The Adoption of Sales Innovations in Swedish B2B Companies

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ABSTRACT

Sales is an essential department for organizations, it connects the products and services with the customers. The literature highlights that sales has faced a number of changes in the past years, especially with the introduction of new technologies that aim to contribute in the sales process, making it more precise and efficient. However, the previous studies have not yet explored how the companies are innovating in their sales process to adopt the new technologies that have been developed. In this research, we are studying how these elements are connected in real life, bringing a perspective of how Swedish B2B companies are adopting technology to innovate in their sales process.

As the theme of this research is relatively new to the literature, we adopted an inductive approach, conducting qualitative research. To collect the data we used semi-structured interviews, which allowed our interviewees to speak freely about the research topics. Our aim was to capture new insights and avoid preconceptions based on sales studies executed in another context, such as the USA market. To analyze the data we used thematic analysis, which is based on generating codes and connecting them according to their relationship. The analysis also connected concepts of the Theoretical Framework with the empirical data. Thereby, we identified the connection between sales process innovation and technology adoption in the context of the participants.

The results of our research showed that sales process innovation is, most of the time, not a priority for the companies. The participants were using technologies in different ways, according to the particularities of their sales process. The innovation in the sales process is very incremental in the adoption of CRM and Sales Automation Technologies. The companies have not had significant innovations in the way they sell to adopt new technologies. Thus, they are satisfied with the current structure of their sales process and the outcome of it.

Our findings contribute to the literature by casting light over sales innovation and technology adoption in a context outside the USA. We also contribute academically by connecting the process innovation and technology adoption models and performing an empirical research on the subject. In the managerial contribution, we presented a variety of insights about the reasons that lead to technology adoption. With our constructionist approach, we also expect to have a contribution to the development of the sales departments in the participant by promoting the reflection and debate around sales process.

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1. Introduction

This chapter will not only introduce the topic and the existing knowledge gaps that led to this research, it will also provide the readers with a solid theoretical background for the theoretical framework of chapter two. Giving a clarified view on Sales, Sales Processes, Sales Technology and Innovation.

1.1. Choice of Subject

Innovation: exciting and challenging, a term that is used in many forms and that receives attention by the media in daily life. Both of us have had a long-time personal interest in innovation, which grew even more while living in Umeå where both the academic and business environment thrive on innovation and growth. During the course in New Product Innovation, we had the idea of writing our master's thesis together investigating innovation and business growth. Considering our backgrounds in Marketing and Sales, we chose to look in another direction than the already widely investigated topic of new product innovation.

From both guest lectures and personal experiences with Swedish companies, we had the feeling that companies focused more effort on product innovation than other topics. The processes seemed to be less structured and guided by feelings rather than planned steps. Looking into various scientific articles, we were reassured that both process innovation and sales process innovation were receiving less attention than product innovation worldwide. However, we were positively surprised by one Swedish company, from which the CEO told us that a sales innovation, a new technology on their website for customization of the orders, increased the revenues of the company by more than 10 times in a few years. This successful Swedish company inspired us as an example of the potential that new sales technologies have and we started to dig into the existing knowledge on sales process innovation.

We expect that our work will contribute to understanding how sales innovation plays a role and is applied in the Swedish B2B market. Furthermore, we hope that it opens a window for new research, guiding Swedish companies into the adoption of new technologies in their sales processes.

1.2. Problem Background

Sales is a topic that has been explored over the years from the academic and practical perspective. The history of sales can't be completely described since it started in ancient times. Sundie et al. (2012, p. 134) even stated that the act of influencing people for trade, which can be compared to selling, is the world's truly oldest profession. The authors stated that human beings have always lived in groups and the ability to influence group members, together with the willingness to submit to the influence of others, helped our ancestors to survive and reproduce. Moreover, the tactics used by salespeople today are intimately connected to the techniques used by the influence agent's trade to navigate their social world a long time ago (Sundie et. al, 2012, p. 135).

For the ancient nature of sales, it is expected that the activity has faced many changes during the years and developed to adapt to the business environment. Ingram (2004, p.18) states that, in the past years, sales has been dramatically affected by a variety of forces, such as the complex work environment, increasing customer expectations, increasingly complex buying situation and more diversity in the customer databases. According to the

author, this turbulent business environment that sales is facing influenced the function to become a dynamic source of value creation and innovation within the firm. Taking into consideration a similar context of change that sales has faced inside the organizations, scholars highlight three main aspects as representation of the new reality of sales: sales is assuming a strategic role inside the organizations (Storbacka et at., 2009, p. 905; Ingram, 2004, p.18; Cron et al., 2014, p. 471; Haas et al., 2012, p. 97), building a relationship is becoming a key factor for sales (Weitz and Bradford, 1999, p. 241; Storbacka et at., 2009, p. 905; Ingram, 2004, p.18; Åge, 2011, p. 2) and sales is becoming more connected to other areas of the organization (Storbacka et at., 2009, p. 905; Ingram, 2004, p.18; Borg and Young, 2014, p. 548).

Scholars also discussed changes that affected the role that salespeople play inside the organizations (Donaldson, 2007, p. 5; Cron et al., 2014, p. 485; Verbeke et al., 2011, p. 422; Rapp et al., 2014, p. 246). Verbeke et al. (2011, p. 422) highlighted that the knowledge economy has affected the role of salespeople inside the organization. The authors describe that customers have more access to the information than ever before, which places pressure on salespeople to possess knowledge that is scarce and unavailable to the customers. This requires that salespeople become knowledge brokers, whose job is to transfer knowledge about product or services to the customer (Verbeke et al., 2011, p. 422).

Advances in technology have furthermore impacted the execution of sales activities. Already in 1999, Marshall et al. (1999, p. 88) stated that perhaps the greatest change in sales has been the increase in availability and use of advanced technology on salespeople's daily life. By that time, the author was referring to the availability of technology such as cellphones, laptop computers, internet and teleconferencing. These technologies were only the beginning, more complex applications were developed over the time. Similarly, Hunter and Perrault (2007, p. 16) stated that the advances in IT dramatically impacted the buyer-seller relationships. The authors highlight the high investment made by companies in Sales Technology (Customer relationship management, sales automation tools) that have the goal to improve sales force effectiveness and efficiency. Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p. 22) also stated that technology, a changing customer base, new selling tools and globalization all had a major impact on the sales people of today, even affecting their day-to-day job. The advances in technology represent big opportunities for the sales force inside organizations. However, Schillewaert et al. (2005, p. 330) highlight that considering the magnitude of investments in sales technology and their large failure rates, companies need to better understand how technology adoption can be maximized.

The emerging sales technologies also affect the sales processes that were used inside organizations. Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p. 21) highlights that the traditional model for the sales process, known as the 7 steps of selling, has been influenced by transformative factors, such as the technology, the expanding strategic role of selling within organizations, team-based approaches to selling and increased buyer knowledge and sophistication, and others. Similarly, Dixon and Tanner (2012, p. 10) have also criticized the traditionally adopted steps of selling, stating that a process model composed by steps does not reflect reality and that technology has weakened the model.

New ways to see and organize the selling process considering the changes in technology and sales environment emerged in the literature, such as the eight-step model for strategic

sales (Shapiro and Posner, 2006, p .142), the trust-based sales approach (Ingram et al., 2008, p. 67) and a multi-level selling process (Borg and Young, 2014, p. 559). Understanding how the sales process developed as a result of external and internal forces is useful to understand the background of sales technology adoption inside organizations. Furthermore, the changes that organizations had in their sales process to introduce a new technology would be classified as an innovation by Dasgupta and Gupta, who define an innovation as the successful introduction of something new and useful to the organization (Dasgupta and Gupta, 2009, p. 205).

While the scholars above write about sales in general, including B2C and B2B sales, it is clear that sales in the B2B environment have also changed over the years. According to Ingram et al. (2008, p. 87), some developments of the sales B2B are a response to the ever-increasing competition and rapid change in the business environment. It is therefore important to have an overview of how the sales process of organizations is affected by internal and external changes. In the context of the internal and external changes caused by technology development in sales, we consider it important to research about how companies are adopting sales technologies to innovate and develop their sales process. The influence of different technologies and opportunities in the sales process has been highlighted by the literature (see Appendix 1).

