grit	6,112	0,892	5	0,911	0,914	0,904	0,739	0,934
V5 Salesperson bricolage	5,571	1,154	7	0,917	0,933	0,915	0,673	0,934
V6 Perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness	4,878	1,064	3	0,373	0,665	0,617	0,359	0,13
V7 Adaptive selling (generic scales)	5,827	0,653	6	0,691	0,763	0,716	0,474	0,801
V8 Resiliency	5,737	0,697	6	0,829	0,853	0,823	0,54	0,874
V9 Salesperson's self-efficacy	6,019	0,577	3	0,643	0,777	0,652	0,554	0,768
V10 Psychological Flexibility	5,772	0,761	7	0,854	0,883	0,841	0,547	0,891

M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation,  $\alpha$ =Cronbach's Alpha, Rho\_a= Rho a coefficient, RRC= Raykov's factor reliability coefficient, AVE= Average Variance Extracted, CR= Composite Reliability

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Table 2 presents the pairwise correlations among the variables under investigation. Firstly, a statistically significant and positive correlation is observed between Salesperson post disruption performance and Adaptive selling. Similarly, a statistically significant and positive correlation is identified between Salesperson post disruption performance and Resiliency. Additionally, a statistically significant and positive correlation is found between Adaptive selling and Salesperson creativity. Moreover, a statistically significant and positive correlation is observed between Salesperson bricolage and Salesperson grit. Furthermore, a statistically significant and positive correlation is found between Resiliency and Adaptive selling. Additionally, a statistically significant and positive correlation is identified between Salesperson's self-efficacy and Resiliency. Lastly, significant positive correlations are observed between psychological flexibility and both Resiliency, and Salesperson's self-efficacy.

Table 2. Pairwise Correlation

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10
V1	1									
V2	-0.135	1								
V3	0.297	0.280	1							
V4	0.002	-0.080	0.062	1						
V5	0.079	0.155	0.215	0.695*	1					
V6	0.114	0.297	0.272	-0.120	-0.073	1				
V7	0.463*	0.192	0.549*	0.065	0.091	0.260	1			
V8	0.388*	0.122	0.408*	0.051	0.229	0.050	0.392*	1		
V9	0.254	0.265	0.330	0.064	0.332	0.054	0.304	0.631*	1	
V10	0.274	0.110	0.185	0.026	-0.034	0.019	0.231	0.585*	0.450*	1

Note: V1= Salesperson post disruption performance, V2= Learning Orientation, V3= Salesperson creativity, V4= Salesperson grit, V5= Salesperson bricolage, V6= Perceived Covid-19 disruptiveness, V7= Adaptive selling, V8= Resiliency, V9= Salesperson's self-efficacy, V10= psychological flexibility. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The structural model illustrated in Figure 1 was estimated using PLSPM with the aid of SmartPLS 3.0 (Hair Jr et al., 2017). This methodology offers advantages in terms of statistical validity by imposing less stringent requirements on sample size. PLSPM is particularly valuable in cases where the assumptions of multivariate normality necessary for maximum likelihood-based structural equation modeling (SEM) estimations cannot be fully satisfied. Therefore, it provides a suitable alternative when the strict assumptions of traditional SEM cannot be met (Hair et al., 2012). However, recent marketing studies such as Alhamami et al., 2023; Hariyanti et al., 2023; and Rahmidani et al., 2023 have used the same method to conduct their research.

Table 3 summarizes the results of the econometric estimations based on our initial sample of fifty-two B2B salespersons. The coefficient of multiple correlations (R Square = 0.439) and the Stone-Geisser's coefficient of predictive relevance (Q Square = 0.219, blindfolding procedure, omission distance=7) indicate the model's relevance and predictive ability (Wong, 2016). The effect size of the exogenous variables (F Square) (Cohen, 1988) was found to be small ( $F \geq 0.02$ ) for variables such as salesperson's bricolage, psychological flexibility, resiliency, salesperson's age, and salesperson's gender. Additionally, a medium effect ( $F \geq 0.15$ ) was observed for Adaptive Selling.

Our initial findings provide preliminary evidence supporting several hypotheses. Firstly, we found a positive direct effect of salesperson bricolage (H1), adaptive selling (H3), resiliency (H4), salesperson's self-efficacy (H5), and psychological flexibility (H6) on salesperson post-disruption performance. Figure 2 visually demonstrates the negative moderating effect of Perceived Covid-19 Disruptiveness on salesperson post-disruption performance. Lastly, we observed a negative indirect effect between learning orientation (H1a), salesperson creativity (H1b), and salesperson grit (H1c).

