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# Covid-19 was the end of B2B sales as we know it? Understanding the new skills and abilities of the B2B seller post covid 19

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# In the history of humanity there will always be disruptive events

# World Wars I & II

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# Spanish Flu: 1918 - 1920

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Covid-19:
2019 - ?

# Russia – Ukraine War: 2022 - ?

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# Before Covid-19 pandemic, a minority proportion sold virtually

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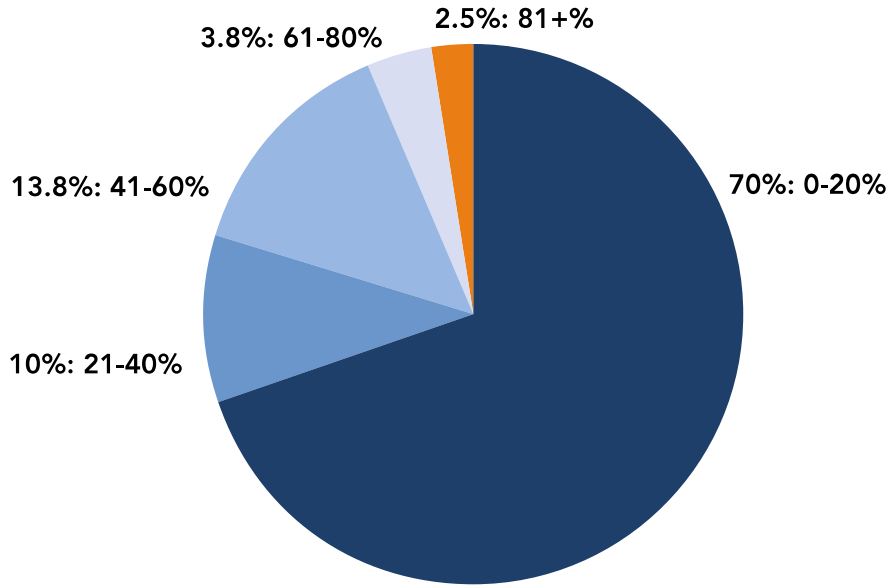
**Before COVID-19, what percentage of the time did your sales reps sell virtually?**




Source: JANEK Peformance Group & SellingPower Magazine, 2021

# After two years, most sales interactions went to hybridity

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**Most B2B seller interactions have moved to remote or digital ...**

**Current way of interacting with suppliers' sales reps during different stages[1,3]**
% of respondents

**... and that's exactly what customers want.**

of B2B decision makers prefer remote human interactions or digital self-service[2,3]

**Why?**
- Ease of scheduling
- Savings on travel expenses
- Safety

**Source: Mckinsey &Co, 2021**

# But pandemics and wars are not the only events that will change the world of sales

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Source: KPMG, 2021

# Covid-19 disruption changed consumer habits

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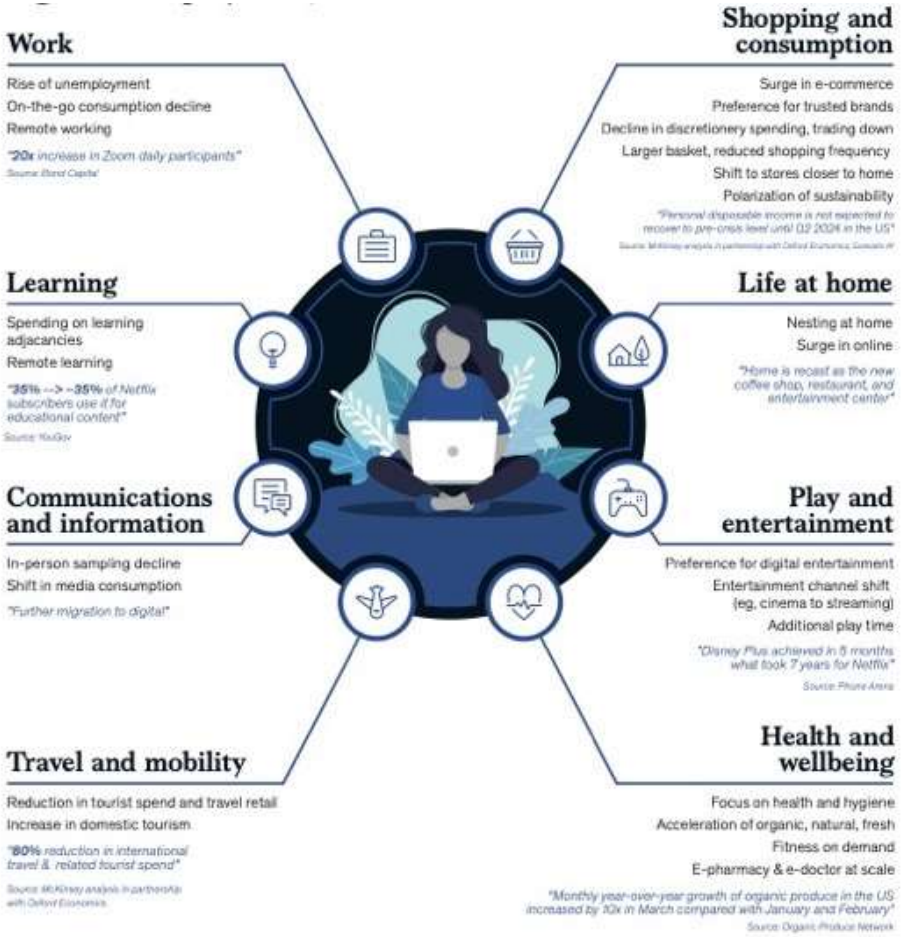


