

CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE ON INDIAN-THAI B2B

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ABSTRACT: *Business to Business or B2B relationships lead to a large volume of long-term business, in particular international trade. Effective salespersons who are able to deal with foreign clients are essential in this globally digital world. Social media has been used as a communication tool for cross-cultural selling; however, personal selling attributes of salespeople should be considered as well. Therefore, our study aims to examine the benefit of social media in facilitating cross-cultural sales performance and to investigate the mediating effect of cultural intelligence (CQ) and two selling behaviors on increasing sales success. The survey study collected data from a total of 234 Thai salespersons dealing with Indian businessmen. Findings show that Thai salespeople using social media intensively in their B2B tasks tend to present higher levels of cross-cultural sales performance. The mediating effects analysis shows that CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior fully mediated the positive relationship between social media use for Indian-Thai B2B selling and cross-cultural sales performance. It is recommended herein that, apart from social media usage training programs, international businesses should organize CQ, adaptive selling technique and customer-oriented selling technique programs for their salespeople in order to increase the chance of their success in cross-cultural selling tasks.*

Keywords: *Social media, Cultural intelligence, Cross-cultural selling, Business to business*

Introduction

Nowadays, many international business organizations increase the number

of their foreign clients by attending international trade shows, because these shows help them to create their brand awareness to prospective foreign buyers and expand their international marketing position (Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). In addition to these benefits to the firms, their salespeople can also have the opportunities to present information regarding the benefits of the product directly to prospective foreign customers (Jha et al., 2019). If, after the sales presentation, clients are interested in the organization's products, it will lead to larger sales volumes and long-term Business to Business (or B2B) relationships. Unarguably, it is quite challenging for the salespeople to continue the B2B relationships with those cross-cultural clients after attending the

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international trade shows because of the distance between countries and increasing international travelling costs. Thus, many sales organizations try to find the most effective and efficient channel for their salespeople to communicate with foreign clients after the international trade shows. To date, one of the most popular communication tools that has been applied tremendously by sales organizations is social media (Nunan et al., 2018). Social media has become more popular in a selling context because it facilitates the interaction between sellers and buyers, especially if they have difficulty in face-to-face communication (Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanun, 2017).

So far, social media usage has enhanced performance across a variety of areas (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ainin et al., 2015; Bolander et al., 2015; Yu et al., 2019). Nevertheless, despite these various outcomes related with social media usage, the amount of study about the roles of social media usage in a cross-cultural selling context is still scarce. Thus, this study will use evidence obtained from people based in Thailand working in sales, and who apply social media to continue their B2B cross-cultural selling tasks after attending international trade shows; this is done in order to investigate how social media is used in a cross-cultural selling context.

This research has been designed to explore the correlation concerning the use of social media by salespeople and their cross-cultural sales performance in B2B relationships after attending international trade shows. B2B is a form of business transaction between businesses, such as one involving a manufacturer and wholesaler or a wholesaler and a retailer (Kotler & Fox, 1995). So far, the study about the benefits

of social media usage in a globalized selling environment is still insufficient in the literature (Moore et al., 2015). But instead of directly linking social media and cross-cultural selling performance, this study proposes that the benefit of social media usage can be indirectly explained by three competencies of salespeople which are: (1) cultural intelligence (CQ) (2) adaptive selling behavior and (3) customer-oriented selling behavior. While CQ is the capability to work with high efficacy in cosmopolitan situations (Bucker et al., 2014), adaptive selling behavior is the capacity of the merchants to change their sales behavior regarding the nature of the selling situation (Romon & Iacobucci, 2010) and customer-oriented sales is the selling approach where sellers hope to recognize customer demands and offer the most appropriate solution for them to satisfy their needs (Homburg et al., 2011). Companies such as Facebook, WhatsApp etc. are crucial platforms to help people with the aim of social relationship building and information gathering or spreading (Hu & Gu, 2018). In this study, these platforms are proposed as communication tools that can promote the three, above-mentioned competencies, which in turn allows salespeople to increase their cross-cultural sales performance.

The intent of this study is to get data regarding the plusses of social media usage in facilitating salespeople to successfully interact with international B2B clients, and also to increase cross-cultural sales performance. The research objectives are to: (1) look at the correlation between social media usage by salespeople when communicating with foreign clients and their cross-cultural sales performance; (2) illustrate the connection between salespeople using online social networks

when communicating with foreign clients and their development of CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior; and (3) demonstrate any mediating effects of CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior that explain the interrelationship of social media usage by the salespeople in communication with foreign clients and their cross-cultural sales performance.