1.3. Theoretical background and Knowledge Gaps

For a better understanding of the theoretical background and knowledge gaps, we will start by presenting a background on the definition of sales, followed by changes in the sales process over time and the role of technology in the development of sales processes. Further the chapter goes deeper into defining sales technologies and adoption, especially CRM and Sales Automation, and innovation.

1.3.1. Sales

In order to understand the theoretical background of sales, it is necessary to clarify some basic concepts. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary sale, a singular noun, is defined as the act of selling something: the exchange of goods, services, or property for money (Merriam Webster, N.D.). Sales, a plural noun, is defined as operations and activities involved in promoting and selling goods or services (Merriam Webster, N.D.). For the purpose of this work, we will therefore adopt the presented definition when we refer to "sales". As many spheres of sales that have faced changes in the past years, the academic definition of selling has also been updated. Dixon et al. (2012, p. 10) criticized the traditional definition of selling, "interactive, personal, paid promotional approach between a buyer and seller", because it does not capture the transition towards the technology-enabled engagement persona of today. The authors proposed a broader approach, defining selling as "the phenomenon of human-driven interaction between and within individuals/organizations in order to bring about economic exchange within a value-creation context". As selling is part of the definition of sales, we will adopt the updated concept presented by Dixon et al. (2012, p. 10) when we refer to the term "selling".

Sales and the act of selling can take different forms depending on the scenario in which it is performed. Essentially there are two main categories of selling that cover a wide number of operations: Business to Business Sales (B2B) and Business to Consumer Sales (B2C). This division also applies to the marketing structure and affects the business strategy pursued by the company. The differentiation between sales to consumers and

sales to other organizations is not a new topic in the literature. Already in 1987, Lilien (1987, p. 3) stated that the market of goods focused in business or in final consumers have only two main similarities: purchase is the outcome of the process and the result derives from some decision-making activities. In spite of these superficial similarities, the author highlights that business focused in an industrial market must be handled differently from the consumer market. As the factors that differentiates the business-to-business market Lilien (1987, p. 3-4) presents: the derived demand, which is the demand being derived on the final consumer's demand; multiple influencers, many individuals involved in the purchasing processes; long purchase cycles, due to the high cost and number of individuals involved in the process; customer heterogeneity, companies have different purchase requirements and special needs that must be understood in the process.

Practices therefore differ from one market to another, sales in the B2B market are more focused on fewer and varied customers, using complex and technically oriented sales process (Lilien and Grewal, 2012, p. 3). The B2B market is characterized by often large and powerful buyers, purchasing predominantly for the furtherance of organizational objectives and using skilled buyers (Jobber and Lancaster, 2015, p.11). As the salesperson is likely to be dealing with experienced negotiators, the process of buying can extend to several months. The complexity of the sales process involved in B2B transaction is often recognized as one of the main factors that differentiate this sales approach from B2C (Lilien and Grewal, 2012, p. 3, Jobber and Lancaster, 2015, p. 11, Ingram et al., 2008, p. 31). One of the reasons for the complexity is the fact that multiple stakeholders are involved in the purchase, resulting in a multi-stage decision-making process (Ingram et al., 2008, p. 86). According to Ingram et al. (2008, p. 86), in the process of sales B2B, salespeople must gather information to discover the structure of the decision making team. Despite the importance of sales B2B, Biemans et al. (2010, p. 192) state that research on sales processes is mostly focused on B2C companies or has no distinction between B2B and B2C. That, combined with the influence of large and powerful buyers, as described by Jobber and Lancaster (2015, p. 11), makes the B2B market more interesting for further research. In this research, we will therefore narrow our focus to one type of market: the Business-to-Business market.

In spite of the recognized importance of sales to the organizations, scholars highlighted that sales as a topic of research has not received the academic focus that one might expect (Zoltners et al. 2008, p. 115; Donaldson, 2007, p. 21). According to Zoltners et al. (2008, p. 115) there is only one academic journal focusing primarily on sales force issues, the Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, and among popular journals focused on marketing, only 4% of the articles were directly related to sales. Furthermore, the authors highlight three major reason why the academic focus on sales has not matched the level of practitioner interest: sales force research is difficult because it cuts across many different disciplines; many still consider the sales function to be somewhat of an art and a mystery, instead of a discipline backed by research, data and framework; the academic access to sales organization is low, due to the fact that salespeople are highly action-oriented and focused on achieving their revenue goals. Similarly, Donaldson (2007, p. 21) states that the study of sales management has some specific problems, such as the focus on implementation and tactical operations rather than strategic planning and policy. Another topic pointed by the author is that many scientific articles and evidences are US-based and these empirical findings do not remain intact across the Atlantic. This context shows a variety of knowledge gaps that can be explored in sales. To understand

sales as a topic of research, it is first necessary to understand the processes behind sales, which are therefore addressed in the next paragraphs.

1.3.2. Sales Process

The literature regarding the processes adopted by the salespeople provides different models. One main issue found in the research about sales process is the nomenclature adopted by scholars to describe the process. While some scholars presented their models "selling process" (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005, p.13; Shapiro and Posner, 2006, p. 143; Borg and Young, 2014, p. 543), other scholars presented their models as "sales process"(Weitz, 1978, p. 502; Ingram et al., 2008). In spite of the explicit difference previously presented about the definition of the two terms (see Sales ProcessSales), the process developed by scholars seem to refer, in general, to the same set of activities. No references to the reason for adopting the two different terms were found in the literature. For this reason, we will adopt for "sales process" and "selling process" one general definition presented by Haas et al. (2012, p. 97): "It is a process that aims to uncover the needs of the customers and to produce and deliver solutions to maximize long-term satisfaction of customer and seller. Managing interactions with customers is assumed to facilitate exchange". When we refer to each specific model, we will still use the nomenclature given by the scholar that developed the model. In the other chapters, we will only refer to the term "sales process".

The background of change in sales inside an organization has also resulted in changes in the sales process proposed by scholars. While some scholars have as a basis the traditional linear approach, other scholars proposed new ways to look to the process adopted by salespeople. One of the most traditional views that were widely accepted for over 80 years is the "Seven steps of Selling", which is composed by: prospecting, pre-approach, approach, the demonstration, the argument, the close and the follow-up (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005, p.13). However, the suitability of this process to the current sales environment has been challenged. Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p. 21) state that the "Seven steps of Selling" does not reflect the reality of sales anymore, as it was strongly affected by transformative factors, including technology advances, the expanding strategic role of selling within organizations, team-based approaches to selling, increased buyer knowledge and sophistication, and others. Dixon et al. (2012, p. 10) also criticize the seven steps of selling, stating that the linear process or step ideology of the past years is gone.

The impact of technology in the traditional "Seven steps of Selling" received special attention by scholars (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005, p. 14; Long et al., 2007, p. 676) Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p. 14) stated that technology created new selling activities and affected directly the process related to communication, sales, relationship, team and database. Similarly, Long et al. (2007, p. 676) studied the impact of Internet on the "Seven steps of Selling". According to the author, information acquisition and information transition through the Internet impacted and provoked changes in every step of the traditional selling process. The influence of technology and Internet on each step of the traditional sales process is presented in Appendix 1, combining the considerations of Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p.13-22) and Long et al. (2007, p. 676).

The transformative factors highlighted by Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p. 21) has led the authors to propose a new sales model to cope with the changes identified by them.

