The Effectiveness of Sales People on Customer Loyalty: A Quantitative Research into the Irish Printing Industry

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Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all those who have helped me through this difficult task of completing this dissertation and the greater challenge of the Executive MBA. This has been a truly life changing experience of which I didn’t know I would enjoy so much.

Although all questionnaires were anonymous I still feel the need to thank all those who participated in the research, I feel a great depth of gratitude to you all.

I would like to thank Neopost and all my work colleagues who helped me along the two years and picked up the slack from long days studying. Special thanks go to Cathal O’Boyle who made it all possible and Duncan Groom whose guidance and push has made me stay the course.

I would also like to thank my supervisor Shakeel Siddiqui who provided timely and excellent feedback and guidance.

Big thanks go to my family members for the support they offered me and my family through the long evenings and weekends allowing me the time to be fully committed.

Last but not least, I would like to give a special thanks to my wife Linda who showed the greatest patience, compassion and belief which enabled me to make the sacrifices necessary. Also to our two sons Keelan and Fionn, whose smiles and unwavering support pushed me through this difficult experience and helped me achieve my ambition of gaining an MBA.
Abstract

Relationship selling is not a new concept and has been written about by many authors however it is very rarely industry specific and little is known about the effect modern relationship managers have over customer’s loyalty given the new concept of readily available digital information. It is also evident viewing literature previously written that the arguments and assumptions based around relationship selling is from the view of the sales person and not the buying organisation,

It is the authors aim to ascertain the effect relational sales people have over customer loyalty in the modern Irish printing industry and more specifically are they still worth the high wages these sales people have become accustomed to.

The researcher performed a survey of the entire printing industry in both north and south Ireland in July 2014 using a questionnaire and model previously used in America and performed a comparative analysis by which he came to his conclusions.

The author overcame preconceived ideas pertaining to the sales environment and the views of buying organisations over sales people’s behaviours, realising that relational behaviours are the single most important skill a sales person can have and or develop.
Declaration

I hereby declare that this material and all material within this dissertation to be submitted for assessment towards the awarding of masters in Executive Masters in Business Administration is entirely my own work and has not been taken from any work of others, any work that has been the work of others is correctly quoted and noted in the bibliography.

Signed ........................................ Date.........................................
Chapter one:

Introduction
1, Introduction

**Introduction**

The research in this dissertation the author will research a population of key decision makers in the Irish printing industry to ascertain the effectiveness of modern relationship sales personnel at creating relationship loyalty. It is the aim of the researcher to outline the problem area, consult previous research and perform primary research, analyse that research and come to a set of conclusions and make some recommendations for future research and implications for the work place.

**1.1 Background of the Issue**

Capital Equipment sales are most definitely a two sided transaction, with both sides investing time and money in both selling solutions and investigating the market place. Most marketers are avoiding the “spray and pray” approach in business-to-business markets (Kotler et al 2012). These large capital equipment sales teams are targeting favourable customers and developing a solutions sales approach to justify spending, in doing so the sales person develops a trust and relationship with the customer enabling a free flow of information. These approaches are not a new concept (Powers et al 1988) and have been around since the early 1900s. As a result; this approach to sales has been honed over a long period resulting in sharper highly paid solution selling personnel. However the problem area resides around this transaction and the changing environment in which these sales are taking place. With the global release of information and how readily available it is, the transaction negotiation is changing at a fast rate resulting in people already knowing about brands and machinery benefits and more importantly the price of machinery before the negotiation process begins, making the negotiation process extremely difficult.

In this context the research revolves around the capital equipment sale and the factors influencing the buyer’s loyalty and also and more importantly the relevance of relationship sales people in effectively creating customer loyalty in the printing industry.

Printing firms are now looking at ways to gain market share and maintain or grow profits. One of the ways they are able to achieve this is by staying in front of the curve in technology which gains them competitive advantages and cost saving measures with quicker machines
which require less labour. A European wide industry review performed by the European Union (2013) found that 36% of companies would invest in both new technology and in more automation in the short term.

However there is great competition in the market place today from the suppliers of this equipment, tussling for each and every capital equipment purchase. The operators of printing firms strive to make the best purchase and drive the best bargain however not every purchase is made on price and not every purchase seems logical.

Given the fragmented nature of the Irish Printing Industry and the lack of research on relationship management in printing industries in general the author feels that this research will not only benefit his employer which operates in 22 different countries but it will also benefit the industry as a whole.

1.2 The Researcher

The researcher is not only involved with personal selling in today’s market but he is also very heavily involved in the Irish printing industry. The author served an apprenticeship as a Lithographic Printer in the newspaper industry in 1997 and subsequently became a sales person in the same industry in 2003. Having learned his trade in the personal sales role for seven years the author decided to re-educate and undertook a diploma in Business Studies in Dublin Business School in 2011. The author is deeply attached to the roots of printing in Ireland being a third generation printer with several relatives also involved in the industry.

With reflection of the industry changes and the outside factors which are forcing the industry to evolve the author is trying to quantify the modern relationship sales person. One of the main factors in a capital equipment sales cycle today is price; with printing firms driving down the price of equipment, can the selling organisation afford highly skilled and highly paid relationship managers or can they afford not to have them?.

1.3 Industry Overview

The Irish Print Industry has been attacked on several fronts in the past 15 years, technology has paid a large part in this transition with the movement from more traditional methods of printing to the digital era of printing, the change in market trends from global trends towards visual advertising and the power of point of sale and large format has also impacted the
industry greatly. Printers have tried to diversify their offering moving away from traditional production to offering a more comprehensive range of services (Ibis World 2014).

The printing industry is also in decline due to pressures from foreign print firms offering services across most of Europe from central bases, such as Vista Print with a manufacturing facility in the Netherlands (Ibis World 2014). Larger book production is also under pressure from cheaper labour countries such as Spain and Poland, the authors or publishers in Ireland are sending large production runs abroad as the printing firms here do not have the capacity to produce these type of runs or the volume to specialise in one type of production process.

Technology on a different front has paid a large part in the consolidation of the industry, with the internet and the access to easy information putting major sectors into decline such as newspapers and book production. The email and digital era has also impacted on direct mail and letters with mail volumes dropping by as much as 20% in the four years from 2007 to 2011 (Grant & Thornton, 2012). And as we all know all matter coming through the letter box is printed.

The global recession also hit extremely hard as companies first budget being cut is the printing or marketing budget, printing also relies heavily on machinery and investing in new quicker more efficient machinery to keep ahead of the competition. The global recession hit this aspect of the industry as the credit crunch did not allow companies replace old machines as their end of life approached forcing companies to run below capacity. This in turn has a knock on effect on the manufacturers of this machinery and the sales agents; there have been some widely known closures of large machinery manufacturers such as Man Roland the German newspaper press manufacturer.

The largest difficulty with the printing Industry in Ireland is putting a statistic analysis on it. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) has divided the industry into separate NACE Codes and with many printing companies offering a variety of services they are no longer confined to specific codes. The original code was NACE 22.2 which stood for “printing and services relating to printing”. It has now been divided into three codes. The new NACE codes fall as:

- NACE 17.23 – Manufacturing of paper stationery
- NACE 18.12 – Other printing services (except for newspapers)
- NACE 58.19 – Other publishing activities
The CSO changed the codes in 2007 which makes it difficult to create a time line or report on the size of decline. Fallon (2009) puts the printing industry in 2005 at €2.6 billion turnover and employing 17,000 staff with 750 companies. However the Print and Packaging Forum sponsored 2 reports the first report in 2005 putting the industry at 703 companies turning over €2.5 billion and employing 18,858 (statistics dated 2003) and the second report 2010 could not make a direct comparison due to the changes in the CSO codes.

The Northern Irish Printing Industry is classed by the British Print Industry Federation (BPIF) as having 161 companies, employing 1,899 and turning over £185.5 million. Once again this information is based on membership of the BPIF and is not a whole picture of the industry, a report commissioned by the BPIF in in 2012 called “Stronger Together” put the figures for Northern Ireland at 157 companies employing 1,803 people and turning over 172,642,000.

The printing industry is heavily dependent on capital investment to maintain industrial manufacturing advantages and gain economies of scale, 21% of companies surveyed in 2013 in the UK print industry intended to increase their capital investment and the majority of companies surveyed conveyed that they spend 5% or more of their annual turnover on capital investment. The top investors (15%) of companies surveyed spend over 15% of their annual turnover on capital equipment. The above statistics come from a joint report from Neopost UK and the BPIF and reports that all expenditure in 2013 is up from the same report commissioned in 2008 which is a promising statistic giving the financial crises that existed during this period.

Another key aspect of the Irish printing Industry is the demographic of the company owners and managers. This is particularly evident when put into context with the author’s research on capital equipment purchases and relationship loyalty. The report published in 2010 by the Print and Packaging Forum of 711 companies puts states that 98% of the companies are Irish owned and 74% of companies are privately owned with the average employment being just 21 (which are down from 45 in the 2005 report). With these statistics in mind it is easy to see that the sales people are engaging in capital equipment sales are by and large conversing with the owner manager of the printing firm. As a result of this there is a large need for string lasting relationships as the owner will remain at this company until they pass it onto a family member.
1.4 Need for Present Study

Nothing in this world is sold without someone selling it first. There is a distinct lack of understanding of the buying decisions made during the capital equipment purchase and in particular in the printing industry. The printing industry is particularly bad at reporting and regulation and even more with the industry being disjointed as mentioned above. The researcher will perform a comparative analysis with a body of work performed by Newell et al in 2011, in their conclusions they suggested future research should be the performing of their research in a comparative bases in Europe and in China. Newell et al (2011) and Geiger & Darach (2003) both agree that a lot of research has been committed around relational loyalty and relational selling however the majority of research has been performed from the perspective of the sales individual (Churchill et al 1985, Dublinsky, 1980) and not from the buying organisation, this paper will focus on loyalty from the perspective of the buying organisation. The research also goes further than the comparative research completed by Newell et al (2011) and takes the views of the buying organisation over the selling organisation and their impact on relational loyalty.

This body of research will not only aid the printing industry in Ireland but will help the industry further afield. The researcher works for a French Multinational called Neopost; this multinational operates in 29 countries selling graphical equipment in 7 of these countries. Neopost are making a strategic approach towards the selling of larger graphic capital equipment in all other countries and this research will aid them in marketing and also recruitment of sales personnel in the future, while gaining an insight into the unsuccessful sales cycles and also into the winning sales cycles. This research will also give sales personnel a further insight into the mind of the purchasing company helping them sign more business and learn from the mistakes of the past.
1.5 Research Aim
The aim of this research is to investigate the impact a sales person has over the relationship loyalty of a buying organisation in a capital equipment purchasing relationship. This research will also touch lightly on the relationships between the selling organisation and the buying organisation. This will provide an insight into the views and levels of importance placed on different factors in relationship management and allow companies decide whether the highly paid relationship sales executive are worth investing in.

1.6 Research Question

Saunders et al (2012) stress the importance of setting a clear and concise research question early in the research process which is as follows;

Are relational sales people still effective at creating relationship loyalty in the modern Irish printing industry?

1.7 Research Objectives
As stated by Saunders et al 2012 the research objectives allow the researcher operationalise the research question and allow greater detailed investigation into the problem area. With these ideas in mind the researcher defines the research objectives as listed below:

- To ascertain the correlation between relational behaviours and customer loyalty.
- To ascertain the correlation between sales person trust and customer loyalty.
- To ascertain the effect consultative task behaviours have over customer loyalty.
- To ascertain if sales person expertise is an indicator of relational trust in a sales relationship
- To ascertain the effect a sales organisation has over relational loyalty.
1.8 Organisation of the Dissertation

This Dissertation is divided into the following chapters

Chapter 1: Chapter one is the introduction to the dissertation and sets the scene of the research, research question and objectives. It also contains the need for the research, the background of the problem and the relationship of the researcher to the topic while giving an insight into the industry and an understanding of the respondents. It also states the research question and objectives.