Literature Review

Theory and Hypothesis Development

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura (1986), explains the causative relationship concerning the conduct and the environment of an individual. This theory focuses on the mechanisms of how a person's actions, character, and surroundings are all interdependent on one another (Bandura, 2001). This theory complements the difficult ways in which people utilize social applications to enhance their cultural intelligence (CQ), as well as their adaptive-selling and customer-oriented sales behaviors. In addition, within SCT, people adjust themselves according to their media and observational encounters (Bandura, 1986). And so people develop the ability to organize and regulate themselves as well as learning to reflect and make active, positive change. When applying this theory to the cross-cultural selling context, salespeople's personal experience and the experience of the various things they have observed while attempting to glean information and having personal interactions with their foreign customers via social networking apps has an effect on how they think; this actually starts the process of cultivating CQ and appropriate selling behaviors to cope with cultural related issues effectively.

Social Media

Social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61). It becomes part of individuals' routines and provides vigorous impacts as a search instrument and public communication system (Hu & Gu, 2018). The platform has altered the manner in which salespeople and buyers communicate, and extra traffic on social networks could create desirable returns for merchants (Agnihotri et al., 2016), especially if the sales forces apply it for their cross-cultural selling tasks. So far, prior studies have found various outcomes associated with social media usage in different contexts. For instance, social media usage has been found to increase the job performance of employees (Leftherioties & Giannakos, 2014), the performance of both retailers and brands and buyer/seller loyalty (Rapp et al., 2013), both financial and non-financial performance of SMEs (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2018), exporting firms' performance (Rialp-Criado & Rialp-Criado, 2018), and students' academic performance (Abdurahman et al., 2019; Francescucci & Rohani, 2019; Sampasa et al., 2019).

Contribution of social media usage in cross-cultural sales performance

Several researchers have observed the benefit of salespeople using social media to facilitate communication about product information with B2B customers and to be more responsive to their needs, which in turn can create customer satisfaction, brand engagement and increased sales performance (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Agnihotri et al., 2012; Guesalaga,

2016; Rodriguez et al., 2012b). Generally, one crucial social media function that tends to facilitate cross-cultural selling is to help salespeople in online communication with their foreign customers without travelling for face-to-face meetings. When salespeople use social media to continue B2B relationships with foreign clients after international trade shows, the foreign clients tend to feel more engaged to the salespeople and brands, which in turn can create customer loyalty and salespeople can keep maintaining high levels of their cross-cultural sales performance (Guesalaga, 2016). In addition, the real-time interactive characteristic of social media might help salespeople to provide the most up-to-date information regarding new products, inventories and promotions upon foreign clients' request, which in turn could shorten selling cycles and the buying decision making process from inter-cultural clients while enhancing inter-cultural sales (Rapp et al., 2013). Also, using social media with foreign clients can build trust and create friendships easily between salespeople and international buyers, this reduces inter-cultural anxiety and can create long-term B2B relationships and increase cross-cultural sales performance (Hu & Gu, 2018). Given the benefits of social media usage in enhancing cross-cultural sales performance of salespeople, this hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling achieve better cross-cultural sales performance.

Although researchers have explored the benefits and outcomes aroused by social media usage and sales performance, there is still insufficient research related to social

media use in an international selling context (Schrock et al., 2018). Therefore, it is proposed that the mechanism by which social media usage can enhance cross-cultural sales performance can be explained by three competencies that might be related to social media usage in a cross-cultural selling task: (1) cultural intelligence (CQ), (2) adaptive sales behavior and (3) customer-oriented sales behavior.

Contribution of social media usage on CQ and cross-cultural sales performance

P. C. Earley and Ang (2003) define CQ as a toolbox of abilities that allows people to perform in cosmopolitan environments. CQ is multi-faceted and includes four micro-qualities related to intellect: cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and behavioral CQ (Earley & Ang 2003). 'Cognitive' refers to the general knowledge about other cultures that individuals have; such as their political systems, economics, social norms, and languages (L. Van Dyne et al., 2008). 'Metacognitive' is a mental process which a person applies to get and understand cultural knowledge (Ang et al., 2007). People whose metacognitive scores are elevated prepare themselves very well before inter-cultural exchanges. They find it easier to adjust their knowledge about other cultures; when the real situation is different from their expectation, then they will gain new knowledge regarding other cultures (L. Van Dyne et al., 2008). This increases customer satisfaction and cross-cultural sales performance (Delpechitre & Baker, 2017). 'Motivational' refers to an individual's capability of learning, and adjusting themselves to various cultural environments (Earley & Ang 2003). People with elevated 'motivational' levels have high intrinsic motivation; this helps them to

enjoy interactions with foreigners. This enables them to put more effort towards cultivating relations with foreign clients, thus reaching greater levels of cross-cultural sales performance (Hansen et al., 2011). Additionally, they also possess high levels of self-efficacy that help them patiently deal with any obstacles during cross-cultural interactions (Linn Van Dyne et al., 2010). Lastly, the 'behavioural' aspect is people's capability to adapt their behaviour appropriately according to the nature of inter-cultural scenarios (Earley & Ang 2003). People with an elevated 'behavioural' aspect can modify their speech, body-language and general deportment to the required scenario (P Christopher Earley, 2002) which, in turn, can create impressive buying-selling interactions and enhance cross-cultural sales performance (Delpechitre & Baker, 2017). Overall, enhanced levels of cultural understanding and awareness of cross-cultural situations will lead to a salesperson exhibiting more impressive heights of CQ which can boost their motivation to adjust their words and behaviour appropriately during cross-cultural communication (Bucker et al., 2014) and enhance their cross-cultural sales performance (Hansen et al., 2011).