The new model proposed is called "Evolved selling process" and aims to reflect a changed organizational philosophy toward selling and customer relationship. The evolved model highlights the influence of the following aspects of the sales process: (1) customer retention and deletion, (2) database and knowledge management, (3) nurturing the relationship, (4) marketing the product, (5) problem-solving, (6) adding value/satisfying needs, and (7) customer relationship maintenance. Other variations of the sales process also emerged to address different sales situations. Shapiro and Posner (2006, p .142) proposed an eight-step model for strategic selling, reflecting systematical approach process that identifies the customer's needs and relates the company's products to those needs. The model is composed by the following steps: (1) Opening the selling process, (2) Qualifying the prospect, (3) Developing the sales strategy, (4) Organizing the justification, (5) Making the presentation, (6) Coordinating resources and personnel, (7) Closing the sale and (8) Nurturing the account relationship.

With a non-sequential approach, Ingram et al. (2008, p. 67) proposed another model considering the idea that the sales process is becoming more similar to a relationship management process. The sales process presented by the authors, which was named "trust-based sales process", considers that salespeople should have some attributes to inspire trust and adapt their selling strategy to fit the situation. The proposed model is based on the in a correspondence between the stages of the buying process and each activity that is performed by the sales person, having three steps with discrete lines: (1) Initiating customer relationship, (2) Developing customer relationships and (3) Enhancing the customer relationships. Borg and Young (2014, p. 550) also proposed a new approach to the sales process. The scholars reviewed the previously existing sales process and highlighted that the commonest models adopted by the literature evolved from monadic to dyadic. However, the focus continued on the single buyer–seller relationship. The new proposed model by the authors aims to address different relationships within the context of sales. The authors introduce the idea of a multi-level selling process, which embraces the notion that the multiplicity of people and types of relationship within the company play a role in the selling process. The model proposed presents how the value is created via relationship within a sales context, considering three levels: (1) optimizing its relationship competence (firm level); (2) optimizing its relationship portfolio (dyadic level); and (3) optimizing its relationship value to strengthen its network position (Borg and Young, 2014, p. 559).

The sales process changed as a result of a variety of factors, one of them is the technology. As authors previously highlighted, technology is a strong force that impacted the traditionally accepted steps of the process adopted by sales. Considering the changes that the sales process faced in the last years, we only could find academic models that show how the sales process evolved and technology was included (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005, p. 14; Long et al., 2006, p. 676). However, we could not find empirically driven studies that demonstrate how companies innovate to adopt new technologies and change their existing sales process. We consider this lack of evidence connecting technology and sales process evolution based on companies' experiences a knowledge gap that will be further explored by this research.

1.3.3. Sales Technology

Considering the high impact of technology among all the changes happening in the sales context (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005, p. 22), we decided to research how technology, more specifically sales technology tools, affected the sales process of organizations.

Hunter and Perrault (2007, p. 96) refer to sales technology (ST) as the information technologies that can facilitate or enable the performance of sales tasks, including sales-based CRM and sales force automation (SFA) applications. Robinson et al. (2005, p. 407) state that sales technology is an integral tool for enhancing customer-related information management and knowledge development, which can be used by salespeople to practice adaptive selling, improve performance and enhance competitive advantage. The sales technologies are widely employed to give customers individual based offers and to improve the efficiency of time and resources when approaching and selling to customers (Dickie, 2004 p. 22; Hunter and Perreault Jr, 2007, p. 30). In this research, we will focus on two main sales technologies: Customer relationship management and Sales force automation.

1.3.3.1. Customer Relationship Management

There exist different views about what CRM is in the literature. Finnegan and Currie (2010, p. 153) state that Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has merged with a view to integrate customers details and promote a one-stop-service. According to the authors, a useful way to define CRM is as a process that aims to connect diverse pieces of information about customers, sales, marketing effectiveness, and responsiveness to market trends. King and Burgess (2008, p. 422) mention that CRM is in essence about customer interaction and learning from and about customers, in terms of preferences and needs, to be able to provide the most appropriate services or products to customers in the future. Zablah et al. (2004, p. 477) concluded that there was a lack of conceptualization of the term CRM and collected the different academic explanations of CRM to come to five different concepts. Zablah et al. (2004, p. 477) classify CRM as a process, a strategy, a philosophy, a capability and as a technological tool. Similarly, Similarly, Pedron and Caldeira (2011, p. 265) state that the concepts of CRM can be arranged in three concepts, as a business philosophy, strategy and as a technology. This way, CRM as a technology is part of the selling process and CRM as a philosophy is part of the sales strategy. In a different view, Srivastava et al. (1999, p. 169) define CRM as a process that consists of all aspects to identify customers, to create customer knowledge, to build customer relationships and to shape the customer's perception of the firm and its products.

As the purpose of this work is to investigate how technologies are adopted to innovate in the sales process, we will focus on the view of CRM as a technology. As stated by Zablah et al. (2004, p. 279) technology plays a substantial role in the efforts of managing relations with customers, providing links between function in front and back office, to deliver an efficient and effective management of interaction across different customer touch-points. Furthermore, the authors highlight that CRM tools enable a good use of a database, data mining, interactive technologies and storage of customer data. Another purpose of CRM is to increase the loyalty of customers and further to expand the lifetime value of customers (Blattberg and Deighton, 1996, p. 141; Brassington and Pettitt, 2006, p. 278; Ahn, et al., 2003, p. 325). In other words, it is to make customers like your company, to make them love, remember and be aware of the offers and stay with you for long-term. Research findings show positive and negative outcomes of CRM applications in companies. For example, Coltman (2006, p. 4) and Sin et al. (2005, p. 1264) showed a very positive relationship between the use of CRM and the companies' performance, where Zablah et al. (2004, p. 279), Chen and Wang (2006, p. 111) and Everett (2002, p. 25) displays many disappointing results in performance of CRM use. On the other hand, many researchers conclude that CRM can be beneficial to an organization's growth, when applied in the right way (Rust et al., 2000, p. 117 ; Zablah et al., 2004, p. 279; Sin, et al.,

2005, p. 1264; Chen and Wang, 2006, p. 111; Coltman, 2006 p. 4;;King and Burgess (2008, p. 430)

1.3.3.2. Sales Force Automation

The term SFA is an abbreviation for sales force automation, and is by many scholars also referred to as Sales Automation. Baker and Delpechitre (2013, p. 277) for example use Sales Automation and Sales Force Automation as synonyms and Hunter and Perreault (2006, p. 96) also add Sales Force Automation tools and Sales Automation technology to the same description. Unlike CRM, which is described in a variety of ways from philosophy till technology, sales force automation is purely seen as technology, created and applied to support customer relationship strategies and processes in a diversity of industries worldwide (Baker and Delpechitre 2013, p. 277; Holloway et al., 2013, 236) and is highly promoted by both industrialists and academics because of the potential of SFA to increase productivity in selling (Hunter and Perreault, 2007, p. 19; Sundaram et al., 2007, p. 108; Ahearne et al., 2008, p. 673).

In essence, both CRM and SFA can be "hardware and software tools that can aid the performance of sales tasks" (Hunter and Perreault, 2006, p. 103), it is by salespeople applied information technologies to "facilitate or enable the performance of sales tasks" (Hunter and Perreault, 2006, p. 96). The difference is that CRM is used to connect to the customer and to get a greater view of their needs, while SFA is used to make the selling itself in a direct way more efficient for both the firm and the customer, like providing the customer with easier payment methods, using web tools to simplify customization of products to the individual customer's needs or the ability to order by phone application. In many cases CRM and SFA are combined (Hunter and Perreault, 2006, p. 96), for example a CRM tool that is used to collect user data and to understand what new features individual customers might require on the products they bought, aided by SFA tools are applied to automatically give these individual customers customized offers.

Similarly to CRM, Sales Force Automation is not always a success story (Baker and Delpechitre, 2013, p. 284), while in the nineties most studies emphasized the enhanced efficiency in sales and the quick returns on investment on SFA, like Keillor et al (1997, p. 211), in the early 2000's many reports popped up elaborating the high amount of failing or less successful than expected SFA projects (Avlonitis and Panagopoulos, 2005, p. 364; Homburg et al., 2010, p. 159). This has mainly to do with the technology acceptance, the performance expectancy and the technology adoption capabilities of a firm and the users within the firm (Baker and Delpechitre, 2013, p. 278).