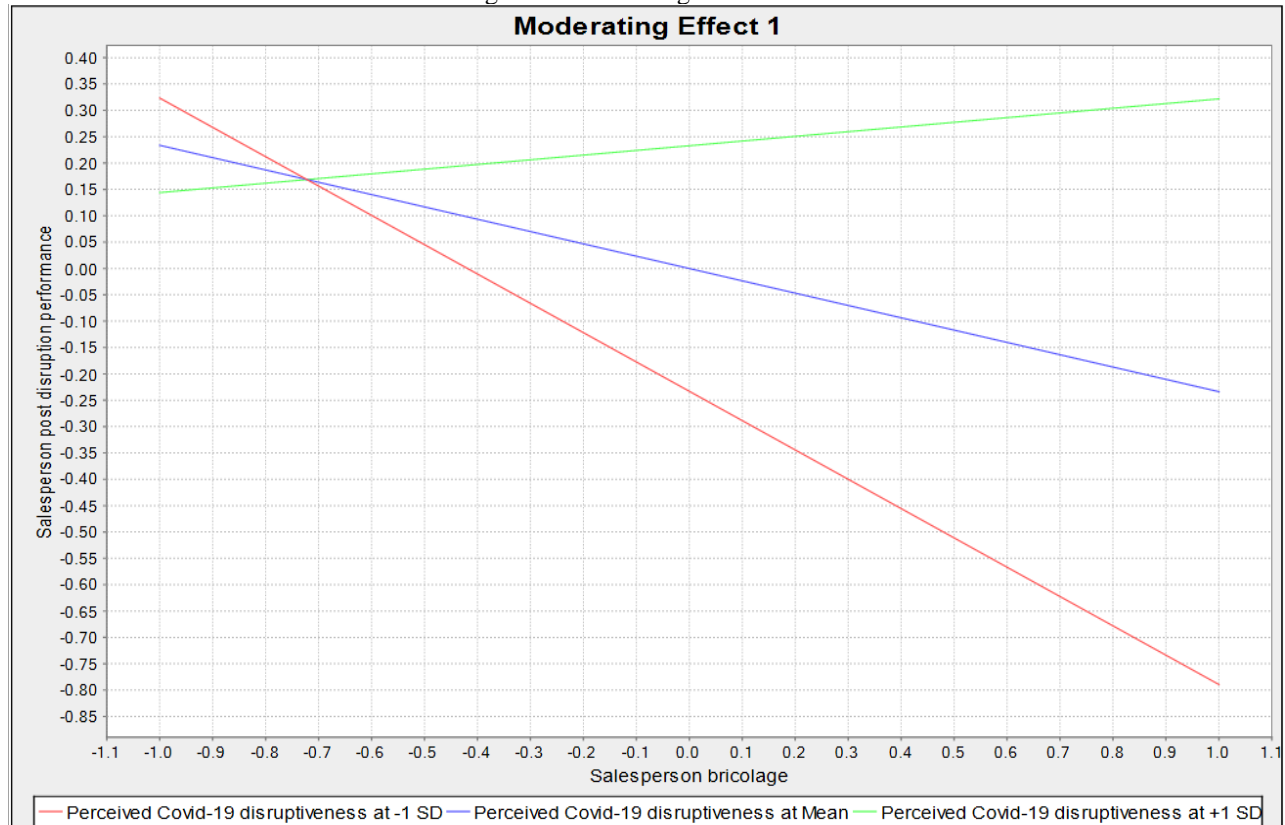
To further strengthen the robustness of our analysis (Alavi et al., 2019), we conducted additional models as part of a preliminary sensitivity analysis (see Table 3). Model 2 was designed to confirm the paths without the inclusion of control variables, and the results were consistent with Model 1. Model 3, on the other hand, included only the control variables while excluding the main variables. This model accounted for less variance (R Square = 0.045) compared to the previous models.