Researchers have found that CQ can be beneficial to performance outcomes in a variety of circumstances (Collins et al., 2016; Duff et al., 2012; Jeevan & Sumeet, 2015; Kim & Mazumdar, 2016). Thus, as has been hypothesized, the level of CQ of salespeople should be positively associated with cross-cultural sales performance. Also, networking apps are vital to the selling process because salespeople can obtain new information regarding their clients' needs and enhance good relationships with them (Rehg et al., 2012).

All in all, social media usage tends to facilitate salespeople to develop CQ and enhance their cross-cultural sales performance. Given the above review regarding the positive effect of CQ on cross-cultural sales performance, as well as the contribution of social media usage that enables salespeople to enhance their CQ in cross-cultural selling tasks, these hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 2: The level of CQ of salespeople is positively associated with cross-cultural sales performance.

Hypothesis 3: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling possess higher levels of CQ.

Social media usage and adaptive selling behavior

Adaptive selling behavior is defined as "the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz et al., 1986, p. 175). With increased levels of adaptive selling behavior, salespeople are capable of designing their sales presentations and modifying them according to the nature of international selling situations by using the information they gleaned about clients before and during interactions in order to customize their sales messages to achieve effective communication (Yoo & Arnold, 2019). In contrast, with low levels of adaptive selling behavior, sales personnel will use the same sales presentations in every sales situations because they are not willing to alter their sales patten while attempting to make a sale (Spiro & Weitz, 1990). Research has discovered that adaptive selling behavior

positively influences performance (Kaynak et al., 2016). Thus, adaptive selling behavior tends to facilitate salespeople to adjust their selling behavior and sales messages appropriately according to the needs of foreign clients, which in turn will enhance their cross-cultural sales performance.

Social media usage with clients also facilitates salespeople to create a friendly environment as well as trust, which in turn will help them gain updated information regarding customers' demands and problems (Itani et al., 2017a) and allow them to adapt their selling techniques appropriately (Ogilvie et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2012a). Given the above review regarding the positive effect of adaptive selling behavior on cross-cultural sales performance, as well as the contribution of social media usage that enables salespeople to enhance their adaptive selling behavior in cross-cultural selling tasks, these hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Salespeople's adaptive selling behavior is positively related to cross-cultural sales performance.

Hypothesis 5: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling possess higher levels of adaptive selling behavior.

Social media usage and customer-oriented selling behavior

The sales behavior known as 'customer-oriented selling behavior' is the enactment of the orientation of the marketplace relating to individual salespeople (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). This approach focuses on building long-term relationships with consumers (Abed &

Haghighi, 2009). Customer-oriented selling behaviors require that salespeople, first, gain knowledge regarding customers' needs by deeply listening and, second, try to analyze their problems then provide them with the best solution to fulfil their desires (Boorum et al., 1998; Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Sellers who are elevated in their 'customer-oriented' levels will try to find a way to satisfy their customers by attending to their needs and providing the best solution for their problems (Boorum et al., 1998; Homburg et al., 2011). Research confirms a beneficial relationship between sales success and orientation (Arndt & Karande, 2012; Choi & Joung, 2017; Franke & Park, 2006; Kaynak et al., 2016; McIntyre et al., 2000; Mehrabi et al., 2012; Singh & Das, 2013; Tevan & Winters, 2007; Thureau et al., 2002; Yakasai & M., 2015). Given the volume of literature supporting the roles of customer-oriented selling behavior which might enhance cross-cultural sales performance, this hypothesis can be expected. In particular, salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling have a higher chance to possess elevated amounts of customer-oriented selling behaviors. Given the above review regarding the positive effect of customer-oriented selling behavior on cross-cultural sales performance, as well as the contribution of social media usage that enables salespeople to enhance their customer-oriented selling behavior in cross-cultural selling tasks, these hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 6: Salespeople's customer-oriented selling behavior is positively related to cross-cultural sales performance.

Hypothesis 7: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling possess higher levels of customer-oriented selling behavior.