1.3.3.3. Adoption of Sales Technology

The successful adoption of sales technology does not rely only on the decision to include the technology into the process, but also in the involvement of the salespeople. Schillewaert et al (2005, p. 323) presents that putting sales technology to use strongly depend on salespeople's perception about the technology impact in the performance, the personal innovativeness and organizational resources in training. Hunter and Perrault (2007, p. 31) suggest that still some decision regarding ST is in hands of IT specialists rather than sales experts. The authors suggests that research is needed to guide this decisions, which often have huge financial implications. In our research, we will investigate the adoption of sales technologies from the perspective of sales experts (sales manager and directors), which can lead to a further step of understanding regarding ST adoption decisions.

1.3.4. Innovation

The adoption of new technologies that change the business process of firms can be classified as an innovation. When the term innovation is referred to, the first that comes to mind is product innovation. Boer and During (2001, p. 84) define innovation as a creation of a new combination between product - market - technology - organization – combination (PMTO- combination). When talking about product innovation, an innovation is a new or improved product or service that is available on the market (Fagerberg, 2003, p. 4). All steps in product or service development before the product or service is marketed, are called inventions and are officially not yet innovations, according to Rogers (1995, p. 15) it is even common that there is a time gap of multiple decades between an invention and the commercialization that makes it an innovation. The same principle counts for developments in other business areas than the core products and services.

When speaking about process innovation, any development is in this aspect considered an innovation as soon as it is applied in the real market (Pan and Li, 2016, p. 136). This would involve adopting new technology in machinery and equipment, new management and designing software, new ways of training staff and new ways of offering services to customers (Pan and Li, 2016, p.136) may involve investment in new technology embodied in machinery and equipment, new software for management.

Companies innovate mainly to enable business growth or to keep their part of the market share. According to general marketing theories, there are three main thresholds for growth, independent from the product or service that a company offers. These are awareness, price/quality and availability (Weitz and Wensley, 2002, p. 269, p. 290, p. 328). Threshold one is that the price related to the quality, exclusivity and demand of the offer is too high for the target customers (Weitz and Wensley, 2002, p. 270). This threshold requires product or service innovation, development of the current primary sellable goods. Threshold two is that the target customers don't know about the existence or advantages of your offer, which requires more efficient marketing to create a higher brand and product awareness among the targeted customers (Weitz and Wensley, 2002, p. 290). Marketing innovation, the development of current marketing processes, can take away this threshold. Threshold three is that the customers are willing to pay the price and know about the product, but the product is not easily available or accessible (Weitz and Wensley, 2002 p. 213). In this case, the thresholds for growth are within either distribution for the availability, or sales for the accessibility. Innovation in this aspect would be distribution channel development to create a higher tangible availability or sales development to keep customers closer and make it as easy and convenient as possible for them to buy your products. In this report the focus lies on sales process innovation, sales exist to make it possible for the customer to buy the product the customer wants (Homburg and Jensen, 2007). Sales process innovation is any applied development in the sales process. However, before writing on sales process innovation it is important to define process innovation in general.

According to Carpinetti et al. (2007, p. 378) process innovation not only involves manufacturing process of products, but also the planning, steering and supporting processes of an organization. According to the author, process innovation also includes improving function such as strategic planning and implementation, marketing, production, logistics, quality management and human resource management. Srivardhana and Pawlowski(2007, p. 53) states product innovation, which is targeted towards product

development, differs from process innovation, that is related to improving organizational process. Improving an organizational processes can be done in different ways, Boer and During (2001, p. 84) state that innovation, including process innovation, may range from incremental, small step innovation, through synthetic innovation. Gaynor (2001, p. 128) states that there are many types of innovation: incremental innovation, which is related to the modification, refinement, simplification or enhancement of existing products and processes; discontinuous innovation, which places an organization's core competencies in the trash barrel; architectural innovation, which re-configures a system of components that constitutes a product, process or service; system innovation, which includes ideas that requires systematic collaboration to be achieved; radical innovation, which involves introducing a new product or service that develops into a major new business or spawn a new industry.

A variety of authors states that process innovation has received less attention compared to product innovation (Reichstein and Salter, 2006, p. 653; Hervas-Oliver et al., 2012, p. 2; Huang and Rice, 2012, p. 1250023-1). Reichstein and Salter (2006, p. 653) state that process innovation has often been considered a second-order innovative activity, an unchallenging cousin of the more glamorous product innovation. Basker (2015, p. 339) states that process innovation is a key to technological change at both micro and macro level, but unfortunately is still poorly understood. According to the author, these innovations are often invisible, but still represent transformations of firm organization, production process and supply chain. McElheran (2015, p.1214) highlights that innovative activity focused on improving business processes warrants further attention by both theorists and empirical scholars. This is especially true when referring to process innovation inside sales, very few publication connect these two aspects (Matsuo, 2009, p. 321), The need for sales innovation is stated by Matsuo (2009, p. 321), referring to sales innovativeness as indispensable for any sales force dealing with increasing complexity of environment.

1.4. Research Question and Objectives

As described previously, there are several gaps in the sales literature. With this research we aim to explore one specific topic, which is related to the adoption of sales technology, especially CRM and Sales Automation, to innovate in the sales process by Swedish B2B companies. To develop this study, our research question is:

"How do Swedish B2B companies adopt technologies to innovate in their sales process?"

Understanding how organizations are innovating to incorporate technology in their sales process might help to build a bridge between the theory and practice. Academically, it has several contribution. The first one is that it aims to understand how sales technology affects the sales process of organizations based on empirical evidence outside the US, which will give a new perspective to the literature that is usually focused on the American market. Second, it will explore theories of process innovation focusing on the sales, which will contribute to the development of this area that has not been as explored as product innovation. Third, it will connect process innovation theories with technology adoption models, which can supply the basis for future studies about the relation between the two topics. At the same time, we also expect to have managerial contributions. By researching sales innovation in Sweden with a constructivist ontology, we also expect to contribute promoting the discussion and development of the sales practices locally. As the report

will be shared with the participating companies, we will also give them insights about their sales process compared to other companies in the region. As this is a combination of topics that has not been studied previously connected, this research will have an inductive and exploratory approach. The constructivism as an ontological choice also will guide us as researchers. The literature offers a limited amount of articles and academic publications sales, technology and process innovation, which is an opportunity for us to gain insights into an unexplored topic and lay the basis for future research in the area.

2. Theoretical Framework

The background on various subjects given in the introduction, will be more explored in the theoretical framework. In this chapter theories and models of process innovation and technology adoption are connected to our research topic on innovating in sales. The models, designed by various scholars, about process innovation and technology adoption will be synthesized into a combined model for sales process innovation.

2.1. Process Innovation Theory

The theoretical framework is build up in different sections, to start off with a short description of a process innovation and the need for sales process innovation, followed by describing different theories and models on process innovation to analyze and apply these to sales process innovation.

2.1.1. Process Innovation

The term process was first used in 1776 by Adam Smith, as a set of activities initiated by an input to create a preferred output. Gulledge Jr. and Sommer (2002, p. 365) describe a process as a word that is broadly used in a variety of disciplines, and for a similar variety of people, the noun process can have many different meanings (Gulledge Jr and Sommer, 2002, 365). In this paper the term process would always refer to a business process, and when speaking about a business process, Davenport and Short (1990, p. 11) consider it "a set of logically related tasks to achieve a defined business outcome for a particular customer or market" (Davenport and Short, 1990, p. 11). As these markets constantly change, processes need to be developed over time, which we call process innovation. In the introduction, chapter 1.3.4, you can find and read the conceptualization of the term innovation broadly summarized as any development that is applied in the real market (Boer and During, 2001, p. 84; Fagerberg, 2003, p. 4. Process innovation can be divided into two different types of process innovation: radical and incremental (Tushman and Anderson, 1990, p. 604; Gatignon et al., 2002, p. 1104; Reichstein and Salter, 2006, p. 655). "Incremental process innovation is a process innovation that is new to the firm but not new to the industry"(Reichstein and Salter, 2006, p. 656), while radical process innovation is "developed by a firm and new to the industry"(Reichstein and Salter, 2006, p. 656) and "increases the price/performance frontier by much more than the existing rate of progress"(Gatignon et al., 2002, p. 1107). Mentioning this difference is important in the different theoretical approaches needed to develop the sales process in either an incremental or radical way.