Chapter 2: This chapter is the involvement of secondary research consulting books, academic articles, governmental statistics and industry research to build a foundation of knowledge to start the primary research.

Chapter 3: This chapter outlines the research methodology that will show the research approach, philosophy, and strategy to be used in this research and giving reasons why the author has chosen particular strategies and approaches.

Chapter 4: Chapter four reports on the findings of the primary research, these findings will be from the statistical analyses of the survey submitted.

Chapter 5: This chapter reports the success or fail of the research reports on the initial question and the meeting or not of the objectives by the primary research.

Chapter 6: This chapter presents on the learning and opinions formulated by the researcher during the process of writing a dissertation.

Chapter 7: This chapter contains the conclusions to the dissertation and the limitation to the research while also giving recommendations to future research.

Chapter 8: This chapter is the bibliography reporting on all literature books and journals etc. used in the writing of the dissertation.

Chapter 9: This chapter is the appendix of the dissertation containing sample questionnaires and interview questions.
1.9 Scope and Limitations

The research study presented in this dissertation was conducted with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the opinions of buying organisations over relational sales people and their attitudes towards loyalty. This research gives a comparative analysis and also adds to academic knowledge around this topic area.

The main limitation of this research is the survey sample, as the printing industry has no definitive boundary around what constitutes a printer and also how many printing companies there are in Ireland. However the sample population used is said to be the most comprehensive database on the Irish printing Industry both north and south of the border.
Chapter Two

Literature Review
2. Literature Review

2.1 Industrial Marketing

Business markets serve the largest markets of all as one industrial purchaser can purchase many times the consumer. Hutt and Speh (2013) define it best when they say “business markets are markets for products and services, local to international, bought by businesses, government bodies, and institutions for incorporation, for consumption, for use, or for resale”. According to Kotler et al (2012) there are over 19 million businesses in Europe.

The main defining factors in business markets are that the purchasers are organisations or businesses not the general public or consumers. Business firms buy goods or services to resale or to aid or be part of production of a service or product. Hutt and Speh (2013) define four distinct business markets which all have to be marketed differently and are as follows: producers, sellers, public sector and government and institutions. Kotler et al (2012) stress that in order to be successful in business; marketing sellers need to understand their organisational customer’s needs, resources, policies and buying procedures. Such as just in time purchases for small business who do not wish to overstock or plan too far into the future to large organisations who build long relationships with suppliers which are mutually beneficial.

It is not a new trend and scholars worldwide have been writing about the importance of relationship management or building relationships between sellers and buyers and the key factor in building this relationship or sustaining it is the contact points between seller and buyer “The Sales Person”. These sales people have been very important and traditional in the business to business environment in the printing industry in Ireland.

2.2 Relational Marketing

“Relationship marketing is the process of creating and maintaining harmonious relationships between suppliers and customers through mutual cooperation and commitment”

Sheth (1992)
Many scholars (Ming et al 2013, Machintosh et al 1992, Pop et al 2011, Morgan & Hunt 1994, Dwyer et al 1987, Newell et al 2011) worldwide have written about relationship marketing and all agree about its importance and how critical it is to success in industrial or business-to-business markets. As quoted by Dwyer et al (1987) Hunt (1983) cornered marketing believing the primary focus of marketing is an exchange of relationship. The role of personal selling became more scientific towards the 70’s and 80’s with most academics having written seminal articles devising many models and frameworks still cited today (Leigh et al, 2001).

In order to understand relationship marketing it is important to define it from other forms of selling mainly discrete. A discrete exchange excludes all other elements of the purchase and breaks it down to merely a change of goods and money (Dwyer et al 1987). Relationship marketing pertains to a longer period of business and often taking many transactions between the same parties into account (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

In order for relationships to last there has to be several factors present, loyalty, trust, and it also has to be mutually beneficial. Dwyer et al (1987) believed that relationships do not just occur they are built up over time and evolve and develop through a sequential process of five steps

1) Awareness
2) Exploration
3) Expansion
4) Commitment and
5) Dissolution

Each phase builds on the previous phase and allows relationships to grow and more exchanges to take place.

There has been much research based around this topic of relationship marketing however all researchers agree that the development of long term relationships build competitive advantages for both sides of the exchange (Pop et al 2011). Abed & Haghighi (2009) believe there are other major benefits to relationship development including:

- Fast access to new technologies and markets
- The ability to provide a wider range of goods and services
• Economies of scale in joint research and production
• Access to knowledge beyond a firms boundaries
• Bridges to other firms
• Sharing risks
• Access to other complementary skills

As discussed, in order for the relationship to have longevity there has to be an element of trust and this in turn builds loyalty. Plank et al (2008) put forward an interesting perspective on the differences between commitment and loyalty stating that commitment suggests that there will be a continuation of the relationship however loyalty is more specific in meaning and a more specific behavioural intention. In a buyer seller relationship, loyalty means that the buyer will remain buying from the supplier by choice. A buyer can be committed to a relationship as they have no choice although they may be unsatisfied with that relationship and dissolve it had they a choice (Plank et al 2008). Dwyer et al (1987) describes the formation and commitment to a relationship as an implicit or explicit pledge of relational continuity between exchange partners. They go further explaining that “participants have not ceased attending to alternatives, but maintain their awareness of alternatives without constant and frenetic testing”. Therefore it is extremely advantageous for a seller to build commitment and hope for loyalty.

As loyalty to a relationship grows so too does the trust levels, each purchase for a buyer has a perceived element of risk, the trust in the relationship puts the buyers mind at ease allowing for a certain level of risk taking believing that this risk is shared through this relationship Morgan & Hunt (1994).

Morgan & Hunt (1994) also speak of the termination of relationships and the associated costs. It is believed that these costs whether it is stock, clothing lines or machinery and service or maintenance will affect a company financially were the relationship to dissolve. It is for this reason that once a strong relationship is established it is in both parties’ interests to fully commit to this relationship and commit to conflict resolution where required. Dwyer et al (1987) presents these dissolvent as direct and in-direct meaning a buyer will plainly state their intention to dissolve the relationship or on the other hand keep their intentions to themselves and start trading with a third party.
Newell et al (2011) believe that committed relationships represent a sustainable advantage to the seller as they are difficult for competitors to break or copy, furthermore highly committed partnerships lead to increased levels of market share and revenue and a decrease in costs related to acquiring new business.

Pivotal to the concept of relational marketing or relationship development is the relational sales person; sales people are the outwardly facing employees of any firm and are the catalysts of all relationships.

2.3 Adaptive/Consultative Selling

Although adaptive and consultative selling can be broad and far apart in some selling instances these two topics present themselves as two different sides of the same coin in capital equipment selling in the Irish printing industry. Avlonitis et al, (2006) puts forward three types of sales roles 1) missionary seller 2) trade seller 3) technical seller. In this research and given its focus on the printing industry, the research is mainly revolved around the technical selling role given the expertise needed to sell the capital equipment and the solution selling needed to build customer unique solutions.

Weitz et al (1986) define adaptive selling as “the altering of sales behaviours during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation”. In a capital equipment sale the selling cycles are more often than not unique in nature and must involve adaptive selling strategies. Furthermore they speak of the importance of adaptive selling in relation to performance but distance it as the sole reason for performance; they also state that the improper use of adaptive selling can cause ineffective selling.

Newell et al (2011) state consultative selling behaviours are used to help customers take intelligent actions to achieve their business objectives. These business objectives can be different from sale to sale and from customer to customer, and require sales people to not only take on the role of consultant but also do so with and open adaptive frame of mind. The more a sales person takes on the consultative role in the buying situation the greater the impression is given of expertise (Newell et al 2011). The consultative process is a two way communication and will not be effective unless there is trust present and the consultation will
not be effective or help the customer meet their business objectives unless there is an open communication line (Liu and Leach 2001).

Spiro and Weitz (1990) stress the caution needed when adapting an adaptive sales strategy as it can be costly to adapt sales approaches for each customer, however Newell et al (2011) believe that consultative selling behaviours are key to sustaining a long term relationship with customers and those customers put great value on this type of sales person giving rise to customer loyalty. The longer the sales cycle and the greater the contract or piece of capital equipment the more time and effort is spent investigating and consulting with sales prospects. Liu and Leach (2001) agree with Newell et al finding that sales people must be committed to a long term sales strategy and that as customers profits grow so too will their own.

The sales approach for a capital equipment purchase can sometimes develop a solution sales strategy which is a combination of adaptive and consultative tasks (Evans et al 2012). There is also a need for sales people to be creative in their designing or researching of solutions for customer’s problems thus a sales person’s creativity is a particularly relevant consideration when buyers are trying to achieve business objectives (Evans et al 2012). The theory of customer information gathering regarding adaptive or consultative selling is so important that is in the only information acquisition skill to be included in Weitz et al’s (1986) adaptive selling framework.

There is a train of thought that the more expert a sales person is the more trust it creates within a customer relationship giving rise to a free flow of consultative information, the more a sales person knows about processes and capabilities of a customer the better equipped they are to advise on purchases. These relationships create extensive barriers to switching and are a source of sustainable competitive advantage for the sales firm (Liu and Leach 2001).

2.4 Relational Selling Behaviour

There is a large body of work pertaining to the importance of relational selling strategies in selling and in particular in industrial markets where buyer-seller relationships are typically characterised by complexity, interdependence and long-term orientation (Abed et al 2009).
Crosby et al (1990) refer to relational behaviours as a “sales person’s behavioural tendency to develop, maintain and grow the buyer-seller relationship”. They performed research to establish how important relational behaviours are at building long lasting relationships. They found that high contact intensity, mutual disclosure and cooperation between buyer-seller greatly enhanced the relationship quality. Richard plank and David Reid (1994) speak of the importance of the Walker, Chruchill, Ford (WCF) model which tested the various determinants of sales success; their model outlined 5 factors of 1) personal, organisational and environmental factors 2) motivational factors 3) aptitude 4) skill level and 5) role perceptions and sales behaviours.

The seminal paper depicting the personal selling process (PSP) was written by Alan J. Dublinsky, (1980). Dublinsky surveyed 181 sales people on the importance they place on different selling techniques. He devised a 7 step approach to selling: 1) locating and prospecting for customers, 2) The preapproach, 3) the approach, 4) Sales presentation, 5) handling objectives/sales resistance, 6) the close and, 7) post-sale follow up. Wortuba, (1991) devised a five stage evolution of personal selling believing that sales people go through this evolution to become personal sales people. He also believes that personal selling changes as the seller’s competitive and market environment changes however this paper has no research findings and is based on an inductive analysis of available literature in 1991. Dwyer et al (1987) devised a relationship development process comprising of five general phases: 1) awareness, 2) exploration 3) expansion, 4) commitment, and 5) dissolution. Dwyer et al’s, (1987) paper relies heavily on relationship development for the success of personal selling and believes that there are four key benefits to the idea of organisational exchange on a personal level they are reduced uncertainty, managed dependence, exchange efficiency and social satisfactions from the association. All the above theories believe in the personal selling process however differ slightly in the make-up of the process.