Mediating roles of CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior

It is herein argued that social media usage to increase cross-cultural sales performance can be mediated by CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior. The implication being social media usage tends to be the significant tool that can enhance the level of CQ in salespeople and facilitate adaptive and customer-oriented selling behavior, thus expanding inter-cultural levels of selling performance. Even though salespeople use social media to perform inter-cultural sales tasks, it is still important that salespeople have cultural knowledge in order to understand foreign customers and also they need to know how to adapt their selling messages according to the nature of sales situations and provide the best solutions for customers' problems and demands, all of these are factors that tend to increase their cross-cultural mercantile ability (Franke & Park, 2006; Hansen et al., 2011; Itani et al., 2017b). This study also proposes that social media usage enhances cross-cultural sales performance because it promotes the level of CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior of salespeople. The reason that this study applies CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior as the factors which can explain the relationship between social media usage and cross-cultural sales performance is because dealing with foreign customers is totally different from dealing with local customers in terms of the way they think,

react and communicate with salespeople. Salespeople need to understand the cultural background of each foreign customer e.g. their norms, lifestyles, and communication styles in order to facilitate them to perform their cross-cultural selling tasks more effectively. Therefore, these three mediating variables play a crucial role for effective cross-cultural interaction because the characteristics of these three variables tend to facilitate salespeople to respond to the needs of cross-cultural customers effectively when using social media to perform their cross-cultural selling tasks. In addition, previous studies also found that CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior enhance cross-cultural sales performance (Baker & Delpechitre, 2016; Delpechitre & Baker, 2017; Herlache, 2018). Given the above review about the positive effect of CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling on cross-cultural sales performance, as well as the role of social media usage that enhances salespeople's levels of CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior, this study proposes that the association between social media usage and cross-cultural sales performance is mediated by CQ, adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior.

Hypothesis 8: CQ mediates the positive relationship between social media usage intensity for B2B selling and cross-cultural sales performance.

Hypothesis 9: Adaptive selling behavior mediates the positive relationship between social media usage intensity for B2B and cross-cultural sales performance.

Hypothesis 10: Customer-oriented selling behavior mediates the positive relationship between social media usage intensity for B2B and cross-cultural sales performance.

Methodology

Sample and data

This study focuses on the B2B relationship between Indian and Thai organizations for the reason that the growth of Thai-Indian business has developed in recent years. Additionally, India has become the largest audience country for social media giants. Expanding efforts of digitalization in conjunction with reduced costs of data have helped Indians to get online with circa 250 million regular consumers of social networking apps. In India, Facebook and YouTube are particularly popular (with 225 million regularly using the latter), but even Instagram and LinkedIn have 50 million users apiece, while a whopping 240 million Indians send a total of circa 50 million WhatsApp messages daily (Vagrani et al., 2019). Indian consumers prefer communicating with salespeople via social media regarding products' prices and promotions in order to build quality interpersonal relationships with salespeople before making the purchasing decision (Muralidharan et al., 2015). Considering the greater number of social media users in India, it is the great opportunity for Thai salespeople to keep in contact with Indian clients via social networking after attending international trade shows and to update new product information on social media with the purpose of maintaining a sustainable buying-selling partnership.

The target of this study is Thai salespeople who have used social media to perform their B2B selling tasks with Indian

customers after attending Indian trade shows. The list of Thai international businesses attending the Indian trade show at the time the study was conducted was obtained from the Department of International Trade Promotion, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand. Normally, there are only two times a year that Thai-Indian trade shows would be conducted by the department. As most members attend both trade shows, only one was selected for this study. There were a total of 54 organizations attending the Indian trade show during the period of data collection. Sales managers of each organization were contacted in order to obtain consent to carry out questionnaires in their workplaces.

An ethical approval for this study was obtained from the KMUTT Institutional Review Board (KMUTT-IRB-COE-2019-186). Data was collected from 1st June 2019 to 31st August 2019 (3 months). According to quota sampling, five sets of questionnaires were distributed to each organization. Sales managers were asked to collect those completed questionnaires then forward them to the researchers. Before filling in questionnaires on their own, each participating salesperson was given a thorough explanation of the objectives of the study and was given a guarantee of data-protection and privacy.

Explanatory variables

Two scales were developed: the intensity of social media use for B2B selling scale, and the cross-cultural sales performance scale. The items in both scales were created with reference to the reviewed literature and interviews with Thai salespeople who work for international businesses in Thailand and the sales experts

from well-known international businesses in Thailand who are well-versed in social app usage in their cross-cultural selling tasks. The initial questions were sent to 20 salespeople who had used social media in their cross-cultural selling tasks in order to facilitate clear and accurate analyses of questions posed in these two scales. Subsequently, questions were revised according to feedback. After the creation of a first-draft, pre-tests with a cohort of 50 salespeople were carried out in order to stress-test how reliable the scales actually were. The coefficients of internal consistency were satisfactory with Cronbach's alpha at 0.868 for the scale of social media use and 0.915 for the scale of cross-cultural sales performance. The final version of social media use scale included seven questions asking about how intensely salespeople use their social media for B2B tasks; for example, to facilitate the distributors to order the products at their convenience through social media. A Likert-scale was used with the choices vacillating from 'very little' (1) to 'very extensive' (5). Cross-cultural selling performance was gauged by five questions inquiring about the relevant abilities of salespeople in their selling tasks; for example, selling more product lines to Indian distributors and keeping long-term buying-selling relationships with Indian distributors after the Indian trade shows. A Likert-scale was used with the choices vacillating from 'very little' (1) to 'very extensive' (5).