Table 3. Econometric Estimations

Effect	Model 1- Full Model		Model 2- No Control		Model 3- Only Control	
	Path	F Square	Path	F Square	Path	F Square
<b>Direct Effect: Bricoleur Characteristics--&gt; Bricolage Behaviour</b>						
Salesperson Creativity ---> Salesperson Bricolage	0,251	0,149	0,251	0,149		
Learning Orientation ---> Salesperson Bricolage	0,156	0,058	0,156	0,058		
Salesperson Grit ---> Salesperson Bricolage	0,698	1,266	0,698	1,267		
<b>R Square</b>		0,621				
<b>R Square Adjusted</b>		0,597				
<b>Q Square</b>		0,363				
<b>Direct Effect: Salesperson Characteristics--&gt; Post-Disruption Performance</b>						
Salesperson Bricolage ---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	-0,234	0,031	-	0,198		0,022
Salesperson' Self-Efficacy---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	0,262	0,055	0,200			0,036
Adaptive Selling ---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	0,420	0,240	0,411			0,217
Psychological Flexibility ---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	-0,085	0,007	-	0,058		0,003
Resiliency ---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	0,125	0,013	0,144			0,016
<b>Direct Effect: Control Variables--&gt; Post-Disruption Performance</b>						
Salesperson' Age---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	0,057	0,005			0,103	0,011
Salesperson' Experience---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	-0,023	0,001			-	0,001
Salesperson' Gender---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	0,190	0,053			0,179	0,034
<b>Direct Effect: Moderating Effect--&gt; Post-Disruption Performance</b>						
Perceived Covid-19 Disruptiveness ---> Salesperson Post-Disruption Performance	0,323	0,071	0,295	0,056		
<b>R Square</b>		0,439		0,404		0,045
<b>R Square Adjusted</b>		0,303		0,31		0,015
<b>Q Square</b>		0,219		0,214		-
<b>SRMR</b>		0,120		0,122		0,083
<b>Indirect Effect: Bricoleur Characteristics--&gt; Post-Disruption Performance</b>						
Salesperson Creativity ---> Post-Disruption Performance	-0,059	-0,050				
Learning Orientation ---> Post-Disruption Performance	-0,036	-0,031				
Salesperson Grit ---> Post-Disruption Performance	-0,163	-0,138				

Source: Prepared by the authors (2023).

Figure 2. Moderating Effect



## CONCLUSIONS

The fast-evolving business environment has created new issues, problems, and opportunities for sales research. The fourth industrial revolution, plus the Covid-19 pandemic and other external drivers, are changing the way sales organizations approach the customer; it changes the way salespeople do their daily job, and the buyer is using it to influence the buying process.

The theoretical contribution is a process that is based on the development of the theory and the advancement of the existing theory with logic and facts. This study has focused on the proposal of what are the new sales competencies that B2B key account managers must develop to achieve a better sales performance. Where we highlight the theory and its main basic components. The study also suggests how such concepts can be practically implemented in organizations to improve organizational performance. By having fragmented literature and a topic of great interest to practitioners, we have seen it as a trigger for exploring boundary conditions (BC) in this matter.

According to our research, the B2B selling abilities post Covid-19 as the subject of this study has been little developed by the academy and without a dominant theoretical

framework, but rather a partial vision. This article contributes to integrating the scarce academic literature, which, as we demonstrate, is mainly empirical, with a theoretical domain.

As suggested by Corley & Gioia (2011), we distinguish from the existing literature on the theoretical contribution in two dimensions, its originality, and practical utility. We have developed a review of how academics approach objections from a theoretical, original perspective, but with a pragmatic approach. It also strengthens the validity of research and reduces the gap between research and practice.

Practitioners must be able to train and coach their B2B Key Account Managers (KAM) considering the new abilities needed (salesperson bricolage, adaptive selling, resiliency, salesperson' self-efficacy, and psychological flexibility) for sales success. At the same time, design and execute a sales process that takes charge of the perceptions that the buyer may have so that they do not feel threatened by the organization or its sellers because in case of perceiving a bad service and / or threat because it may lead to reduce purchase intention, impacting the commercial productivity of organizations.

On the other hand, it is critical that salespeople's training, education, and coaching plans and sales processes consider the delivery of these different abilities. In turn, the delivery of knowledge and skills for the generation of credibility on the part of the KAM, management of emotional intelligence, and particularly management of salespeople's anger.

This study has the advantage of being supported by an empirical study, has a real-world sales correlation, so it can be easy to understand by salespeople. Consequently, this research can contribute to helping salespeople training to understand this complex topic of post Covid-19 selling.

The main limitation of this study is that the overall model proposed was tested in a Latin-American context. Although each hypotheses empirical support, this does not imply that the complete model will have an acceptable fit and each path's significance. For this reason, as further research to test all the proposed conceptual model, measurements should be reviewed and developed for constructs that do not have it.

Finally, our proposal will probably raise more questions and speculations than provide definite answers, resulting in more limitations. However, the authors hope these limitations can be the starting point to further research in this topic.

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