Openness in a buyer-seller relationship is a key aspect of maintaining a long lasting relationship as the sales person is often called to solve complex situations and reluctance on the part of the customer to reveal critical information may block or severely delay satisfactory problem resolution (Crosby et al 1990). Another key factor mentioned by Crosby et al (1990) in the frequency of contact between the buyer and seller, they noted that the relationship cannot be trusted if the contact is infrequent and only tested in rare times of crises. This
frequent contact theory proposed by Crosby et al (1990) is also corroborated by Doney and Cannon (1997) stating that more frequent contact a firm has with a sales person can better allow the buyer predict the behaviours of the sales person enhancing the level of trust. The frequency of contact is effective in the sale process whether in the selling phase or the post or the pre-sales cycle and buyers are also more familiar with seller habits they see every week rather than in the past (Evans et al 2012).

Doney and Cannon (1997) also put forward the idea of similarity between buyer and seller increasing the relationship sharing. This theory believes that the buyer can better predict the actions of the seller through similar believes in behaviours, goals and policies fostering a stronger bond and enabling a high degree of trust between the parties.

Rapport building has received much attention and has been classed as interactions between individuals to establish a connection. As noted by Newell et al (2011) this is often established by finding common areas of interest or similarities while being attentive and courteous. They also go further to discuss the gateway nature of rapport building suggesting that it merely serves as a purpose to uncover a longer lasting relationship between buyer and seller. Aded (2009) et al reiterates this idea believing that the successes of relational strategies are strongly dependent on the ability to create interpersonal bonds between buyer and seller.

Reeves and Barksdale, (1984) proposed hypothetical research model for researching the personal selling process, they recognised the shift in the personal selling process to one of significant organisational variances and one which the sales person is having to adapt to. They note the importance of a two dimensional approach to selling research firstly that relationship is two way and secondly that it has dynamic behaviours this is based on the fact that selling is a complex process involving interpersonal, organisational, and situational dynamics. The transactions and relationships investigated by the author in his research are two way dynamic, meaning that the sales process has a large amount of involvement from both the buyer and the seller.
2.5 Organisational Buying Behaviour

There have been many papers published on the buying behaviours of organisations and extensive research published around the different aspects of organisational buying. The three pioneering models of Robinson, Faris and Wind, (1967), Sheth, (1973) and Webster and Wind, (1972) are among some of the seminal papers published to date. The author has an interest in the buy grid framework by Robinson et al, (1967), this framework as depicted in Appendix #2 deal with three types of buying situations: new task, modified rebuy and straight rebuy and the eight steps of the buyer purchase process. As Anderson et al, (1987) noted the new task is relatively rare and has an aspect of risk attached. They also stated that given the risk element and the higher value attached with the new buy task the buying centre tends to be larger and performs a higher degree of competitor research than would ordinarily with a straight rebuy. Sheth, (1973) observed that not all industrial decisions are the outcomes of a systematic decision making process as some are forced by breakages etc. Bunn, (1983) researched the topic of taxonomy of buying decision approaches he also speaks of the importance of the purchase to the firm having a large impact on the decision making process. He classifies six different types of approaches which are 1) Casual Purchase, 2) Routine Low Priority, 3) Simple modified rebuy, 4) Judgemental New Task, 5) Complex Modified rebuy and 6) Strategic New Task. The purchasing process being investigated in this paper matched 6) Strategic New task best, it has a lot of similarities with Robinson et al’s, (1967) new task purchasing situation however some critiques of the Robinson et al framework is the lack of insight into the importance of the purchase or for the complexity of the evaluation of the task (Anderson et al, 1987). The framework overstated the role of newness as a description of the purchase task.

In this paper the author is mainly concerned with small to medium enterprise as the majority of companies in the print sector are from this type of company. Ellegaard, (2009) distinguishes between large corporation and large businesses and “small company owners” in the purchasing process. Through his research he found that SCO’s spend minimal time on purchasing as they are trying to run the company and do not prioritise purchasing; however Ellergard, (2009) does not differentiate between the types of sales and their value.
Webster, (1965) put a model forward for the purchasing process of organisations which has four steps 1) problem recognition, 2) buying responsibility, 3) the search process and 4) the choice process. As stated by Sheth, (1973) and Webster and Wind, (1972) different influences impact the buying decision and all agree that new technologies and problem solving play a key role in the decision process.

2.6 Trust/ Experience Development

“Trust is a fundamental aspect to maintaining relational ex-change because it allows inevitable short-term inequities to be overlooked and yield long term mutual benefits”

Liu and Leach (2001)

Many authors speak of the importance of trust and experience as a precursor of long lasting relationships and customer loyalty (Morgan and Hunt 1994, Doney and Cannon 1997, Smith and Barclay 1997 Gullet et al 2009, Williams and Simms 2011, Wood et al 2008). There are several definitions of the aspect of trust however Morgan and Hunt (1994) offer this explanation “Trust is confidence on the part of the trusting party resulting from the firm belief that the trustworthy party is reliable and has high integrity which is associated with such qualities as consistent, competent, honest, fair, responsible, helpful and benevolent”. Wood et al (2008) offer the qualities of consistency, competence, honesty, fairness, responsibility and helpfulness as antecedents of overall trustworthiness.

All the research viewed rated experience and competence as a large factor in constructing trust between a long lasting relationship (Liu and Leach, 2001). Lui and Leach (2001) write of the importance of the sales person to portray expertise they must acquire accurate, current and specialised knowledge. They go further to state that the sales person must convey this expertise through providing tailor-made solutions to the customer. Smith and Barclay (1997) believe that role competence is a factor in the overall perception of a sales person and which relationship trustworthiness is built on; they form role competence as the skills abilities and knowledge necessary for effective task management. As written by Busch and Wilson (1976) and quoted Doney and Cannon (1997) customers view sales people with higher levels of perceived expert power as more trustworthy.
For trust to exist or to define it there has to be an element of risk involved and therefore the buyer trusts the seller with a large economic decision. The sales person must show the buyer that any element of risk would be shared and that the business solutions would be jointly designed for solution selling to reach the buyers business goals (Williams and Sims, 2011). Gullett et al (2010) take the position that trust is a level of behaviour that demonstrates the level an individual is willing to relinquish control to the party being trusted, thus taking an uncertain jump of faith and admitting a level of risk. In the economic exchange of goods the buyer believes that the sales person will act with their best intentions and have the progression and intentions of the customer in mind when considering this sale. Therefore trusting the sales person with the growth of their production/company is highly important (Wood et al, 2008). Morgan and Hunt (1994) believe that trust decreases a buyer’s decision making uncertainty because the trusting buyer has confidence in the behaviour and actions of the selling partner.

Smith and Barclay (1997) put forward five mutual trusting behaviours from the social exchange theory and are central to ongoing exchange relationships they are: relationship investment, influence acceptance, communication openness, control reduction and forbearance from opportunism. The idea of forbearance in exchange for opportunism offers the length of the relationship; the customer must trust the sales person is not making a quick sale and damage the long term relationship. Doney and Cannon (1997) believe that firms are unlikely to engage in opportunistic behaviour as such behaviour would damage continuation of long lasting relationships. They go further to explain that trust grows with the length of the relationship, concluding that the sales persons behaviour can be predicted with past experience and also the sales person is less likely to jeopardise a long relationship with untrustworthy behaviour. Partners will cooperate with other partners in a relationship through their desires to make that relationship work (Morgan and Hunt 1994).

Partnership trust is a key aspect to developing a long successful relationship. Partners must jointly expect responsibility in the performance of their individual roles and believe that each will act in the best interests of the partnership (Smith and Barclay 1997). Communication is a
major precursor of operational trust and must be performed by-directionally. Morgan and Hunt (1994) posit that past communications from another party have been frequent and of high quality this will result in greater trust. Furthermore they state that “communication can be described as the glue that holds together a channel of distribution”.

Trustworthiness may be shifted through several channels, partner firms may place their trust in a sales and a firm jointly. In a firm regardless of sales person or the long term relationship may be with the sales person regardless of the firm he or she is working for (Wood et al 2008). Doney and Cannon (1997) believe that the buyer firm has little contact with the supplier firm and as a result bases all perceived ideas around trustworthiness on their relationship and experience of the sales person. Thus the sales person can be seen as the firm.

2.7 Loyalty

Loyalty is a strong concept used in both business to business and consumer markets with all literature in the areas agreeing that customer loyalty breads better business (Reichheld and Markey, 2000, Ravald and Gronoos, 1996, Dowling and Uncles 1997). Reichheld and Markey (2000) make the connection between loyalty and value creation believing the two variables are inextricably linked. Ravald and Gronroos (1996) suggest that safety, credibility, security and continuity being antecedents of trust and thereby building customer loyalty. They put forward a theory that as a customer moves from a valued single or episode purchase to relationship of value they become more loyal and therefore more profitable.

As a buyer-seller relationship becomes longitudinal the loyalty also grows as the buyer experiences the firm’s service and makes associations between the quality of the service and the service provider (Foster and Cadogan, 2000).

Dowling and Uncles (1997) believe that in order for a company to engage in loyalty marketing, it must first know its customers. However they argue as the numbers of customers increase database marketing is favoured in the absence of personal knowledge. Thus leading
to less loyalty as observed by Newell et al (2011) personal relationships and relationship selling are intrinsically linked to customer loyalty.

The most common objectives for customer loyalty programmes are 1) Maintain sales levels, margins and profits 2) Increase loyalty and potential value of existing customers and 3) Introduce cross-product buying by existing customers (Dowling and Uncles 1997). However one of the most common outcomes of customer loyalty is their willingness to refer a supplier or seller to another firm or associate (Foster and Cadogan 1997).

Price elasticity and protection against competitors are other extremely favourable aspects to customer loyalty. The loyalty to a supplier may reduce the likelihood of a firm from switching suppliers for purely economic reasons (Foster and Cadogan, 2000). However Wind (1970) hypnotised that the greater the price between the current supplier and other suppliers, the greater the probability of change. Thus although loyalty can protect against customer switching over price the research suggests that the prices between suppliers would still have to be relatively comparable. This is evident in the printing industry as price is a key issue in the modern context.

Loyal customers are said to be more profitable as the cost of acquiring new customers is higher, thus it is of greater important to retain customers rather than constantly try to acquire new ones (Reichheld and Markey, 2000). Dowling and Uncles (1997) found that loyal customers are more profitable through reduced servicing costs, less price sensitivity, increased spending and favourable recommendations.

There must be a distinct line drawn between commitment to and loyalty to a relationship, Dwyer et al (1987) use commitment in their five steps in the relationship development process stating that in order for commitment to be present there must be two factors. The first factor being inputs both sides of the relationship must input information of economic and personal nature and the relationship must be durable. However as suggested previously Plant et al, (2008) disagree that commitment and loyalty are the same thing, they state that a buyer can be committed to a relationship as long as there is no alternative, however loyalty is continuing with the relationship although there are alternatives. The buyer “chooses” to continue the relationship, thus loyalty exists.
Chapter Three:

Research Methods
3. Research Methods

3.1 Introduction:
Blumberg et al, (2011) defined business research as “a systematic enquiry whose objective is to provide the information that will allow managerial problems to be solved”

In order to gain the objectives of the research problem the author intends to conduct both primary research and secondary research. Riley et al (2000) states that research may be defined in terms of a review of current literature and knowledge in a particular field or area with the creation of a new branch or slant on this knowledge.

Saunders et al, (2012) compare the approach to research methodology to an onion and that the layers of the onion represent the layers of research and considerations to be made before the researcher gains their objectives. Research can be conducted in many different ways however to ensure the highest possible standard of results careful consideration must be given to each layer of the research onion.