**Source: Mckinsey & Co, 2020**

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# Research questions:

- Covid-19 was the end of B2B face to face sales as we know it?
- What are the new skills and abilities that makes best a B2B seller a post disruptive event like Covid-19?

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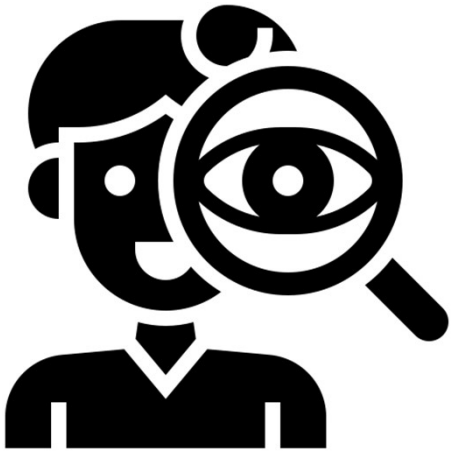
**Observation:**

- 2020 & 2021: training +30 Spanish and Latin American companies (+4.000 sales people trained)
- 2020 & 2021 in sales management consultancy

+



**Preliminary research:**

- Surveyed 52 B2B salespersons using established generic survey scales capturing each of the constructs of interest.
- This study develops descriptive statistics, psychometric properties, pairwise correlations, and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

# Relevant Literature Review (1)

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| Author | Key Constructs | Methodology | Method | Key Findings and Contributions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (D. Sharma et al., 2018) | Sales agents' perceived cannibalization, Relational Capital, Perception of Fairness, Job Performance, Client Professionalism | Survey | Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Structural Model | (a) Sales agents' perceived cannibalization has an adverse effect on salesperson performance and client professionalism.<br>(b) Relational capital moderates the relationship between sales agents' perceived cannibalization and job performance. |
| **(Alavi et al., 2019)** | (a) Generic Scales: Adaptive Selling.<br>(b) Adaptive Behavior<br>(c) Bases of adaptation | Semi structured interview and Survey | Structural Model | (a) Salespeople adapt based on six perceived customer attributes (customers' needs, personality, social status, communication style, body language, relationship length).<br>(b) The variance of the scales can be largely explained by salespeople's adjustment of their argumentation and communication style to customers' needs, personality, and body language. |
| **(Singh et al., 2019)** | a) sales profession and value creation, (b) sales professional and organizational issues, and (c) sales professional and individual-level issues. | Review | Literature Review | The influence of sales digitalization technologies, which includes digitization and artificial intelligence, is likely to be more significant and more far reaching than previous sales technologies. |
| **(Bharadwaj & Shipley, 2020)** | Auditory Cues, Visual Cues, Customer Mindset, Behavioral Outcomes. | Review | Literature Review | The authors describe five research areas (1) Customer's perceptions of a salesperson's digital communication effectiveness; (2) training and recruiting the digital salesperson; (3) organizational strategy and structure to support their digital selling transformation; 4) the suitability of digital selling; and (5) the potential negative effects of digital sales interactions. |
| **(Hofacker et al., 2020)** | Coopetition, Value Co-Creation, B2B Branding, Servitization, Innovation Networks, Relationship Dynamics, Power/Trust | Review | Literature Review | (a) The authors describe the increasingly instrumental role of digitalization in B2B relationships through seven domains.<br>(b) There are many unexplored or underexplored phenomena in the intersection between B2B and digitalization that highlights a rich future research potential. |