Mediator Variables

CQ

CQ was calculated by the use of 20 items on the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) created by Ang et al. (2007). The scale includes four aspects of CQ: cognitive

CQ consists of six items ($\alpha = .843$); metacognitive CQ is made up of four items ($\alpha = .811$); motivational CQ is made up of five items ($\alpha = .875$); and behavioral CQ also consists of five items ($\alpha = .802$). A Likert-scale was used with the choices vacillating from 'very little' (1) to 'very extensive' (5). Because of the strong association between the four aspects of CQ as laid out in Table 1 and the results from the discriminant validity test which indicated that all four aspects of CQ could not be differentiated, the CQ dimensions factor scores were utilized to construct the second-order latent variable of overall CQ.

Table 1: Correlation among CQ Dimensions

	Metacognitive CQ	Motivati onal CQ	Behavio ral CQ
Cogniti ve CQ	.437***	.397***	.383***
Metaco gnitive CQ		.488***	.344***
Motiva tional CQ			.328***

Note: *** $p < .001$

Adaptive selling behavior

Adaptive selling behavior was calculated through the use of the five ADAPTS scale items created by Spiro and Weitz (1990). The degree of scale reliability and validity has been confirmed in prior research in different sample groups (Franke & Park, 2006; Pelham & Kravitz, 2008; Singh & Das, 2013). A Likert-scale was used with the choices vacillating from 'very little' (1) to 'very extensive' (5).

Customer-oriented selling behavior

Customer-oriented selling behavior was gauged by using five of the 10 items of a subcategory of the Selling-Orientation-Customer-Orientation Scale created by Saxe and Weitz (1982). The scale degree reliability and validity have been confirmed in prior research in different sample groups (Chakrabarty et al., 2014; Periatt et al., 2004). Here, a Likert-scale was used with the choices vacillating from ‘very little’ (1) to ‘very extensive’ (5).

Control variables

Age was calculated by using the salespeople’s actual ages. Gender was gauged by using a dummy code in which female was represented as 0 and male was represented as 1. Total selling experience was measured by using the actual numbers of years that the salespeople had experience in sales. The measurement of international selling experience was done by using actual numbers of occasions salespeople worked with international clients. Selling experience with Indian clients was measured by using the actual numbers of times that the salespeople had worked with Indian clients.

Data Analysis Method

A partial least square (PLS) regression in the data analyses part for the proposed model was applied. Data is not required to be dispersed in the normal manner using PLS (Chin, 1998). PLS has been chosen due to the fact that the normality test implied several important factors of the data were dispersed in unusual ways. Other equation development methods tend to give more subjective findings than PLS does (J F. Hair et al., 2012). The PLS valuation was carried out using WarpPLS 6.0.

Results

Descriptive results

A total of 234 questionnaires were handed out to 54 organizations. This number is sufficient for a PLS analysis (J F. Hair et al., 2012; Hammer et al., 1979; Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). Given that PLS requires smaller sample sizes than other SEM techniques (Hammer et al., 1979), a relatively small sample size (n=234) was also appropriate for PLS estimation (J F. Hair et al., 2012). All 234 were adequately completed and returned in good time (100% response rate) and none of them contained missing data. Descriptive statistics of respondents are reported in Table 2 and the number (percentage) of the top-three social media used per day by respondents is given in Table 3.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents (n = 234)

Characteristics	Descriptive statistics
Age (years)	Mean: 34.47 Standard Deviation: 6.60
Gender	Male: 45 (19.2 %) Female: 189 (80.8 %)
Type of product sold	Food: 39 (16.7 %) Clothes: 48 (20.5 %) Health: 54 (23.1 %) Decoration: 19 (8.1 %) OTOP: 15 (6.4 %) Other: 59 (25.2 %)
Total selling experience (in years)	Mean: 5.97 Standard Deviation: 4.53

International selling experience (number of times)	Mean: 9.38 Standard Deviation: 7.00
Selling experience with Indian clients (number of times)	Mean: 4.06 Standard Deviation: 3.65

Table 3: Numbers (percentage) of Respondents Reporting Their Top-Three Social Media Used Per Day (n = 234)