The author proposes using the research approach as seen in Figure 1 to conduct their research which comprises of five different layers: Research Philosophy (the outside layer), Methodical choice, research strategies, time horizon, and techniques and procedures (the inner most layer). The layers lead to the inner most layer of research data collection and analyse which helps the researcher draw their conclusions. The author chose this approach for the research because of the structure imposed and the simplicity of the approach.
Figure 1 The Research Onion (Saunders et al 2012)

3.2 Research Philosophy
This layer is the outer most layer of the research onion. This layer represents the philosophy approaches that the researcher can take in order to underpin its research strategy. When taking into account the objectives and the nature and market of the dissertation the author viewed all three major fields of Epistemology, Ontology and Axiology:

1) Axiology: Ethics, Asthetics
Axiology revolves around the aims of research i.e., are you trying to predict the world or are you trying to understand it (Lee and Kings 2008).

2) Ontology: Objectivism, Subjectivism, Pragmatism
Ontology is the study of the nature of reality; it is a set of beliefs about what the world we are studying actually is (Lee and Lings 2008). Easterby-Smith et al (2008) described it as philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality.
3) Epistemology : Positivism, Realism, Interpretivism

Bryman and Bell (2007) describe epistemological issues as concerning the question of what is or what should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline. It is deep rooted in the nature of the world and the best ways of inquiring into it (Easterby-smith et al 2008).

Saunders et al, (2012) state that the philosophy of Epistemology is concerned with acceptable knowledge in a field and that this field of research deals with topics which are more objective. The author feels that the field of Epistemology best fits the topic of the research and has chosen epistemology as the research philosophy. There are ten possible research approaches to take within the field of epistemology; the author chose three to investigate; they are positivism, critical realism and interpretivism.

**Positivism**

Firstly the author considered positivism as a research philosophy. Positivism is the approach which is mainly associated with the social sciences. The Author considered this philosophy as the dissertation intended to use mixed methods approach to the research and a certain level of observation will be used in the in-depth interviews however after lengthy secondary research the author chose to undertake a mono-methods approach. However after considering all the aspects of positivism the author discovered that a value free perspective is preferred (Bryman et al, 2011) and given that the researcher is immersed in the topic this would not be possible. The author also considers the research topic to be highly objective and immersed in human feelings, Bryman et al, (2011) states that positivism believes that only knowledge confirmed by the five senses can be considered as knowledge.

**Realism/Critical Realism**

Secondly the author visited the philosophy of realism and more closely the aspect of critical realism. This philosophy deals more with the social aspects of the business world and moreover the social structures that govern decisions and the phenomena of trying to understand these decisions. Lee and lings, (2008) believe that realism also believes in the existence of some things being beyond our ability to confirm directly but still have
independent existence. Critical realism also deals on multi-layer understanding as opposed to direct realism in meaning that there are several layers of study to be completed to meet the research objectives.

**Interpretivism**

Thirdly the author considered the research philosophy of interpretivism, as suggested by Saunders et al, (2012) this philosophy creates the need for the researcher to have an understanding of humans in their role of social actors. This philosophy also implies that the researcher is part of what is observed and that the research is driven by interests. Saunders et al (2012) also comment on this approach as having a strong grounding in the research of business and management topics, particularly in such fields as organisational behaviour. Business situations are unique and complex and involve several parties. An interpretive approach is said to be constructed by language and meaning leaving a quantitative approach to research very difficult since the nuance of these social interactions are lost in the data (Lee & Lings 2008).

**Conclusion**

The research has adopted the philosophy of interpretivism under the philosophy of epistemology as it best suits the research topic put forward and also the values surrounding the complexity of relationship management and organisational buying behaviour. Lee and Lings (2008) believe that by quantifying research you lose the social aspect of the research however the researcher will pose questions in the questionnaire which draw out the social aspect and the opinions of the buyers in relationship loyalty. As the researcher intends to perform a survey a positivism approach is said to be more associated with this type of quantitative research however the author intends to analyse the data through measuring the impact the variables have on each other and as such it becomes more about opinions and social interactions in a business decisions.

**3.3 Research Approach**

Having started to peel off the layers of the research methodology, the next consideration is the choice of research approach. Cooper and Schlinder (2008) suggest that in everyday life we have two ways of disclosing our meanings and they are exposition and arguments. Exposition consists of statements that describe without explaining and arguments allow
explanation and to be interpreted, defended and challenged. They also suggest that there are two types of arguments that are of great importance to research and they are deduction and induction. Lee and Lings, (2008) state the importance of the concepts deductive and inductive research and that they are both concepts of elementary logic laid down by the ancient Greeks.

**Deductive**

The deductive approach pertains that concepts must be operationalised in a way that enables facts to be measured against premises given at the start of that research (Blumberg et al, 2011); however the research topic deals mainly with human behaviour and the decisions of individuals and as a result might struggle in certain aspects of the research to be deductive. Collis and Hussey (2014) describe deductive research as moving from the general to the particular. Cooper and Schlinder (2008) state that for a deductive argument to be correct it must be both true and valid, that is the premises given for the conclusion must agree with the real world and the conclusion must follow from the premises.

**Inductive**

Induction is essentially the opposite of deduction. It is the process of moving from specific observations to a more general theory (Lee and Lings, 2008). Bryman et al, (2011) feel that deductive research must follow a step by step approach whereas the inductive process can be more open to interpretation to different processes or theories after the findings are realised. In induction you draw a conclusion from a set of facts and those facts support the conclusion (Cooper and Schlinder, 2008). The inductive approach to research is said to move from the specific to the general and allow for general inferences to be induced from specific instances (Collins & Hussey 2014).

**Conclusion**

Bryman and Bell (2007) set a difference between deductive and inductive research approaches quite simply as

Deductive = Theory $\rightarrow$ Observations/ Findings

Inductive= Observations $\rightarrow$ Findings/theory
Given the nature of the research topic and the mono methods being used the inductive research approach is best suited, as suggested by Saunders et al, (2011) the deductive approach is more concerned with the natural sciences than that of social sciences. The research will investigate the perceptions of buyers of sales people and analyse the research and come to findings and a conclusion. However Collins and Hussey (2014) stress the need not to be constrained by one approach as several approaches to different researches can be used in the course of good research.

3.4 Research Choice

This is the second layer of the research onion and in this section the researcher chooses between three different areas for the investigation: mono methods, multi methods and mixed methods. Having initially chosen a mixed method approach to this field of research and included this in the research proposal the author conducted further secondary research and realised that the sales persons opinions had been asked many times and decided to focus on the lesser researched side of relationship sales, the opinion of the buyers of sales people and their behaviours. Thus the author has decided to conduct a mono method approach.

3.5 Research Strategy

The third layer of the research onion is the research strategy. When answering the research question asked the findings will inevitably involve one of the following three approaches or a combination of the two, exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Saunders et al 2012).

Exploratory: Saunders et al (2012) pertain that exploratory research is best suited to solidify the justification of a research proposal and involves literature reviews, in-depth interviews, and conducting focus group interviews.

Descriptive: Collins and Hussey (2014) define descriptive research as “research conducted to describe phenomena as they exist”. They also note that descriptive research goes further than exploratory research and is undertaken to ascertain and describe the characteristics of a pertinent issue.
Exploratory: Explanatory research establishes casual relationships between variables and the point here is to study a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationship between the variables (Saunders et al 2012).

The research at hand has used exploratory in the means of a literature review and also explanatory as a result of the research question as the subject matter is the relationship between several variables.

The research question is: Are relational sales people still effective at creating relationship loyalty in the modern Irish printing industry?

Bryman et al, (2011) suggests that on the face of it there is little differentiating between qualitative and quantitative research methods other than quantitative methods being measurable. However they go further to suggest that the two methods are somewhat housed in different philosophical stables. There are several considerations to be taken into account when choosing a research strategy such as population, time research type etc. When choosing a research strategy the researcher must consider: experiment, survey, case study, case study, focus group and in-depth interviews. The researcher must firstly consider if the research will be qualitative or quantitative.

**Qualitative/Quantitative**

**Qualitative**

Qualitative research methods are said to take an interpretivism approach to data collection (Collins and Hussey, 2014). Qualitative research includes an array of interpretive techniques which describe, decode, translate or come to terms with naturally occurring phenomena in the social world (Cooper and Schlinder, 2008). The qualitative methods are more involved in the human social sciences of research and can take many forms such as in-depth interviews, focus groups etc. Qualitative data is said to lack vigour and it is not sound grounded research due to the objectivism based around the findings, however Lee and Lings (2008) argue that the subjectivism of qualitative work is one of its strengths.
Quantitative

Quantitative research is based in numerical research findings and attempts to precisely measure something. It is often used in business research to measure consumer behaviour knowledge opinions or attitudes (Cooper and Schlinder 2008). Lee and Lings (2008) stress the importance of matching the right type of quantitative research to the research question at hand and there are several considerations to make when choosing a quantitative research approach such as survey, sampling, telephone or internet although not the only method survey is the most dominant method in quantitative research. This research strategy is said to have more rigid guidelines and principles attached than qualitative.

Conclusion

The researcher is going to take a mono methods approach to the research. The researcher has adopted a quantitative approach due to the fact that the author wishes to have little involvement in the implementation and a quantitative method which is said to prevent researcher bias (Cooper and Schlinder, 2008). Another reason the author will take this approach is the size of the population and the geographical dispersion of that population. The author has also chosen mono methods and quantitative. The reason being that after further secondary research the author chose to focus on one side of the equipment purchase and drop the qualitative and mixed approach to the research.

3.6 Time Horizon

The research is described as cross-sectional, a snap shot in relation to the time horizon. The research question can be answered using a cross-sectional time frame as the opinions of the organisation can be gathered in a snap shot of time. Another reason for this selection is the time frame in which the dissertation has to be completed; the length of time given for completion does not lend itself to a longitudinal time horizon. The research population in the proposal is another reason to choose cross sectional, as the nature of the research is capital equipment purchases and not all companies make frequent purchases of capital equipment a longitudinal time horizon would have to be a five year time period to capture a capital equipment purchase of all companies as the average machine churn is 5 years. The questionnaire will be administered on two separate days dividing the population.
3.7 Data Collection

Data collection is a very important part of research and is the inner most layer of the Saunders et al, (2012) research onion. This dissertation is concerned with the collection of the opinions and perceptions of capital equipment buyers of the behaviours and skills of capital equipment sales people and thus only in-depth primary research will obtain this information. The author used both secondary data and primary data collection in the research of the dissertation question. The author will outline the research methods proposed below.

3.7.1 Secondary Data Collection

The secondary research forms part of the learning of the author and is used mainly in the formulation of the literature review and most literature in this field will be obtained through the academic search websites UBESCO and Emerald and also through the Dublin Business School Library. Blumberg et al, (2011) believes that the use of secondary data saves money and time. The author uses some government information about the print industry to frame the industry mainly through the Central Statics Office (CSO); the author will also use the Irish Print Federation and internal Neopost Industry information. Due to the lack of public information the industry information is not a complete view of the industry as a whole. Saunders et al, (2011) are under the opinion that governmental census are very good at covering the information as participation is obligatory, however the CSO breaks the industry down to several areas such as paper and pulp, this makes it extremely hard to calculate the industry in its entirety.