# Relevant Literature Review (2)

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| Author | Key Constructs | Methodology | Method | Key Findings and Contributions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(Epler & Leach, 2021)** | Salesperson bricolage, Salesperson creativity, Learning orientation, Salesperson grit, Salesperson post disruption performance, Perceived Covid-19 Disruptiveness | Semi structured interview and Survey | Structural Model | (a) Creativity can help to enhance sales performance, (b) Sales bricoleurs benefit from a learning orientation, (c) Gritty salespeople are more apt to engage in bricolage. |
| **(Guenzi & Nijssen, 2021)** | DT-related excessive workload, DT-related uncertainty reduction initiatives, DT-related stress, Dt Usefulness, DT integration | Survey | Structural Model | (a) Perceived DT-related uncertainty reduction initiatives are negatively related to DT-related demands. (b) Perceived DT-related uncertainty increase perceptions of DT usefulness. (c) Perceived DT-related uncertainty negatively affects perceived DT-related stress. (d) The direct effects of perceived DT-related stress and DT usefulness on DT integration are negative and positive, respectively. |
| **(Habel et al., 2021)** | Salesperson's Relational-Selling Orientation, Customer's attitude toward E-Commerce, Competitor's Personal Selling Focus, Salesperson's E-Commerce Promotion, Customer's E-Commerce Revenue Share. | Survey | Multilevel Path Model. | (a) Salespeople who are more relational-selling oriented are less likely to promote the use of e-commerce channels. (b) Relationally oriented salespeople perceive e-commerce as a danger to their customer relationships |
| **(Kalra et al., 2021)** | Emotional Intelligence, Competition inspired by co-workers, creative selling, sales-services performance | Survey | Structural Model | (a) Emotional Intelligence is positively related to creative selling. (b) Competition inspired by co-workers is positively related to creative selling. (c) CIC negatively moderates the relationship between EI and creative selling. |

# Relevant Literature Review (3)

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| Author | Key Constructs | Methodology | Method | Key Findings and Contributions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **(Mattila et al., 2021)** | Enabling cognitive unlearning in B2B sales. | Semi structured interviews. | Thematic coding | The authors identified four phases comprise identifying a need for unlearning, identifying what needs to be unlearned, discarding old sales managerial processes, and instilling change throughout the sales organization. |
| **(Rangarajan, Sharma, et al., 2021)** | Selling process and COVID-19 for B2B sales. | Semi structured interviews. | Thematic coding | Three themes were identified: (1) customers move to reduce in-person interactions; (2) customers use more digital technologies; and (3) customer information overload and the need for personalized content. |
| **(Rangarajan, Hochstein, et al., 2021)** | Value appropriation, Task complexity. | Semi structured interviews. | Thematic coding | Sales managers are constantly faced with two main challenges the increasing complexity of the sales process and how to successfully ensure that their sales force captures customer value during the sales process. |

# What capabilities?

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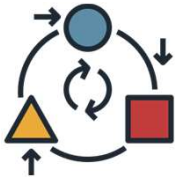
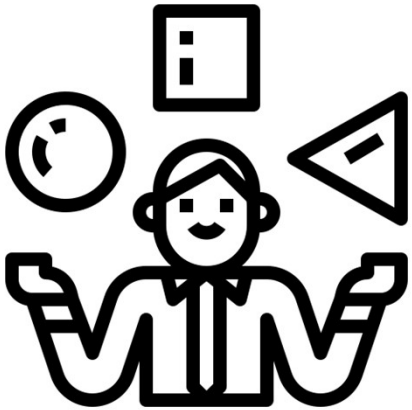
SALESPERSON CREATIVITY