So what makes it so important to innovate in the sales process? Sales is part of many business processes within a company. To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of sales, the selling process itself has to be developed, enabling new technologies and techniques to be incorporated in the sales process. Most companies in Western Europe have gained experience with developing the internal web services, to improve development and integration of all the companies' abilities, however the lack of process innovation prevents them from benefiting from the full-fledged potential of Web service technology. (Papazoglou and van den Heuvel, 2007, p. 79). This means that new methods only are not enough to innovate the way a company embeds its sales. Whether it's a new technology, a new technique or a new method, the firm needs to align the process around it to integrate the new way of working successfully into the company's departments. In other words, the technique, method or technology is always a part of a full business process, which is "a collection of activities that are required to achieve a business goal"

(Merino and Elguezabal, 2005, p. 1). This collection of activities is represented in a QMS, quality management system, with an activity flow to specify the integration and coordination needed to achieve the business objectives and goals (Garza-Reyes et al., 2015, p. 1301). According to di Benedetto (1999, p. 538), research on sales management underscores the importance of sales force involvement in the success of new product launches. He describes that even if the product itself is new and innovative, it might not sell without properly adjusted sales. Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000, p. 445) tell us that to execute the role of sales in an effective way, salespeople should adopt products through their commitment to innovation and the needed effort to its sale.

As explained in the chapter 1.3.2 of the introduction, Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p. 13) and Long et al. (2006, p. 676) describe how technology and internet changed the way sales work. Hunter and Perrault Jr (2007, p. 16) look at the change in sales strategies from a different perspective, according to Hunter and Perreault Jr (2007, p. 16). It's not the new technologies or the internet that initiated innovation in sales, but the need for sales innovation comes from the changing environment of and relation between buyers and sellers.

Already in the 80's companies research the benefits of supplier-customer relations that are built on cooperative partnerships and less on competitive actions (Anderson and Narus 1984 p. 64; Anderson and Narus 1990, p. 42) where companies started to realize the importance of integrative win-win outcomes for both the supplier and the customer, instead of the more distributive approach which was common in those times (Clopton, 1984, p. 40) which continued throughout the 90's in developing long-term rather than short-term benefits and secureness for both suppliers and buyers offered by their cooperative relationship. (Dwyer et al. 1987, p. 22; Ganesan 1994, p. 4). Cannon and Perreault (1999, p. 442) also found the increased strategic emphasis the seller's placed on constructing relationships with customers. Also, the majority of suppliers were investing in information technology, known as IT, to be used in their sales force applications (Shoemaker and Mary, 2001, p. 177).

The importance of the relationship between buyers and sellers kept growing in the early 2000's, in 2004, a research was conducted by Jim Dicky from CSO Insights, a research firm specialized in benchmarking sales effectiveness initiatives and CRM. The research was conducted among 1300 B2B supplying companies spread worldwide, where the executives had to rank their most important priorities. In average, they ranked the strategic value of sales force effectiveness (Dickie, 2004, p. 88) on second place, just behind their top priority "revenue generation" (Dickie, 2004, p. 88). It is this change in approach to the seller-customer relationships over the last decades that drives companies to invest and innovate sales processes more than ever before (Hunter and Perreault Jr, 2007, p. 19). This requires the use of new sales technologies for customer relation management and Sales Force Automation (Hunter and Perreault Jr 2007 p. 17). In the continuation of chapter 2.2 firstly various theoretical models for process innovation will be described, while chapter 2.3 will elaborate on the adoption theories for new technologies within CRM and Sales Force Automation into existing business processes.

2.1.2. Knowledge and Capability Based Perspectives on Process Innovation

In terms of view on innovation, there is a deviation between the knowledge-based view (Gopalakrishnan et al., 1999, p. 148) and the capability based perspective on process development (Pisano, 1997, p. 34). The knowledge based perspective by Gopalakrishnan

et al. (1999, p.150) claims that the tacitness, autonomy and complexity of an innovation is determined by the "characteristics of knowledge" and therefore has implications on the innovation strategy of a firm. This means that the process innovations are linked with knowledge stored in operating procedures, organizational systems, routines and individual operators. The knowledge is seemingly created in the first instance by individuals and can only become organizational knowledge when it is transferred into the organization (Gopalakrishnan et al., 1999, p. 150). Processes based on this knowledge view tend to be much more systematic, like the innovation model of Papinniemi (1999, p. 98). They are based on acquiring knowledge before actively changing a process. Alternative to the knowledge based view is the capabilities based view on process development (Pisano, 1997, p. 203). Pisano describes this as an attempt to develop processes to create new process architectures, instead of achieving incremental improvements based on existing knowledge. The approach of Pisano is therefore more trial and error, or as Pisano states that companies should focus on "learning by doing" instead of "learning before doing" (Pisano, 1997, p. 42). This more loose approach allows for more creativity and more rapid and radical process innovations. The different approaches lead to various models, which in some cases can be balanced and combined for an optimal performance. The advantages and disadvantages of both innovation perspectives, when applied to the selling process, will be evaluated in chapter 2.2.6, after elaborating different models based on both the knowledge and the capability based perspectives.

2.1.3. Basic model of process innovation

Back in 1999, Jorma Papinniemi created a basic model for process innovation, with as purpose to "improve assessment of process innovation initiatives" in order to support innovation management (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 98). A side note to this model is that the processes Papinniemi refers to are within manufacturing products. However, Papinniemi states: "Process innovation means performing a work activity in a radically new way. Process innovation is generally a discrete initiative and it also implies the use of specific change tools and technology for enterprise engineering and transformation of business processes" (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 96). Therefore, the model is created in a broad way to be functional in different business process areas. The three means to support innovation management, as described by Papinniemi are:
- "Analyzing effects of innovation candidates on business and manufacturing processes"
- "Explaining performance changes of processes and of the whole enterprise"
- "Showing the procedure of transforming initiatives to completed innovation"
(Papinniemi, 1999, p. 97)
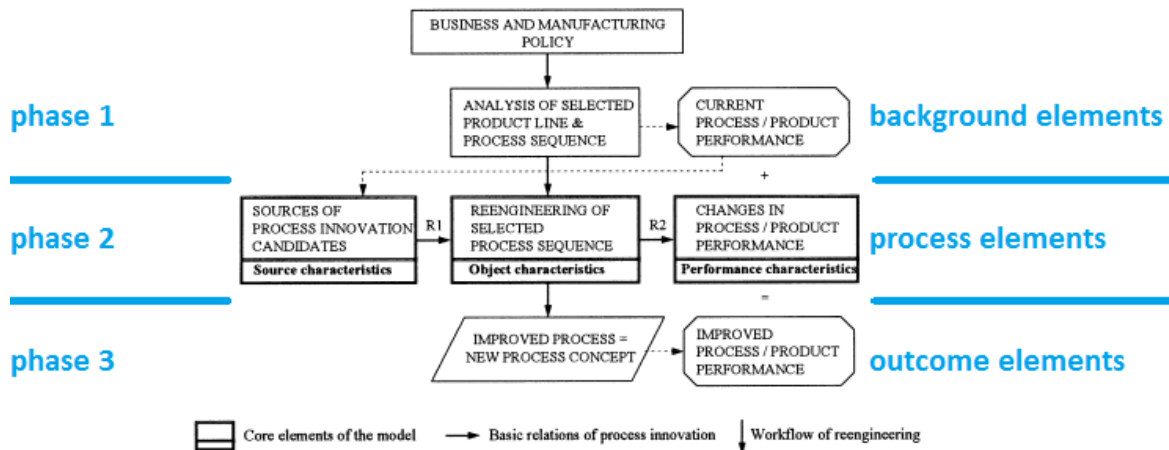
Figure 1: Papinniemi's Basic Model of Process Innovation (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 98)

The model, as shown above, consists out of three main elemental phases, first the background phase, starting with the policy that should direct an organization and should set the guidelines for any development activities of both product and process sequences (Papinniemi, 1999, p.98). The policy is followed by an analysis of the current state of the organization, performed for the process sequence that is selected to be developed. The purpose of this analysis is "to specify internal shortages in the selected process sequence" (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 98). When the internal shortages are identified, the next step will be to connect these shortages to the actual performance of the process. This is the last step in the background phase, where the discovered combination of internal shortages and lacking performance can make a process a candidate for process innovation (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 99). This brings us to the second phase of the model, in order to reengineer process sequences and to apply these improvements of the processes in order to create a positive change in the process performance. In the last phase, the evaluation takes place to see whether the organization managed to actually improve the process by changing and applying it and to evaluate the actual accomplishments in process performance (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 100). The improved process and improved process performance should be the outcomes of the process innovation (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 100).