Type of social media	Social Media Use per Day				
	Less than 1 hr.	1-2 hrs.	3-4 hrs.	5-6 hrs.	More than 6 hrs.
Line (n = 234)	1 (0.43 %)	80 (34.04 %)	110 (46.81 %)	3 (13.19 %)	13 (5.53 %)
Whatsapp (n = 216)	21 (9.72 %)	144 (66.67 %)	38 (17.59 %)	12 (5.56 %)	1 (0.46 %)
Facebook (n = 161)	25 (15.53 %)	115 (71.43 %)	14 (8.70 %)	7 (4.35 %)	1 (0.62 %)
WeChat (n = 24)	8 (33.33 %)	13 (54.17 %)	1 (4.17 %)	1 (4.17 %)	1 (4.17 %)
Youtube (n = 16)	1 (5.9 %)	12 (70.6 %)	3 (17.6 %)	-	-
Instagram (n = 10)	1 (10 %)	6 (60 %)	3 (30 %)	-	-

Before estimating the PLS model, the researcher conducted tests for all scales that sought to confirm that said scales were both reliable and valid. Factor loading was utilized to investigate convergent validity. There was one item of social media use intensity for B2B cross-cultural sales performance which had loadings of less than .5, the other items in each concept had

loadings above .5 (J.F. Hair, 2009). Items with insufficient factor loading scores were expelled from the analysis. Next, a test for validity was carried out. Findings indicated the AVE's square-root was higher than other correlations; this implied the scale was valid (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 5 shows the relationships between the various facets of this study, in addition to the latent-variables' AVEs. Third, there was an analysis of how reliable the construct was; this analysis took the form of Cronbach's alpha in addition to the coefficients of composite reliability. Table 4 shows that the basic constraint of .7 was met by each and every coefficient (Nunnally, 1978). Next, the multicollinearity question was evaluated utilizing the full VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) data. The pinnacle of full VIF was 2.098; this is comfortably within the range limit of 3.3 suggested by Petter et al. (2007). Lastly, the Harman test (the one-factor test) verified the existence of "common method bias" (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Findings indicated the initial model was greater than the indices of the model fit ($\chi^2 = 1129.6$, d.f. = 706, $p < .001$); the conclusion here being that CMB need not be considered a significant obstacle.

Lastly, the results of all indicators of model fit indices of the PLS-SEM model were assessed. These indicators, including average path coefficient (APC= .198; $p < .001$), average r-squared (ARS=.129; $p < .001$), average full collinearity (AFVIF= 1.65), Tenenhaus Gof (GoF)=.320, Simpson's paradox ratio (SPR=.750), r-square contribution ration (RSCR=.963), and statistical suppression ratio (SSR=.917) are satisfactory.

Table 4: Correlation between Variables and Square Root of Average Variance Extracted

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	SEM	AVE	CR	CQ	SP	ASB	SOB	CSOB	PERF	PERF
SEM	.888	.882	1.778	.342***	.238***	.218***	.202***	.022	-.171**	.089**	.088	.086
AVE	.786	.824		.1786	.688***	.683***	.683**	.757**	.091	.178**	.183*	.288**
CR	.751	.888		.1751	.348***	.218***	.202***	.022	.167**	.087*	.087*	.216***
CQ	.736	.824			.1786	.688	.683**	.757**	.091	.178**	.182**	.272***
SP	.611	.611				.1495	.874	.268	.178	.088	.088	.216
ASB	.616	.616					.111		.027	.101	.088***	
SOB	.616	.616						.111	.088	.088	.088	.216
CSOB	.616	.616							.111	.088	.088***	
PERF	.616	.616									.088	.482***
PERF	.616	.616										.088

Main Analyses

Hypothesis 1: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling achieve better cross-cultural sales performance.

The results indicated that these two variables are positively related, which means salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling tended to achieve higher levels of cross-cultural sales performance. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .267$; $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2: The level of CQ of salespeople is positively associated with cross-cultural sales performance.

The results indicated that these two variables are positively related, which means salespeople who possessed higher levels of CQ tended to present higher levels of cross-cultural sales performance. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .170$; $p = .009$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling possess higher levels of CQ.

The result indicated that these two variables are positively related, which

means salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling tended to possess higher levels of CQ. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .318$; $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Hypothesis 4: Salespeople's adaptive selling behavior is positively related to cross-cultural sales performance.

The results indicated that these two variables are negatively related, which means salespeople who presented higher levels of adaptive selling behavior tended to present lower levels of cross-cultural sales performance. However, the relationship was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.067$; $p = .212$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Hypothesis 5: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling possess higher levels of adaptive selling behavior.

The results indicated that these two variables are positively related, which means salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling tended to possess higher levels of adaptive selling behavior. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .342$; $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

Hypothesis 6: Salespeople's customer-oriented selling behavior is positively related to cross-cultural sales performance.