3.7.2 Primary Quantitative Data Collection

The researcher decided to use a survey as the method of quantitative research. Bryman and Bell (2008) define survey research as the collection of data predominantly by questionnaire at a single point in time to collect quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables which are then examined to detect patterns or associations. The method of administering this survey will be a questionnaire administered to the research population via email. The researcher uses survey monkey to send out this questionnaire by email and is said to be internet mediated (Saunders et al, 2011). Blumberg et al, (2011) believe that surveys are more impersonal and create greater anonymity thus eliminating the bias that might be experienced by other methods of data collection. Due to the broken sector boundaries of the industry it is extremely hard to get an exact number of companies operating under this
printing umbrella (Lynn et al, 2010). This survey will be sent out to 1195 printing firms on the full Data Base of Neopost Ireland both North and South Ireland, these sample population and geographical issues are vital deciding factors in choosing email administration of this questionnaire along with the time frame restrictions trying to collect this data. As suggested by Bryman et al, (2011) the use of questionnaires allows the measurement of fine differences; this is extremely useful when measuring the softer side or relationship management as it is easy to see the extremes but the finer differences are very hard to distinguish. When choosing the emailed administered questionnaire the researcher had to consider the advantages and the disadvantages of this method. Some of the stronger advantages include the questionnaire being cheap to administer by email and also cheap to analyse as the questionnaire will be administered through survey monkey, quick to administer and collect, from administering to collection the time frame was a week allowing for more in-depth analyse in the constraints of the dissertation time frame. The lack of administered bias is a strong point in this consideration as the researcher has strong views having being in this industry for ten years, this style of administration is also very convenient for the survey population and gave rise for a good response rate (9.2%). On the other hand there are some disadvantages incurred in this method such as loss of flexibility; closed ended questions are easy to quantify but loose some of the more in-depth analyses. The researcher was mindful of the questionnaire design not having too many questions in order not to deter respondents and as a result might have lost some vital information needed.

3.7.4 Questionnaire Design

Having completed the secondary research the researcher decided to perform a comparative analysis with the research completed with Newell et al (2011) in America. There are several reasons for this, mainly the similarities of the topics in both sets of research although the research performed by the author is industry specific and also a different purchasing situation. The researcher requested a copy of the questionnaire used by Newell et al (2011) in their paper and Professor Newell obliged and sent by email a copy of the questionnaire used in the paper “The Effect of Personal Relationship and Consultative Task Behaviours on Buyers Perceptions of Salesperson trust, Expertise and Loyalty”. As quoted in the paper the questionnaire was developed using guidance outlined by Churchill in 1979. They designed the questionnaire after performing a thorough review of the sales literature. They then consulted five experts in the field to examine and rank the items in order of meeting the
definition of the constructs. This resulted in the editing and eliminating of some of the questions in relation to relational and task behaviours. The same process was undertaken in the areas of trust and expertise, taking a semantic scale developed by Ohanian (1990).

3.7.5 Data Analysis
As proposed above, the quantitative research will be administered through survey monkey and the entire package was purchased. The researcher intended to use survey monkey to perform the data analyses however after the research moved in a different direction and the author decided to do a comparative analyses the analyses will be performed in the same way as the comparative research. A factor analyses was performed using partial least squares and using software called Smart PLS 2. The author will also use survey monkey to compile the data into charts and averages.

3.8 Sampling and Population
Riley et al (2000) state that a census is the collection of information on all members of a population and a sample is the collection of a part of that population. Due to the relatively small population of the Irish printing industry and the difficulty in separating it by sector the author used a census to collect the data. Blumberg et al, (2011) also state a small population with high diversity should be approached using a census. They conclude that a sample of a small diverse population may not give an accurate representation of the population.

The population surveyed is key decision makers in printing firms on the Island of Ireland (both North and South) in July 2014.

A questionnaire was administered by email to the entire data base of commercial printers in the Neopost Database which comprises of 1195 companies. The questionnaire was administered on two separate days, on Thursday the 26th of June 2014 562 email surveys were administered and on Friday the 27th of June 633 surveys were emailed. The total response was 110 representing 9.2% of the population. Of these 110 completed surveys only 3 questionnaires were not fully completed.

3.9 Ethical Issues
Blumberg et al, (2011) suggests that teleological principal refers to the means justifying the end; the authors proposed research and research topic do not breach any morality issues however Bryman et al, (2011) suggests what constitutes a morality issue can differ greatly
from author to author. There are however two ethical issues. The author has been a successful relationship sales person for the previous ten years and will try to be impartial however he will have preconceived ideas of the determinants of successful sales people. Hair et al (2005) feel that business research participants should respond honestly and be given the option of non-participation if the business topic is not relevant, given that the questionnaire was administered through email the researcher relied on the respondents to respond in an ethical manner and not to participate if the topic was not relevant. Hair et al (2005) also believe that all participants should be aware that unethical behaviour can have an impact on the lives of others.

3.10 Limitations to the Research
There are several limitations to the research, one main limitation is the lack of a complete population of the Irish Printing Industry, the author is proposing using the database of Neopost Ireland which is an extremely detailed database collected over a period of 25 years and maintained by a telemarketing department, however there is no comparison to benchmark this database against as suggested in previous reports into the industry (Ferries et al, 2013, Lynn et al, 2010). Secondly with the printing rapidly evolving with technology the lines between old industries such as sign writing and commercial printing have been muddled and as a result both are included in this research. One other large limitation is the emailing of the questionnaire, as it was sent from the researchers email address, the respondents involved may already have a perceived opinion of sales people associating the questionnaire with the researcher this may be a limitation however it is extremely hard to eliminate this biased completely.

3.11 Research Methodology Summary
The researcher has followed the guidelines set out by Saunders et al’s (2011) research onion and set about collecting the primary data mentioned in the chapter above. Although it is extremely important to set about data collection in a correct academic manner and it is vital that the researcher sticks to ethical guidelines, what is done with this data i.e. the analysis is just an important a factor in business research.

The method or surveying a population of an industry by administering a questionnaire is highly effective and is used expansively in business research (Saunders et al 2011).
It is the aim of the researcher to get an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of the key decision makers in Irish Printing industry of the impact of behaviours of sales people over relationship loyalty. Are relational sales people still effective at creating customer loyalty?
Chapter Four:
Data Analysis
4. Data Analyses

4.1 Introduction

As suggested by Suanders et al (2012) data collected through quantitative methods gathered and analysed in its raw form is of little use to anyone. The data must go through a set of rules or graphs and charts to show patterns or statistics in order to properly analyse the results of this type of research.

The survey in this research was administered through survey monkey and it was the intention of the researcher to analyse the data through survey monkey. However after reflection, the researcher has performed a comparative analysis and in keeping to the true nature of this comparison the researcher has endeavoured to use the same analyses tools as the comparative research.

Newel et al (2011) used a factor analysis using partial least squares and the software used was Smart PLS 2.0 M3. Although there is a newer version of this software currently available the researcher used the same version as the comparative research in order to keep the research as close to the comparison as possible.

Newell et al (2011) measured the effects of sales behaviours on customer loyalty from a perspective of the customer, the research solely focused on the sales person, however the researcher has gone further to analyse the opinions of the customers on the sales people but also analyses the data a second time taking into account the customers views of sales behaviours over loyalty and taking the sales firm’s expertise and trust into account. In doing this the researcher ran the model twice using constructs for company expertise and company trust instead of salesperson expertise and salesperson trust.

In both models the loadings all exceeded .7 which as suggested by Hulland (1999) shows strong item reliability, and shows there is more shared variance between the construct and its measure than error variance. Also while viewing the measures as formative measures, forming the individual constructs this indicates that all explanation is pushed towards the endogenous variables (Hulland 1999).
As performed by Newell et al (2011) the researcher performed a method of bootstrapping to “sample and replace” to ascertain the stability and significance of the parameter estimates. Standard errors were computed based on 500 bootstrapping runs.

The aim of this chapter is to present the data findings from the primary research, firstly the researcher will present the findings of the questionnaire and secondly the researcher will present the findings of the data analyse. The findings and presentation will closely follow that of Newell et al (2011) in order to keep a close comparative analysis.

4.2 The Questionnaire

The Questionnaire as discussed previously followed seven different distinct areas which later become seven different constructs to be used in our data analyses. There are 23 questions in total all of which can be seen in Appendix # 1. These constructs help the researcher reach their objectives and answer the research question. The questions and constructs are as follows

4.3 Sales Person Expertise

This topic had three questions and the participants were asked in each occasion to give opinions on the statements on a scale of one to seven. The questions asked are as follows. 1) The sales person has great expertise 2) The sales person has a great amount of experience 3) The sales person is skilled in what he/she does. The most important question asked is “the salesperson displays great expertise” the results of this can be seen below in Figure 2
The Effectiveness of Sales People on Customer Loyalty: A Quantitative Research into the Irish Printing Industry

2014

4.4 Sales Person Trust

This topic had four questions and the participants were asked in each occasion to give opinions on the statements on a scale of one to seven the questions asked are as follows. 4) I trust the sales person 5) The sales person makes truthful claims 6) The sales person is honest 7) I believe the information the sales person tells me. Of the four questions asked in this section the question “I trust the sales person” is the most important standalone question. The results of this question can be seen in Figure 3 below.

Figure 2: Q1 The sales person displays great expertise

The results of the remaining two questions can be seen in Appendix 3, it is interesting that 83.54% of the participants agreed with the statement agreeing that the sales person displays a great level of expertise and only 3.63% answered in disagreement with the statement. The second two questions in this category also answered positively with 80% of respondents answering that the sales person had a great amount of experience and 35.45% strongly agreeing that the sales person is skilled.
Figure 3: Q4 I trust the sales person

The results of the remaining three questions can be seen in Appendix 4. The results of this question also make for some interesting reading as 64.55% of participants answered in agreement indicating that a majority of customers trust the sales person that they deal with and 32.7% strongly agreeing with that statement. There is a general myth that people do not trust sales people, however this proves that in a capital equipment sales situation where large investments are at risk there is a large trust factor at play. Roughly the same percentage of respondents believe the information the sales person tells them (67.28%) however only 24.55% strongly agree with that statement.

4.5 Consultative Behaviours

This topic had three questions and the participants were asked in each occasion to give opinions on the statements on a scale of one to seven. The questions asked are as follows. 8) The sales person presents facts explaining how his/her product benefits my company, 9) The sales person acts as a consultant to me and my company, 10) The sales person gives strategic
business advice to help my company. The most important question in this topic area is “The sales person acts as a consultant to me and my company” the results of this question can be seen in Figure 4 below.

![Figure 4: Q9 The sales person acts as a consultant to me and my company](image)

As above, the results of the remaining two questions in this topic can be seen in Appendix 5. This question has given mixed answers in the eyes of the researcher as 63.64% of the participants answered positively which is not what the researcher would have predicted prior to completing this research. In capital equipment sales particularly in the printing industry, most sales are for process streamlining or labour saving resulting in competitive advantages. The researcher believed that the sales person had a large consultative impact on these decisions. It is interesting also to note that 80.91% of respondents answered positively to the question relating to sales persons product knowledge meaning that the sales people are all perceived to have good technical and manufacturing knowledge knowing where to place
machinery in a production environment. However there was a relatively poor positive response (53.64%) to how the sales person gives strategic advice to the company.