2.1.4.   Action Research: from a Linear to a Circular Theory Perspective

The model of Papinniemi shows a good chronological order of the phases in process innovation, however, does not go deep into the steps that should be taken to improve the processes, which is interesting for us as a research topic. Also the model has a linear start to finish perspective, where other innovation models are often referred to as a continuous cycle. Jensen and Westcott (1992, p. 20), for example, emphasis the value of innovation circulation, created a model for process innovation, basing it on a circular relationship between the manufacturing strategy of a firm and the process innovation project selection. The importance of a continuing learning process instead of just a contemporary improvement was by DiBella et al. (1996, p. 370) already described by organizations that fail to learn are either suboptimal or even dysfunctional (DiBella et al., 1996 p. 363). This while a continuously learning organization should be capable of generating competitive capabilities to strengthen its business performance in a market (Slater and Narver, 1995, p. 66).

A famous simplified loop for learning is the Plan Do Study Act cycle (Deming, 2000, p. 132) which is meant for any kind of development including process innovation. This model can be applied by using Action Research, a term first used by Kurt Lewin (1946, p. 34) and has been further developed since. Coghlan and Brannick (2001, p. 15) describe this method as "research in action, rather than research about action". As models like the one of Papinniemi describe more what phases and steps there are in process development, Action Research is about finding an answer to the question how these steps can be taken in the best possible way. It is a way of doing research inside an organization with close cooperation between the researchers and employees involved in the processes (Schein, 2009, p. 163). The result of action research is a continuously repeating learning process, based on a series of four steps, similar to the steps in the PDSA loop of Deming (Saunders, 2011, p. 5). The first step is a reflection, in which the focus lies on making a diagnosis, followed by a second step of planning changes to improve the limiting factors that showed up during the diagnosis. The third step is applying the proposed changes, which is then followed by the reflection phase (Larrea and Karlsen, 2014, p. 88).

Figure 2: Action Research Spiral, graphically visualized by the Valencia College of Colorado (n.d.)

In essence, the models do not majorly differ from each other, however combining a linear model like the three phases of Papinniemi with a circular learning process like action research makes the firm more independent and effective in continuously developing their processes further, ultimately leading to the continual progress, a "process that goes on cyclically" (Larrea and Karlsen, 2014, p. 89).

2.1.5. Process Innovation Cycle by Papazoglou and van den Heuvel

Just like in action research, Papazoglou and van den Heuvel (2007, p. 80) also aimed for the continual progress and created a more specialized roadmap for process innovation in which they describe that the integration of process innovation can be achieved in six steps. These steps are described in the phases 'Planning', 'Analysis and Design', 'Construction and Testing', 'Provisioning', 'Deployment', 'Execution and Monitoring'. The last step can be followed by the second phase, 'Analysis and design', to create a circle of

improvements until a new innovative idea comes up and starts from the planning phase again.

Before these steps, a new idea is necessary for changing or implementing a technique, a method or a new technology. Papazoglou and van den Heuvel highlight that their incremental transition through the six phases allows changes to get a more incremental and iterative nature. This helps in creating an environment of "continuous invention, discovery and implantation of each iteration" (Papazoglou and van den Heuvel, 2007, p. 80), meaning that the innovation through these six steps will be realized with less resistance and will therefore be smoother and more successful than radically innovating the whole process before properly analyzing the effects of the innovation throughout the enterprises functions. The stepwise transition through the six phases considers the realization of scenarios for several business processes and innovations to be practically and technically evaluated and compared, therefore it will force any development and innovation team to develop new ways of working in a "predictable and repeatable manner" (Papazoglou and van den Heuvel, 2007, p. 80). When new ideas are brought up,
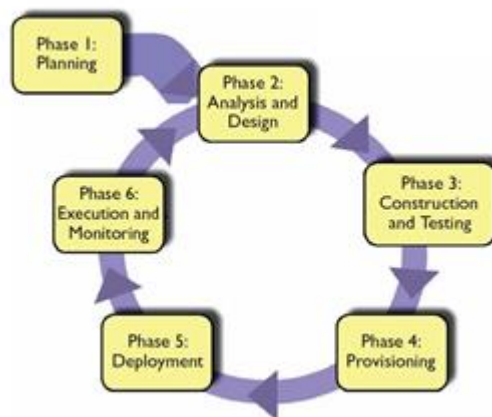
it shall be handled in the first phase, called 'Planning', which involves a gap analysis to discover the need for the innovation, followed by a scenario analysis for the possible positive and negatives effects of the innovation.

Figure 3: The Six Phase Model of Papazoglou and van den Heuvel (2007, p. 80)

The second phase is about Process Analysis and Design, about how to incorporate the new idea into existing and new processes and computer systems. The third phase, construction and testing. So after developing and evaluating the new idea, the construction and testing are about the business process realization. Implementing the new idea into the processes and testing its implementations. Followed by the fourth phase, provisioning. In this phase, the company determines which provisions are needed in order to secure the functions and effects of the processes. After this, the fifth phase is 'deployment', which basically describes the publishing of the use of your new processes towards the companies' stakeholders. When fully deployed, the execution phase is the final of six phases. This means that the new idea is fully implemented in the processes and executed by the company in order to achieve new business goals, this is the phase where the company needs to use reactive monitoring mechanisms to maintain the process working well (Papazoglou and van den Heuvel, 2007, p. 85). Until new ideas are introduced, changes in the environment of the company will make it useful to continuously pass through phase 2 to 6 to keep incrementally evolving all processes in alignment to the environment.

2.1.6. Process Innovation Theories Applied to Sales

In chapter Process Innovation, is explained that there are two distinct different types of process development, being radical or incremental (Reichstein and Salter, 2006, p. 655). The basic process innovation model of Papinniemi, consisting out of the elemental phases background, process and outcome (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 98) is a linear model, systematically designed to generate knowledge first and act based on this knowledge. Papinniemi mentions a big scale of different applications for his model, including sales activity processes (Papinniemi, 1999, p. 98). When applied to sales, this would mean that in the background phase, like in all knowledge based models, a problem will be defined, through analysis of the current state of the organization in search for shortages in the selected processes. This leads to a focus on solving current weaknesses and deficiencies in the selling process, which will lead to incremental changes of processes rather than the replacement of complete processes. Depending on what the aim of an organization is, the model of Papinniemi can help making the current selling process more efficient in an incremental and safe way, be learning about the current process and it's deficiencies before applying changes, which fits in the knowledge based view of Gopalakrishnan et al. (1999, p. 148). However for a continuous improvement of the sales process, the model of Papinniemi lacks the sequential learning curve connected to a circular model like the process innovation cycle of Jensen and Westcott (1992, p. 20), the PDSA cycle of Deming (2000, p. 132) and the applied action research of Coghlan and Brannick (2009, p. 15).