The results indicated that these two variables are positively related, which means salespeople who presented higher levels of customer-oriented selling behavior tended to present higher levels of

cross-cultural sales performance. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .148$; $p = .033$). Therefore, Hypothesis 6 is supported.

Hypothesis 7: Salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling possess higher levels of customer-oriented selling behavior.

The results indicated that these two variables are positively related, which means salespeople who used social media more intensively for B2B selling tended to possess higher levels of customer-oriented selling behavior. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .216$; $p = .004$). Therefore, Hypothesis 7 is supported.

Hypothesis 8: CQ mediates the positive relationship between social media usage intensity for B2B selling and cross-cultural sales performance.

The researcher used the indirect effects analysis and total effects analysis provided in WarpPLS 6.0 to test the mediating effect (Kock, 2015). The results confirmed the positive mediating effect of CQ. This can be interpreted as CQ being the cross-cultural competency that explains why salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling tended to achieve higher levels of cross-cultural sales performance. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .075$; $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 8 is supported.

Hypothesis 9: Adaptive selling behavior mediates the positive relationship between social media usage intensity for B2B and cross-cultural sales performance.

The results from the analysis confirmed the positive mediating effect of

adaptive selling behavior. This can be interpreted as meaning the adaptive selling behavior of salespeople explains why salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling tended to achieve higher levels of cross-cultural sales performance. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .067$; $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 9 is supported.

Hypothesis 10: Customer-oriented selling behavior mediates the positive relationship between social media usage intensity for B2B and cross-cultural sales performance.

The results confirmed the positive mediating effect of CQ. This can be interpreted as meaning that customer-oriented selling behavior explains why salespeople who use social media more intensively for B2B selling tended to achieve higher levels of cross-cultural sales performance. The result was also statistically significant ($\beta = .080$; $p = .004$). Therefore, hypothesis 10 is supported.

In addition, the indirect effects analysis and total effects analysis provided in WarpPLS 6.0 were used to test the mediating effect (Kock, 2015). The results confirmed the positive mediating effect of CQ that explains the association viz-a-viz social-network use for B2B with cross-cultural mercantile proficiency ($\beta = -.075$; $p < .001$). Results also show a significant mediating effect of adaptive selling behavior regarding the link between social-network use for B2B selling with cross-cultural mercantile proficiency ($\beta = -.067$; $p < .001$).

Moreover, customer-oriented selling behavior has a facilitatory aspect regarding social-networking for B2B selling in addition to globalized,

cosmopolitan sales performance ($\beta = .080$; $p < .004$).

Finally, the total effect of social media use intensity for B2B selling is explained through the role of CQ, in addition to adaptive, as well as customer-oriented, selling behavior (as WarpPLS projected). The effect of social media use intensity for B2B selling was, statistically speaking, significant; as was confirmed by the aforementioned result ($\beta = .057$; $p < .001$). The implication herein is that CQ, in conjunction with adaptive and customer-oriented selling behavior are a tetrarch of variables that exemplify the reason for which salespeople who use social media more intensely for their B2B selling tend to possess elevated CQ levels and exhibit superior rates of adaptive and customer-oriented sales conduct. The findings of these effects and analyses are outlined in Table 5.

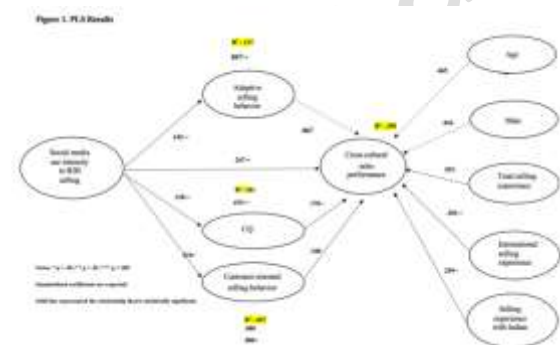
Table 5: Mediating Effects and Total Effect

Mediating effects	Beta
Social media use intensity for B2B selling CQ Cross-cultural sales performance	.075 ***
Social media use intensity for B2B selling Adaptive selling behavior Adaptive selling behavior Cross-cultural sales performance	.069 ***
Social media use intensity for B2B selling Customer-oriented selling behavior Customer-oriented selling behavior Cross-cultural sales performance	.079 **
Total effect	

Social media use intensity for B2B selling Cross-cultural sales performance	.057 ***
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Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 1 outlines the findings from the analysis of PLS. Values of p and the standardized coefficient were determined by the use of a technique known as bootstrap resampling, which comprised of sub-samples numbering 100; a method advocated by Efron (2007).