4.6 Personal Relationship Behaviours

This topic had three questions and the participants were asked in each occasion to give opinions on the statements on a scale of one to seven. The questions asked are as follows: 11) The sales person tries to get to know me on a personal level, 12) The sales person and I enjoy each other’s company, 13) The sales person and I exchange views on a variety of non-business topics. The most important question in this topic area is “the sales person tries to get to know me on a personal level” the results of this question can be seen below in Figure 5.
The results of the remaining two questions in this topic area can be seen in Appendix 6. Results of this question indicate a large engagement of personal selling behaviours between the sales person and the customers 70.1% of participants agreed with this statement and 21.5% strongly agreeing. Only 3.73% of participants disagreed with 18.69% of people remaining neutral in this occasion. These results are larger than the researcher would have predicted. When examining the two remaining questions the results are not as strong however there are large percentages of respondents neutral 27% and 25%. Both questions had very small percentages of respondents answering negatively meaning personal relations rate highly in the perceptions of the buyers.

4.7 Relationship Loyalty

This topic had three questions and the participants were asked in each occasion to give opinions on the statements on a scale of one to seven. The questions asked are as follows: 14) I feel loyalty to the sales person and his or her company, 15) I have a strong relationship with the sales person and his or her company 16) I am willing to maintain my relationship with the sales person and his or her company. There are two questions in this topic which are of great importance and they are questions 14) and 16) the results of these questions can be seen below in Figure 6 and Figure 7.
Figure 6: Q14 I feel loyalty to the sales person and his or her company
Figure 7: Q16 I am willing to maintain my relationship with the sales person and his/her company

The results of the remaining question can be seen in Appendix 7. These two questions pose some serious questions which will be discussed further in the discussion chapter of the dissertation. The stand out comment is that 67.29% of participants agreed that they would maintain their relationship with the sales person or their company however 60.75% of them said they would remain loyal to this relationship leaving a shortfall of 6.54% of participants who will maintain the relationship but would not remain loyal. These results pose the question why? When examining the question “I have a strong relationship with the sales person and his/her company” 28.97% of respondents answered neutrally meaning that they neither agree nor disagree which again poses a question that they can be persuaded either way easily as they do not have an opinion.
This topic had three questions and the participants were asked in each occasion to give opinions on the statements on a scale of one to seven. The questions asked are as follows: 17) The sales person’s company has great expertise, 18) The sales person’s company has a great amount of experience, 19) The sales person’s company is skilled in what it does. As with the topic on the sales person’s expertise the most important question in this area is 17) the sales person’s company has great expertise the results of this question can be seen below in Figure 8.

![Pie chart showing the results of Q17: The sales person's company has great expertise](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>32.71%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>28.97%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>15.63%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
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<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8: The sales person's company has great expertise**

The results of the remaining questions can be seen in Appendix 8. There is a very interesting comparison between the sales person’s expertise and the sales person’s company expertise. The results are very similar with the views on the sales person expertise being slightly stronger (83.54%) than the views of the sales person’s company (81.31%). This question also gave an interesting statistic only 3.73% or three respondents answered negatively and no
respondents strongly disagreed making the fact that buyers perceive the companies they buy from as having great expertise.

4.9 Sales Person Company Trust

This topic had four questions and the participants were asked in each occasion to give opinions on the statements on a scale of one to seven. The questions asked are as follows. 20) I trust the sales person’s company, 21) the sales person’s company makes truthful claims, 22) the sales person’s company is honest, 23) I believe the information the sales person’s company tells me. Of the four questions asked in this section the question “I trust the sales person’s company”. The results of this question can be seen in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9: Q20 I trust the sales person’s company

The results of the remaining three questions can be seen in Appendix 9. Once again there is a direct comparison between the trust placed in the sales person and that of the trust placed in the sales person’s company. This comparison is more interesting as 76.635% of participants agree that they trust the sales person’s company against 64.55% of participants agreeing that they trust the sales person. Also answered strongly is the question pertaining to the honesty of
the sales company. Only 4 companies or 3.78% of respondents answered negatively towards the honesty of the sales company giving the companies themselves a great perception of honesty. The relationships between trust and customer loyalty are examined in more depth in further analyses stages.
4.10 Comparative Data Analysis

The Beta Coefficients above are in parentheses

Figure 10: Sales person beta coefficients and t-Values

The Beta Coefficients above are in parentheses

Figure 11: Sales person's company Beta Coefficients and t-Values
4.11 Objective One

To ascertain the correlation between Relationship Behaviours and Customer Loyalty.

Newell et al (2011) classified Relational Behaviours of a Salesperson as “behaviours exhibited by the sales representative that help to better understand the buyer and his or her non business interests, opinions and activities which lead to developing a deeper personal connection”

Looking at the data in Figure 10 there is an extremely strong correlation between customer loyalty and the relationship behaviours of sales people, in the research performed by Newell et al the beta coefficients were .413 and in the research carried out here the beta coefficients are .642 making the relationship behaviours a stronger indicator of loyalty in the comparative research performed by the researcher. When the sales firm is taken into account the beta coefficients are not as strong .629 this figure alone is very hard to analyse. However when looking at “company expertise” and “company trust” the customers trusts the company more than the sales person.

However when we view the data in a more raw format and look at the percentages in the answers given that only approx. 21.5% of people strongly agree that the sales person tries to get to know the customer at a personal level. This would indicate that the more time a sales person spends on relationship selling behaviours the more loyal a customer will be.

One reason for the stronger correlation between relationship behaviours in the research presented and that of Newell et al could be the sales type. The sales person and situation being researched here is a capital equipment purchase with a long sale cycle and heavy involvement from the customer resulting in a stronger bond between the buyer and seller, the research carried out by Newell et al (2011) does not specify the sales type and the sample surveyed was 2,000 from the membership of the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) and it does not specify the nature of the purchase or relationships being formed in the research.
As suggested by Robinson et al. (1967) a straight rebuy involves less effort and as a result relationships between sales people and buyers may not be forged.

When looking at relationship behaviours and relationship loyalty, the model can explain 63% of the variance, however when we take the sales firm into account the relationship loyalty stands for 69% of the variance.

When looking at both models in their entirety Relationship behaviours are by far the strongest indicators of customer loyalty. As a result of these analyses the researcher can state that objective one has been met and the researcher can conclude that there is a strong correlation between a sales person’s relational behaviours and relationship behaviours.

4.12 Objective Two

To ascertain the correlation between sales person trust and customer loyalty

When viewing the models it is easy to come to the conclusion that sales person trust has a strong effect on relationship loyalty however it does not have as big an effect as relationship behaviours. Looking at the presented research and comparing it to that of Newell et al (2011) it does not have as strong an effect. When we compare the sales persons trust factors and relationship loyalty with that of trust in the company and relationship loyalty the relationship between the customer and the company is much stronger .378 as opposed to .278.

One reason for this difference is a trust built over longevity in the sales firm when buying high involvement equipment and trusting that the company will still be present even if the sales person is not. When we look at the specific questions in the questionnaire, question four through to question seven, 64.58% of the customers either agree somewhat agree or strongly agree that they trust their sales person. This is a considerably high percentage however against the same question posed about the sales persons company giving a percentage of 76.63% this poses some relevant questions.

In the models “sales person trust” counts for 50% of the variance in the presented research and 54% in the research carried out by Newell et al (2011) however when taking the sales person’s company into account the variance is 71%. So to summarise, the researcher can state
that there is a strong correlation between the perception of sales person trust and relationship loyalty of the customer.

4.13 Objective Three

To ascertain the effect consultative task behaviours have over customer loyalty.

Newell et al (2011) classified task behaviours as “behaviours exhibited by the sales representative to help to define, explain and ultimately develop solutions to buyer needs”

The task behaviours observed in the research presented had little effect on relationship loyalty as opposed to Newell et al (2011) they were .007 and .028 respectively. Although the task behaviours had a major effect of the customer’s perceptions of the sales person’s expertise the task behaviours had little influence over the loyalty of the customer. When taking the company expertise into account the sales person’s task behaviours had less of an effect.

There are strong results when looking at the questions in isolation. When asked “The sales person gives strategic business advice to help my company” over 50% answered in agreement and 28% were neutral giving only 18% in disagreement.

However task behaviours feed into expertise which has a strong effect over trust and eventually into loyalty. The task behaviours have little direct effect over relational loyalty; the results of the research performed by Newell et al have stronger effects directly over relational loyalty and weaker results over a customer’s perspective of a salesperson’s expertise. The correlation between task behaviours of the sales person and relationship loyalty actually have a very slight negative effect (.007) as a result of this the objective is met and the researcher can state that a sales person’s task behaviours have a very slight negative effect over relationship loyalty.

4.14 Objective Four
To ascertain if sales person expertise is an indicator of sales person trust in a sales relationship

Sales person expertise counts for 51% of the variance in the research performed just 1% more than Salesperson Trust, this compares to 25% in the Newell et al research of 2011. The effect observed is .639 stronger than the compared research of .604 giving a moderate effect of sales person expertise over sales person trust.

However the very interesting information garnished from the results is the weight of expertise observed when viewing the company expertise over the company trust as perceived by the customer which has a beta coefficient of .829 the largest reading in all three models being scrutinised. The researcher can surmise that sales person expertise is an indicator of sales person trust as observed in the research.

4.15 Objective 5

The ascertain the effect a sales organisation has over relational loyalty

Due to the fact that the researcher is pursuing a new model incorporating the sales organisation there is no comparative analyses against the research completed by Newell et al (2011). When analysing the data in the model it is clear to see that there is a positive effect from the trust and expertise of the sales company over the relational loyalty of customers explaining 69% of the variance. 76% of the participants of the survey agree that they trust the sales organisation, creating a very trusting environment between buying organisation and selling organisation. Also 72.9% of the participants in the survey agree that the sales person’s company makes truthful claims. This is also significant as it proves that the sales organisation can be trusted in marketing and advertising collateral. When viewing the second model closely it is easy to come to a conclusion that a sales organisation has a very strong effect over relationship loyalty.
Chapter Five:

Discussion
5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the author will examine the data as laid out above in retrospect of the objectives put forward at the start of the research. The author will also answer the research question put forward, and offer some discussions and limitations revolving around the research performed.

5.2 Objective One

To ascertain the correlation between Relationship Behaviours and Customer Loyalty

In evaluating the relationship between relational behaviours and relationship loyalty the author found that relational behaviours had a very strong impact over relationship loyalty this is contrary to the believes of Churchill et al (1985) who found after a meta-analysis that the key determinates of successful sales people is aptitude and placed personal variables 5th in the list. The author also found that relational behaviours was the largest contributing factor to relationship loyalty and also that this loyalty was stronger in the survey administered in the Irish Printing Industry than that carried out by Newell et al in 2011. This is a good insight into perhaps two different cultures, and also the survey administered by Newell et al (2011) was sent to 2,000 members of the Institute for Supply Management. They do not stipulate the type of purchasing involvement or the value of the products they are buying, as suggested by Robinson, Faris and Wind, (1967) there are several different types of buying classes. The survey administered by the author was based around capital equipment sales which is defined by the Robinson, Faris and Wind, (1967) as a strategic new task purchase and therefore would have a longer lead time, longer negotiation period and higher risk factor leading to better relationships as Doney and Cannon (1997) believe that frequency of contact breathes better relationships. These factors test the relational behaviours more and put more of an emphasis on these behaviours when measuring relationship loyalty, thus suggesting that the more time spent on new task purchases (Robinson, Faris and Wind, 1967) explains the better relationships and the higher the degree of customer loyalty. When examining the results to
the questions in the questionnaire there is a short fall that can be examined to help the sales people. The results show a large percentage 18.69% (20 respondents) of respondents answered neutral when asked if “the sales person tries to get to know me on a personal level”. The researcher can surmise that these customers should be the target audience for the sales people to convert to loyal customers using relational tactics.