When a company wants to incrementally develop the selling process, but doing this in a continual matter, the model of Papinniemi will be useful in combination with a PDSA cycle of Deming to ensure the continual learning cycle (Deming, 2000, p. 132). However, according to Pisano (1997, p. 40), linear knowledge based models are less capable of creating radical process innovation, because of its systematic nature. Capability models will be more effective when a radical change or complete replacement of current processes is necessary (Pisano, 1997, p. 231). Also in sales innovation, the risk of non-constant growth disadvantages (Usman and Batabyal, 2014, p. 98) of the learn-by-doing method of Pisano is much lower than in product innovation, as implementing a new sales process should in most cases be less expensive than innovating a production process that would implicate changing a production line. According to Pan and Li (2016, p 137) competition in knowledge accumulation has become so heavy that learning by doing is the fastest option to be competitive. Before that, Thompson (2010, p. 50) also concluded that the role of learning from experience is nowadays the key driver in accumulating knowledge that leads to innovation, supported by Teece et al. (1997, p 509) and Zollo and Winter (2002, p 339) who stressed the importance of the capabilities based view on process innovation before.

2.2. Technology Adoption Theory

Damanpour (1991, p. 556) states that the adoption of innovation by organizations is conceived to cover the generation, development and implementation of new ideas or behaviors. An innovation can be a new product or service, technology, administrative system, among others. Furthermore, the innovation is defined as the adoption of an internally generated or purchased device, system, program, process, product or service that is new to the adopting organization (Damanpour, 1991, p. 556). As stated previously, the focus of this research will be on the adoption of innovations related to technology in the sales processes. According to Damanpour (1991, p. 556), the adoption of innovation is a mean of changing the organization, whether in response to changes in its internal or external context or as an action to influence the competitive environment. The adoption

of technology in organizations has attracted a lot of attention in the literature. According to Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 186), information adoption and use in the workplace remains a central concern for researchers and practitioners.

One of the general issues in technology adoption is concerning the decision of adopting a technology. Patterson et al. (2003, p. 97) state that a variety of factors may affect the decision of an organization to adopt and implement a technology. The factors that potentially influence technology adoption have been classified into five broad categories: individual, task-related, innovation-related, organizational, and environmental characteristics (Patterson et al., 2003, p. 97). Furthermore, Damanpour (1991, p. 560) states that organizational slack had a stronger effect in the adoption of technical innovation compared to administrative innovations.

Another general issue in technology adoption concerns the internal use of technology. Morgan and Ink (2001, p. 465) state that while SFA system are chosen in the higher organizational level, it is daily used by the salesperson in the field. If the final users are resistant to incorporate and use the system in their work, the process of adoption tends to be negative. Similarly, Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 186) state that despite impressive advances in hardware and software capabilities, the organizations still face a considerable problem with the underutilized systems.

General theories were elaborated to explain the technology adoption process. In this research, we will explore more three theories that are widely used: Roger's Innovation Diffusion Theory, Technology Acceptance Model and Universal Technology Adoption and Use Theory.

2.2.1. Rogers's Innovation Diffusion Theory

In spite of the fact that Roger's theory is named Innovation Diffusion Theory, often his ideas refer to technological innovation. Rogers (1995, p. 12) states that often, in his book, innovation and technology are used as synonyms. The author describes technology as a design for instrumental action that impacts the cause-effect relationships reducing the uncertainty involved in achieving an outcome. The author explains that getting a new idea adopted is often difficult, sometimes requiring a lengthy period of the time that the technology becomes available to the time when it is widely adopted.

The author defines diffusion of innovation as: "Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers, 1995, p. 5). In this definition, the author highlights 4 mains elements of the diffusion process: the innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system. According to the author, innovation can be defined as an idea, practice, or object that has perceived newness to the individual or unit of adoption (Rogers, 1995, p. 11). Communication channels are a part of the communication process, by which individuals exchange information concerning new ideas, characterizing the means by which messages go from one individual to another (Rogers, 1995, p. 16). Time is an element present in the process of innovation adoption, as it rarely occurs instantaneously (Rogers, 1995, p. 20). The fourth element, a social system, is defined as a set of interrelated units that are working together in a joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal (Rogers, 1995, p. 24). The organizations compose a social group.

To explain how the adoption of the innovation occurs, the author created the innovation-decision process. The innovation-decision process "is the process through which an individual (or other decision-making unit) passes from first knowledge of an innovation, to forming an attitude toward the innovation, to a decision to adopt or reject, to implementation of the new idea, and to confirmation of this decision" (Rogers, 1995, p. 163). The main stages of the process are knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. According to the author each stage is described as (Rogers, 1995, p. 21):

- Knowledge: the first stage occurs when a decision-making unit is exposed to the innovation's existence and gains an understanding of how it functions.
- Persuasion: The decision-making unit forms an attitude toward the innovation, which can be favorable or unfavorable.
- Decision: Occurs when the decision-making unit engages in activities that can lead to choose or not to adopt the innovation.
- Implementation: Happens when the decision-making unit starts to use the innovation.
- Confirmation: Occurs when the decision-making unit seeks reinforcement of the previously made decision, which can lead to reverse the decision due to conflicting messages about the innovation.
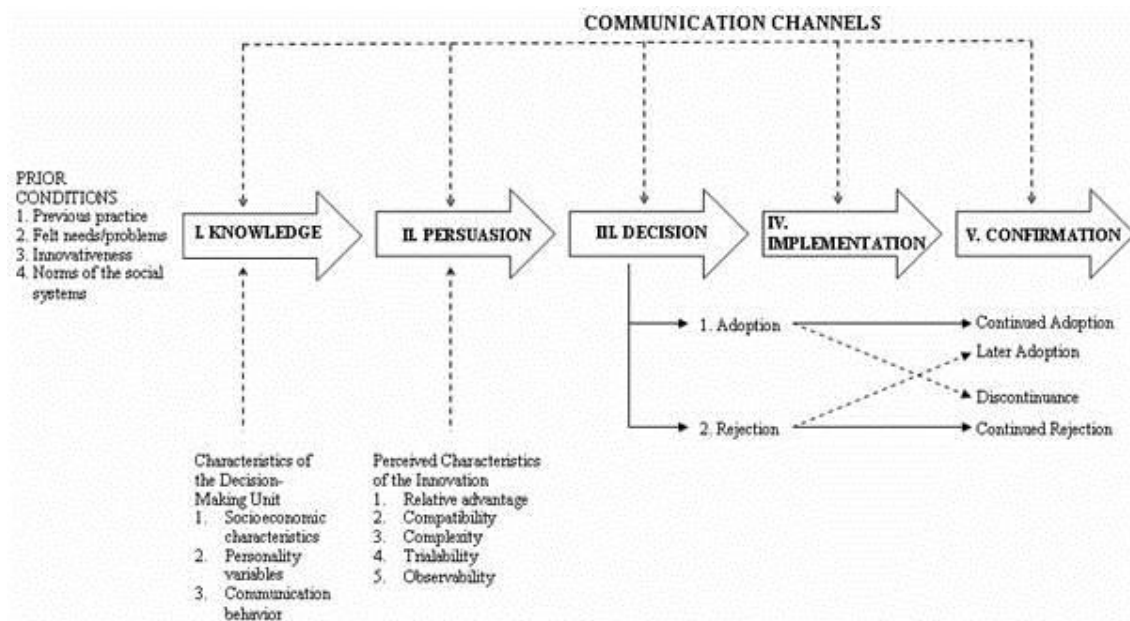
Figure 4: Innovation Decision of the Innovation Diffusion process by Rogers (1995, p. 163)

2.2.2. Technology Acceptance Model

In 1986, Fred D. Davis introduced the Technology Acceptence Model (TAM), as an adaptation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Davis et al. 1989, p. 985). The focus of the theory is in explaining the user acceptance of information system. According to Davis et al. (1989, p. 985) the goal of a TAM is to provide an explanation of the determinants of computer acceptance that is general, covering user behavior across a broad range of end-user computing technologies and populations. According to the authors, a key purpose of a TAM is to provide a basis for tracing the impact of external factors on internal beliefs, attitudes and intentions.