In respect of control, the results indicated that cross-cultural sales performance was negatively related with the age of salespeople ($\beta = -.065$; $p = .22$), male salespeople ($\beta = -.026$; $p = .351$), and the international selling experience of salespeople ($\beta = .202$; $p = .015$). In addition, cross-cultural sales performance was positively associated with the total selling experience of salespeople ($\beta = -.302$; $p < .001$), and on how many occasions the salespeople had worked with Indian clients ($\beta = .259$; $p < .001$). Only the associations with the total selling experience of salespeople, the international selling experience of salespeople and the actual number of times that salespeople had worked with Indian clients were statistically supported.

Discussion

Findings in this research regarding the beneficial linkage between social-

networking usage for B2B selling and cross-cultural sales attainment are in line with former studies which support the positive aspects of social media usage in regards to mercantile success (Nunan et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2012a). The results regarding the mediating roles of adaptive selling behavior, customer-oriented selling behavior and particular CQ also reinforce the findings of previous studies which outlined the influence of social media use intensity for B2B selling to nurture the key sales behaviors necessary to thrive in the sphere of international sales performance (Itani et al., 2017b; Nunan et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2015). Supporting CQ, salespeople could transfer their social interaction by observing their foreign customers' behaviors and communication styles. Findings indicate the significance of social media in facilitating cross-cultural B2B. To date, many businesses around the world sell via social media (Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanun, 2017). Social media has been proven to increase trans-national sales success. Additionally, it has also been proven to have a strong relationship to CQ, as well as adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior. Indians love being online, so the international B2B entrepreneurs should use this opportunity to create more international business transactions with Indian customers via social media. If international businesses provide the appropriate cultural knowledge to their international salespeople, it will enhance the effectiveness of their cross-cultural selling with Indians.

Even though many sales organizations provide training programs to their salespeople, such training typically focuses on face-to-face selling to local

customers, not on cross-cultural selling. Without understanding an unfamiliar culture, salespeople might make some mistakes or have some miscommunication. CQ will help to flag up the important points which should be of concern. CQ is not merely an innate quality that the blessed few possess; it can be systematically learnt or enhanced through training by quality instructors (Macnab, 2012). Thus, this study recommends that international business organizations should include CQ education as a key facet of their in-house development in order to enhance the capacity of their communication with foreign clients. The training program should involve both knowledge and skill practice for cross-cultural communication in order to meet the needs of target customers. This should consist not only of the appropriate language of communication, but aspects of national culture, norms, and media usage styles among the target population. Indians are more likely to use WhatsApp in their daily communication and use this medium for their business activities as well. The in-house training should emphasize Indian lifestyle and language in order to improve the potential of salespeople to achieve their expected sales goals and to contribute to their organizations' competitive ability in the global market.

However, there are some constraints to this research that it would be judicious to put under consideration. One key limitation is that this research used cross-sectional data; therefore, interpretations of said data can only be viewed through the prism of the relationship between the existing constructs. Second, the data were obtained from a relatively small sample i.e.

salespeople from 54 businesses in Thailand who use social media to perform sales tasks with Indian clients. The small sample size means that the results cannot be applied generally, globally or with any degree of abandon. Third, similar research could be conducted elsewhere around the world (i.e. not only in Thailand) and the results could be compared with those in this paper in order to glean some global insight or generality of the conclusions reached herein.

Conclusion

A key goal of this paper is the provision of data viz-a-viz the benefits of how intensively using social-networking apps for B2B selling facilitates salespeople in the development of skills to successfully communicate with clients from international backgrounds; in addition to enhancing cross-cultural sales performance. The first research objective was the examination of the correlation between social-networking usage for B2B selling and cross-cultural sales performance; the results showed significant support for a clear, linear connection. The secondary goal was concerned with the correlation between social-networking usage for B2B selling and the level of salespeople's CQ, and both their adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior. The analysis of the PLS clearly highlighted evidence to uphold the beneficial association between social-networking usage for B2B selling with CQ, social networking use for B2B selling with adaptive selling behavior, as well as social-networking usage for business to business selling in addition to a customer-oriented sales conduct.

These results indicate sellers who use social media to communicate with their foreign clients not only demonstrated higher levels of cross-cultural knowledge and skill, but they tended to know in what manner their sales presentations required adaptation relating to cross-cultural clients, and they could also comprehend the requirements of international clients. Finally, the last goal in this study is to demonstrate the facilitating effect of CQ, as well as adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior which allows sellers who use social media more intensively for B2B selling to increase their cross-cultural sales performance. The results supported the mediating effect of CQ, in addition to adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior. To conclude, using social media more intensively for B2B selling facilitates salespeople to develop CQ, as well as adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior as mechanisms that explain why salespeople who presented higher levels of CQ, as well as adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior tended to achieve elevated trans-national sales performance.

Declaration of Interest: None

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