ADAPTATIVE SELLING

SALESPERSON GRIT

LEARNING ORIENTATION



RESILIENCY

SALESPERSON´S SELF-EFFICACY

PSYCOLOGICAL FLEXIBILITY

# Conceptual Model

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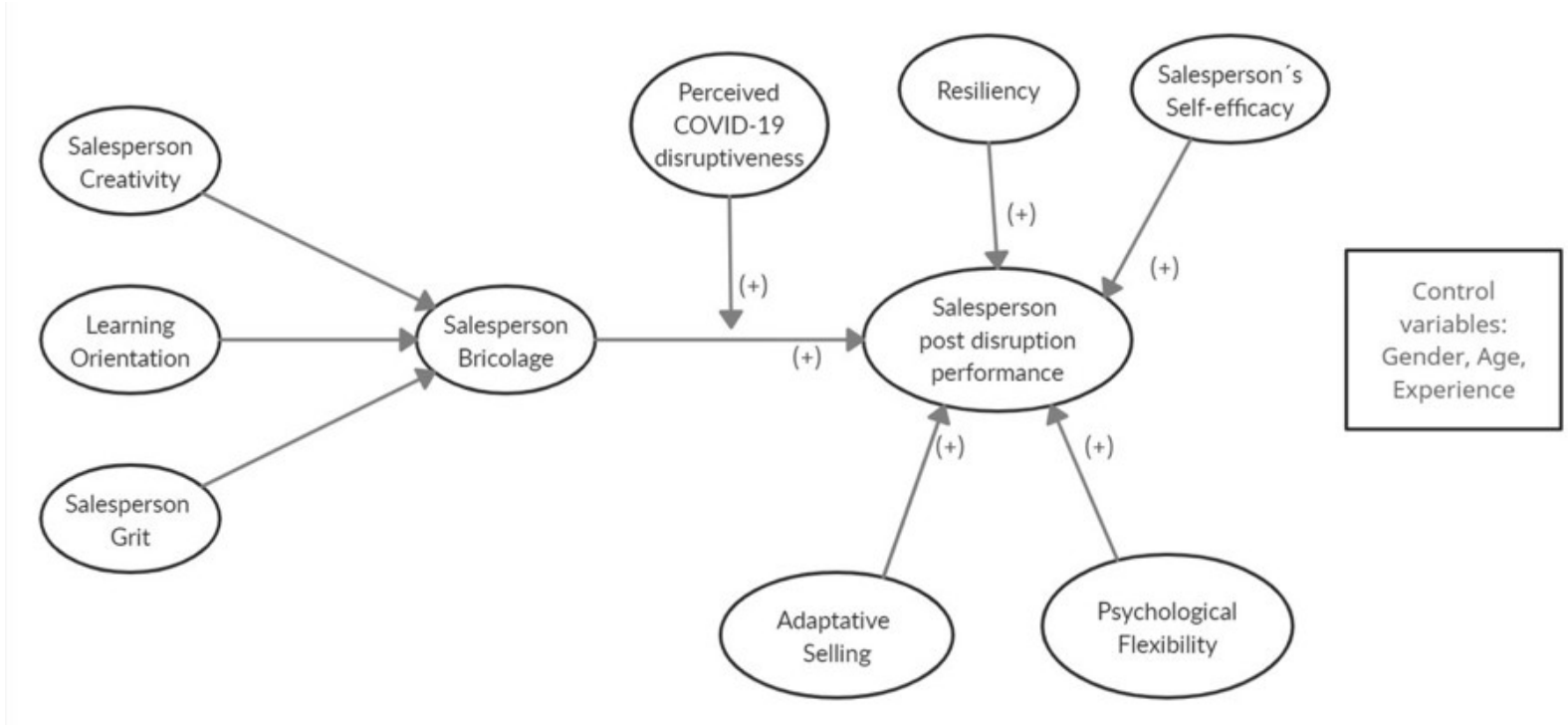

# Preliminary Main Findings

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- This study is a novel effort to understand what competencies are needed to succeed in B2B Sales after a disruption event such as Covid-19.
- Our preliminary evidence suggests a positive direct effect of salesperson bricolage, adaptive selling, resiliency, salesperson's 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.

Thank you!

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