5.3 Objective Two

To ascertain the correlation between sales person trust and customer loyalty

Prior to administering this survey it was the opinion of the author that trust had a large part to play in relationship loyalty however having analysed the results it is evident that trust has a bearing but not as large as was expected. The variance explained for sales person trust by the model put forward is 50% however this is 4% lower than that put forward by Newell et al’s (2011) survey. All the authors quoted previously place a large emphasis on trust as a variable in relationship loyalty and information sharing. However contrary to this the salesperson trust has less than half the impact over relationship loyalty than a sales person’s relational behaviours. Morgan and Hunt (1994) suggested that buyer-seller trust placed the buyer at ease when making decisions and eliminated some of the perceived risk factors in a capital equipment purchase, this might be true to a certain extent however the research shows that the customer places more importance on the personal relationship with the sales person when it comes to relational loyalty and or commitment to this relationship. Another concept not obvious but may be deducted from the results of the two surveys again is the difference in the purchasing conditions, it can be said from the difference that buyers place more emphasis on trust in relationship loyalty when buying commodities, consumables or fast moving goods. The explanation for trust being less a factor in the capital equipment purchase is the frequency of the contact with the sales person and this puts more emphasis on the relationship than the trust. Therefore the buyer’s perception of trust of a sales person has strong effect but not as large an effect as relational behaviours. There is a good comparative analysis worth considering in light of literature reviewed previously and that is the comparison between the sales person trust and the trust of the sales company. Many authors feel that in most instances the sales person is the face of the sales company however when examining the individual questions 76.63% of respondents answered positively to the statement “I trust the sales
person’s company” and 64.55% of respondents answered positively to the statement “I trust the sales person” this is an interesting comparison as this shifts the trust away from the sales person and more towards the sales company. This follows train in two other questions revolved around trust with the sales company stronger in results in both honesty and truthful claims however the respondents believe the sales people more than they believe the sales company by 5.5% this is contradictory to the other three questions but might be explained by the relationships the sales people hold with the buyers.

5.4 Objective Three

To ascertain the effect consultative task behaviours have over customer loyalty

When looking at the tasks behaviours the findings are very interesting especially given the nature of the equipment being sold. As the equipment is of a high value and revenue generating in most instances, and in other instances the machinery brings better efficiencies to a manufacturing process or is labour saving, one would have thought that task behaviours in a sales person would have been vitally important to the buyer and have a large impact on relationship loyalty. However when analysing the results task behaviours have little if no effect on the relationship loyalty but that small effect is negative. Although task behaviours have a very slight negative effect on relationship loyalty they do have a significant impact on the buyer’s perception of expertise which in turn creates trust in the sales person. Weitz et al (1986) spoke of the importance of consultative behaviour but indicated that they are not a large factor in sales performance. In fact the strongest coefficient in the model is that of the impact task behaviours have over the buyer’s perceptions of a sales person’s expertise. When analysing some of the individual questions it is easy to see that the majority of companies answered positively when asked if the sales person acts as a consultant. It is evident to see that existing sales people are using these skills in their current roles and can create a perception of expertise when using task behaviours. Therefore task behaviours are very important for a sales person and have a very large impact on the buyer’s perception of the expertise of the sales person; however these behaviours have virtually no effect on a customer’s relationship loyalty. When viewing the individual question one can surmise that the buyers strongly believe that sales people can present products and their benefits to the buyer however they do not feel as strongly that the sales person gives strategic advice to the
company, therefore the buyers listen to the benefits of the sales persons products but do not necessarily agree with the strategic advice offered by the sales person.

5.5 Objective Four

To ascertain if sales person’s expertise is an indicator of relational trust in a sales relationship

Many of the authors and Liu and Leach (2001) in particular offer the steps of information sharing leading to experience or expertise to create tailor made solutions for customers which leads to trust and subsequently to sales success. When viewing the model put forward this is an obvious progression and a sales person’s expertise has a strong impact over the buyer’s perception of a sales person’s trust. Again this chain of variables task, expertise, and trust has stronger effects over the next variable in the chain than in the same results shown by Newell et al (2011). The model shown explains 51.5% of the variance, again a strong result which also tests stronger than the results of Newell et al’s (2011) results which explained 25% of the variance of a salesperson’s expertise. Doney and Cannon (1997) put forward the thought that expertise and trust are precursors of long lasting relationships and customer loyalty. Therefore it is easy to see from the model that a sales person’s expertise has a strong impact over the customer’s perception of a salesperson’s trust and in turn has a large effect over a customer’s relationship loyalty.

5.6 Objective Five

To ascertain the effect a sales organisation has over relational loyalty

This section of the research is where the author has gone further than the comparative research. Doney and Cannon (1997) put forward the view that the sales person is the firm in most customers eyes as the contact was all through the sales person. As a result the customer never really gets to know the sales organisation. As such the sales firm never really has an identity, the author wished to see if the sales organisation has a positive impact on the relationship loyalty and how strong this impact is. The longer a relationship the more
interaction the customer has with the sales firm as they get to experience the service levels and gain trust in that level of service. A sales persons task behaviours has an impact over the perception of the expertise of the company and thus over the trust the buyer has over this company. The company expertise and the company trust explains 31% and 71% of the variance in the model, respectively. The relational behaviours of the sales person has a small impact over the buyers perception of the company trust however the company trust has a very large impact over relationship loyalty. Thus it can be derived that trusting a company has a very large impact over relationship loyalty and this second model explains 69% of the variance in relationship loyalty. However in this second model the relational behaviours of a sales person are still the largest single deciding factor over relationship loyalty and thus it is very important for sales organisations to employ the right personnel to give the right outward impression of the company, whilst building long mutually beneficial relationships between the selling firm and the buying firm.

5.7 Relationship Loyalty
Although this heading is not an objective outlined in the research topic the questions asked and the results garnished make for some interesting implications and recommendations. One of the most interesting facts is that 67.92% of respondents answered positively towards maintaining their relationship with a sales person and their company however only 60.75% of participants answered positively towards feeling loyalty. That leaves a shortfall of 7.18% who will maintain their relationship but will not feel loyalty towards the sales company; this leaves many customers or buyers who can be worked upon to develop loyalty. As discussed previously not all customers reach the value needed to invest time towards relational selling behaviours however that 7.18% of buyers are the easy target for sales people once identified. There are also a large number of respondents who answered neutrally an average of 25.54% across the three questions on loyalty. Again a large percentage of buyers who are left undecided towards loyalty and who can be moved into the loyalty sector with some targeted tactics.

5.8 The Research Question
When examining the research question put forward at the start of the dissertation it is easy to see how the progression through the research both primary and secondary has answered the question below:
Are relational sales people still effective at creating relational loyalty in the modern printing industry?

Examining the research question and its relevance to the rapidly changing modern printing industry in Ireland it is easy to see how important these sales people can be. The results show that relational selling behaviours are singly the most influential factors over customer loyalty in both models put forward, thus the author can answer the question that relational sales people are still effective at creating relational loyalty in the modern Irish printing industry.

5.9 Implications for Managers

Examining the research findings above there are several implications for sales managers and sales orientated organisations.

Firstly, one must examine the implications over recruitment, the research above shows that one sales trait outweighs all others in sales people when looking at the loyalty of buyers of capital equipment in the modern printing industry and that is relational building behaviours. This suggests that managers aim for sales people with the right relational building skills and give these sales people the necessary training to become overall rounded sales people.

Secondly, the sales managers must take the purchase situation into consideration and realise that relationship loyalty takes time to build through relationship building and as a result the sales person may not be successful immediately but will however be successful if allowed the time to build relationships and turn the customer into a loyal one.

Thirdly, sales managers and sales organisations must realise that the longer the relationship the more impact the sales organisation will have over customer loyalty and it is not enough just to have a good sales force the organisation must back it up with good service.

5.10 Conclusion

In the above findings and discussions the author has answered the research question asked and also met all objectives as set out at the start of the dissertation. Finding some interesting comparative analyses to the same research performed in the United States and has also found some interesting facts, about the perceptions of sales personnel in the printing industry in Ireland.
Chapter Six:

Conclusion
6 Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion
It is much debated between scholars as to what are the determinants of successful sales people? However, most of these scholars have asked the sales people themselves and have come up with the opinions of one side of the argument.

In the research findings it is clear to see that the Irish Printing Industry rate the relational behaviours of sales people as having the largest impact over relationship loyalty these findings have far reaching implications as it is long believed that expertise and trust are the largest factors and that a sales person relational behaviours can be trained. However the research suggests that finding the right sales person with the right relational behaviour skills is the top priority i.e. a sales person with the right relational building skills and then giving them technical training to help their existing skills to meet all the demands of the customers.

In the capital equipment selling environment examined here the relationships become very strong and the research shows that the sales people should try to cultivate stronger bonds with the buyers in order to gain loyalty. However given the investment in time needed to nurture these relationships it will not always be possible to do and as a result the sales people must learn to be selective with their time spent on relationship management. They must pick customer of strategic importance and of most value and concentrate their attention on these firms.

In a fast moving sales environment managers must understand the impact of time spent on relationship management as this time does not always result in immediate sales and may take some time to show higher results.

When taking the company trust and expertise into account the results shift somewhat and as a result the sales firms must spend more time on the interactions between the customers and the company. In the past the literature suggests that the sales person is the sales firm but the research shows that the sales firm has a strong impact over relationship loyalty and this must not be ignored. Thus in relationship management over an elongated period it is more important for the sales firm to perform at a satisfactory level of service and keep the customers loyal as it is the sales person who initiates the sale.
As suggested by Newell et al (2011) in their paper “The Effect of Personal Relationship and Consultative Task Behaviours on Buyers Perceptions of Salesperson trust, Expertise and Loyalty” the scope for future research was a comparative analysis performed in both Europe and in Asia. The author has administered the same survey in Europe and kept the research very industry specific and gained interesting comparative results. The largest difference between the two surveys is the impact that task behaviours have over relationship loyalty in the research performed by Newell et al (2011). Task behaviours have a strong effect over relationship loyalty however this had a very small negative effect on the author’s survey. This result is contrary to the literature and research performed by other scholars and can suggest a difference in the two purchase situations discussed earlier however it could also be a result of the author’s survey being industry specific and these differences could be industry related. The task behaviours did have a larger effect over the perceptions of salesperson’s expertise in the author’s survey than it did in Newell et al’s (2011) survey indicating that these task behaviours are not a wasted skill but are a valued skill used in the right situation as they can have a negative effect over loyalty.

One of the strong aspects of the research performed is the fact that it is the survey of an entire industry in Ireland with a strong response rate (9.2%). From this the results can be used by the author’s employer to great effect in Ireland when targeting customers and also when employing sales people and thirdly when setting training programmes for their sales people. The results can also be used by other capital equipment sales organisations across the Neopost worldwide organisation involved in the printing industry. As suggested above the entire Irish printing Industry was surveyed and had a strong return rate of 9.2% subsequently it can be said that this percentage is a good representation of the opinions of the Irish printing Industry making the research findings and opinions of the respondents carry considerable weight.

6.2 Limitations

The largest limitation of this research as discussed previously is the lack of a definitive number or database of the entire printing industry in Ireland, the database used by the author is the entire database collected over a 2 year period by Neopost Ireland who employs a marketing team to manage this.
Another limitation is the focus of the research, the findings are very industry specific and cannot be generalised across all industries involved in selling capital equipment.

Another consideration under the purchase type is the frequency of which capital equipment is purchased, as discussed earlier the time frame for the dissertation did not allow for longitudinal research and as a result the respondents may not have purchased a piece of capital equipment in the previous two to three years to answering the questionnaire and the information may not have been fresh in their mind at the time of answering the questionnaire and due to this time lapse the answers may not be 100% accurate.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research
As stated in the research performed by Newell et al (2011) they suggested a comparative research in both Europe and China, having performed the research in Europe the author proposes that a comparative research be performed in China. The author also suggests that the research also be performed in another European country in a similar buy class situation or in the same printing industry in Europe to gain a close comparative analysis.

The author also proposes that further research be performed looking more closely into the relationship between sales people and their sales organisations but more importantly the research which is more pertinent is research into the relationship between buying organisation and selling organisation in a capital equipment purchase or relationship.
Chapter Seven:
Reflective Learning
7. Reflective Learning

7.1 Introduction

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” Kolb (1984, P38)

In this chapter I will give an overview of the knowledge and experience gained in researching and writing of this dissertation and the Executive Masters in Business Administration as a whole over a very trying and rewarding two years. I will give a brief overview of learning styles and theory and will also outline the skills learned and how they have been adopted in personal and work life.

Bolton (2010) defined reflective learning as the process of “paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively. This leads to development insights” the researcher intends to examine the learning styles used and the skills learned in order to further the learning through experiences gained in the future.

7.2 Learning Theory and Styles

The seminal author on the learning theory is David Kolb he wrote a book entitled Experimental learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. This work was further expanded on by many authors such as Honey and Mumford (1987); they expanded on the learning cycle as put forward by Kolb in 1984. The learning cycle as defined by Kolb (1984) states that the learning cycle is an ongoing loop and that learning is an active process that comes through experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and putting into practice. Since each new experience starts the loop again the process of learning is never
ending. He also believed that learning is not achieved unless the loop is completed.

![Image of Honey and Mumford Learning Cycle]

**Figure 12: Honey and Mumford Learning Cycle**

Honey and Mumford (1986) added to this work putting learning styles to each step in the loop creating a new learning loop as seen Figure 12 above. The four learning styles put forward by Honey and Mumford (1992) are reflectors, theorists, pragmatists and activists. During the questionnaire the researcher found himself to be equally a Theorist and a Pragmatist.

**Theorist**

Theorists adapt observations into complex, logically sound theories. They tend to be perfectionists, who rely on logic and like to analyse and synthesize, they are keen on basic assumptions, principles and models. (Penger & Tekavcic, 2009)

**Pragmatist**

Pragmatists are keen on trying out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to put them into practice. They are also the first people to try out new learned skills in practice, putting into action quickly and confidently (Penger & Tekavcic, 2009). It is also suggested by Penger & Tekavcic (2009) that they are down to earth individuals who enjoy solving problems.
Conclusion
During the course of the research for this dissertation the author had to use all four learning styles in order to give a rounded dissertation, he had to adapt an activist approach to the research having an open mind to the results and not let his experience in a sales role influence or bias the research. When completing the secondary research the author had to let the concepts and opinions of others sit for some time for reflection before drawing conclusions or proceeding to the next phase of the research.

7.3 The Dissertation

Choosing a Topic
Choosing a topic for my dissertation was not a difficult challenge for me as I am a passionate sales person and the area of personal relationship management intrigued me both personally and professionally. I initially wanted to look at the relational during a capital equipment from both sides however as I researched the topic and started to go deeper into the subject in came up with some startling facts the first of which made me change my focus. The reality that most seminal papers on relationship management asked the sales people of their opinions, being a sales person myself I quickly recognised the flaw in this type of research, all sales people will not admit their failures and as a result the research is one sided. I then changed my focus to the customer’s opinions; this subject would help my employers greatly.

Use of Sources
In researching the topic the secondary research helped me to refine my topic and make it specific to a the topic of relationship loyalty, it also helped me to break down some of the preconceived ideas I had as a sales person and also remove some of my assumptions towards the subject. This research also gave me a broader knowledge of the buying and selling cycle taking me out of my very specific discipline of capital equipment sales.

Academic Research
Prior to embarking on this course I had never completed an academic paper of any shape, it was an extremely sharp learning curve and I wish I had the knowledge then that I have now as my first couple of academic papers are below the standard I am now proud of.
Writing academic papers has taught me several important skills that will help me in my career.

Firstly the information is out there and easily accessible you just have to know where to look and what to look for. Researching that first paper in Marketing Management and trying to figure out the Harvard referencing style was a daunting task however it has become second nature now and I hope I will never lose that skill. Researching papers has taught me to view each piece of literature critically and to dig as deep as necessary to find the answers or evidence needed to help my arguments. It has also taught me to never stop asking the relevant questions until you reach a satisfactory answer or conclusion to the research presented.

Secondly it has taught me the right and wrong way to present an argument. Given the in-depth analysis needed for academic arguments it has taught me the need for proper research and preparation.

Last and not least researching academic papers and completing a good literature review or extensive secondary research is one aspect however the primary research needed for the dissertation has taught me some a vast array of skills. One vital lesson learned is the power of primary research when presenting a business proposal or an academic article it gives substantial weight to an argument. It has also taught me the skills needed to complete this research and also the knowledge needed to properly analyse the results to give proper findings and to obtain objectives. Completing primary research and also made me respect the time and effort needed to successfully undertake a research topic or business research.

### 7.4 Strengths and Skills Developed

**People Management**

Throughout the MBA process including the Dissertation Phase my career has been steadily growing garnishing more responsibility and also more staff. One thing the MBA has thought me and possible one of the best lessons learned is that of effective people management. When I completed the module on effective people management we were asked to partake in the Meyer Briggs personality test. Having tested as an ENTJ and researched the personality somewhat I realised all my downfalls, realising I could not fix them all. I tried to work on the
ones that affect others the most. To this resolve as a manager I now have less conflict within my team and have come to realise that not all staff or people to that matter have the same drive or outlook on life as I do. This has come to me as a revelation and will help me in both my personal life and work life in the future affording me more patients for those around me.

**Commercial Skills**
Before embarking on my learned cycle in DBS a Diploma in Business Studies before starting the Executive Masters in Business Administration I had little if no accounting or financial qualification having opted for the sciences in school and no finance modules included in my printing apprenticeship. The sales nature of my job and also the large purchases involved had made me aware of this fact as I could not properly transverse in the finer points of financial agreements or simple examine a set of accounts and come to a conclusion about a particular company. Now having undergone modules on finance, economics, statistics in the Diploma and financial management in the MBA I am more comfortable about finances and this in turn has made me more commercially minded. These attributes will help me in future life but has undoubtedly made my employer happier in the short term.

**Team Work Skills**
Over the past two years there have been team or group assignments which have taught me a lot about team work. I have a long career working as part of or leading large teams which have a chain of command and all have shared objectives and specific roles and all the individuals in the group have similar experience in the field of expertise. However these assignments were extremely difficult given the vast difference in personalities in diverse groups, all individuals are career driven (otherwise why would they partake in and MBA) and have their own set of opinions add these to their busy personal and work schedules making group assignments one of the most difficult aspects of the MBA. However throw all these mixes into the melting pot and it makes for an excelled learning process these assignments taught me leadership, patience, negotiation, problem solving, conflict resolution and delegation. Most of all it taught me that the diverse personalities all bring something unique to the table and every individual has a role to play and something to add for the better. In my future career it will make me listen to each argument and listen more carefully before casting my assumptions.
Critical Thinking
Gary Beirne our lecturer for Research Methods said something profound in a class that has stuck with me and will help me considerably in my career. The rough sentence stated “that the more learned you become the less time or patience you will have for rash statements or unfounded facts” at the time this seemed difficult for me to comprehend however Gary was right as the module progressed and I started to research the dissertation topic in depth I quickly realised that all good statements and academic papers were backed up by substantial research. As a result this made me question flippant remarks or business remarks, firstly looking for the proof or back up to these remarks. Gary’s remark has made me be more critical and has already helped me considerably both in my personal life and in my career.

Time Management Skills
Up to partaking in this course time was in abundance to me for my work and personal life, however after embarking on my academic career I also started a family. During the duration of this course I have learned the importance of time management and prioritising. Juggling a heavy work schedule, completing an MBA and having a hectic young family have taught me to multitask and priorities the tasks of most importance and delegate the tasks that are less important. It has also helped me release some of my control in my business career as in the past I have been involved in everything failing to delegate jobs for fear of incompetence of others, however with the time constraints forced upon me during this course I had had to take an over view approach to some aspects of my day to day working environment.

Plans to Apply/Sustain the Learning
From the very first class of the masters’ programme I found I was implementing the learning from class work in my work and personal life.

I work mainly in a sales orientated role managing a sales team; however the vast array of knowledge and skills learned across eight extremely diverse fields of management in the modules of the executive MBA have taught and given me an in-depth knowledge of processes and procedures across an entire business structure. The skills learned in the dissertation will allow me to transverse the different areas of the multinational I work for and communicate with the senior management in each area of the
business. It also gives me some gravitas with these senior managers as I have knowledge and understanding of the workings of their departments.

If I was to name two of the most influential aspects I will take with me for the rest of my personal and work life it will be the new found skills of people management and critical thinking. I have incorporated people management and personality management into every aspect of my life and it has made me a better person and helped me be more patient towards others. My critical view will perhaps help me more in my work life than in my personal life however it is a great skill that I will hopefully keep.

The research topic chosen is not only close to my heart in my working career but it think it will also help me in my future carer as it will aid me in future sales management roles. The research topic can also be applied across different industries and is not industry specific. The knowledge learned in the research will also aid my company in choosing the right candidates for sales roles in the printing industry.

One of the main reasons I undertook the Executive MBA was to gain a better understanding of the inner working s of a large organisation and also to further my career, however the driving reason gaining knowledge and experience to raise above industry as a senior manager. I am currently in the Printing Industry and have been all my working life as was two generations of my family before my however this industry is in slow decline and it is my desire to educate myself and raise my career above industry specifics in order to broaden my horizons. I feel having completed the Executive MBA I have done this and time will tell where this qualification helps to further my career.

This Executive Masters in Business Administration has been the hardest and most rewarding undertaking of my life.
Chapter Eight:

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Chapter Nine:

Appendix
# 9. Appendix

## Appendix 1

Please base the below answers on your perception of a capital equipment sales person in the printing industry:

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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**SALES REP EXPERTISE**

- The salesperson has great expertise.
- The salesperson has a great amount of experience.
- The salesperson is skilled in what he/she does.

**SALES REP TRUST**

- I trust the salesperson.
- The salesperson makes truthful claims.
- The salesperson is honest.
- I believe what the salesperson tells me

**CONSULTATIVE BEHAVIORS**

- The salesperson presents facts explaining how his/her product/service benefits my company.
- The salesperson is a consultant to me and my company.
- The salesperson gives strategic business advice to help my company.

**PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP**
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## Appendix 2

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The Buying Decision Grid

Robinson, Farris and Wind (1967)
Appendix 3

Q2 The sales person has a great amount of experience
Answered: 110  Skipped: 0

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Q3 The sales person is skilled in what he/she does
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Q5 The sales person makes truthful claims

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Q7 I believe the information the sales person tells me

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Appendix 5

Q8 The sales person presents facts explaining how his/her product benefits my company

Answered: 110  Skipped: 0

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Q12 The sales person and I enjoy each others company
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Q13 The sales person and I exchange views on a variety of non-business topics
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Appendix 7

Q15 I have a strong relationship with the sales person and his/her company

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Appendix 8

Q18 the sales person's company has a great amount of experience

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Q19 The sales person’s company is skilled in what it does
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<td>18.59%</td>
<td>18.69%</td>
<td>1.87%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>