Davis et al. (1989, p. 985) states that a TAM relies on two main believes, that is the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which are the high relevance for computer acceptance behaviors. Each behavior is defined as the following:

- Perceived usefulness (U): Is related to the prospective user's subjectivity perception that using one specific application system will increase the job performance in the organization context:
- Perceived ease of use (EOU): is defined as the degree to which this prospective user expect that the system will be free of effort.

Another important aspect highlighted by Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 187) is that the TAM theorizes the effect of internal variables, such as system characteristics, development process and training, into the intention of use mediated by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Considering that the two factors, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, also influence each other (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000, p. 187).
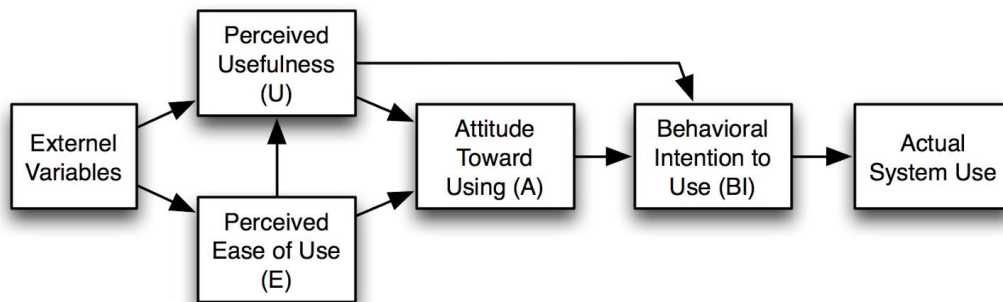
Figure 5: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) of Davis et al. (1989, p. 985)

Furthermore, Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 198) proposed an extension of the TAM Model, named TAM2. This new model aims to explain the perceived usefulness and usage intention considering the social influence and cognitive instrumental process. The social influence processes include subjective norm, voluntariness and image, while the cognitive instrumental cover the job relevance, output quality, result demonstrability and perceived ease of use (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000, p. 186). According to the authors, TAM2 expanded TAM by considering that subjective norms exert a direct effect on usage intentions over and above perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of implemented system inside organizations.
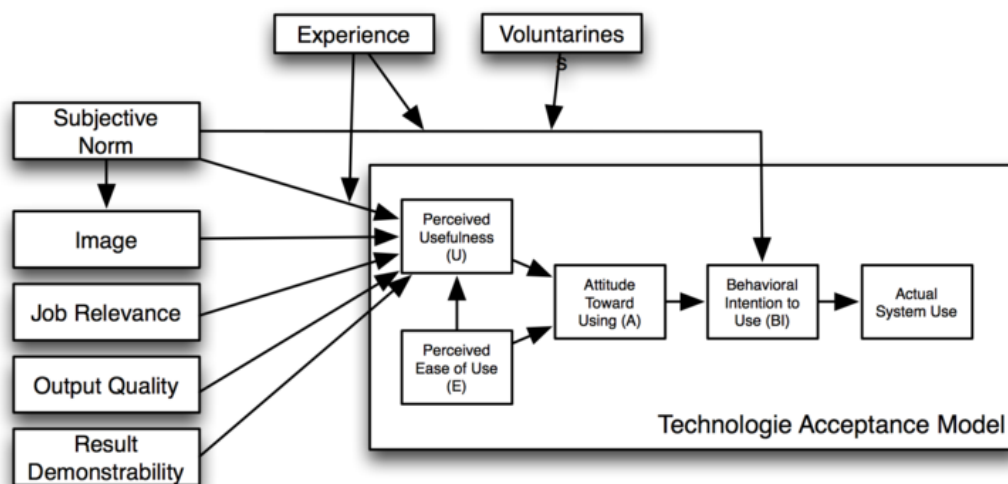
Figure 6: The extended TAM Model by Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 198)

2.2.3. Universal Technology Adoption and Use Theory

Venkatesh et al. (2003, p. 425) proposed the universal technology adoption and use theory, also known as UTAUT. The theory was proposed to integrate fragmented theories and research on individual acceptance of information technology into a unified theoretical model (Venkatesh et al., 2003, p. 467). The aim of the model is to capture the essential elements that were highlighted by eight established models in the literature of technology adoption and use. The articles analyzed and combined into the new theory were: theory of reasoned action, the technology acceptance model, the motivational model, the theory of planned behavior, a model combining the technology acceptance model and the theory of planned behavior, the model of PC utilization, the innovation diffusion theory, and the social cognitive theory.

By analyzing the existing theories, Venkatesh et al. (2003, p. 446) arrived to four constructs that play a significant role as determinants of user acceptance and usage behavior: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Each of the factors were explained by the authors:

- Performance expectancy: The degree to which an individual believes that by using the system he or she will have gain in job performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003, p. 447)
- Effort expectancy: The degree of ease associated with the use of the system, which is composed by the perceived ease of use, complexity and ease of use (Venkatesh et al., 2003, p. 450)
- Social influence: The degree to which an individual perceives that important social connection believe that he or she should use the new system(Venkatesh et al., 2003, p. 451)
- Facilitating conditions: The degree that an individual believes that an organizational or technical infrastructure supports the use of the system (Venkatesh et al., 2003, p. 453)
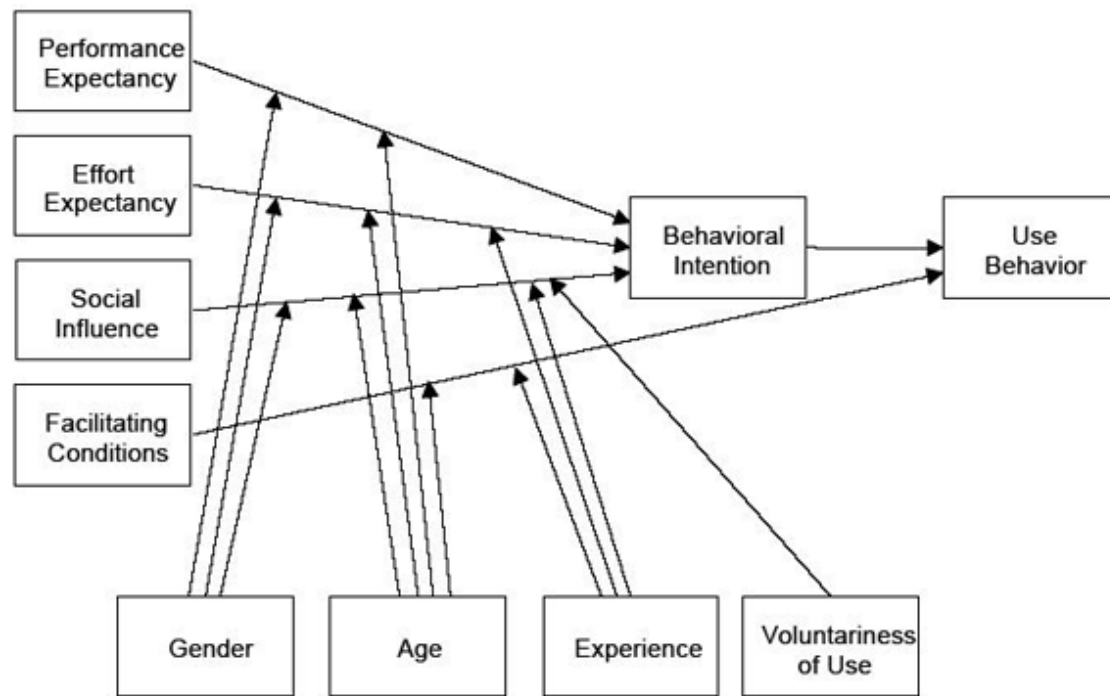
Figure 7: Model for universal technology adoption and use theory by Venkatesh et al. (2003, p. 447)

2.2.4. Technology Adoption Theories Applied to Sales

A variety of researches related to sales technology adoption were based in one of the models cited above. The existence of previous research applying the model to sales contributes to confirming the applicability of the presented theories to the context of this study.

The TAM model was widely used in researches concerning sales technology. Schillewaert et al. (2005, p. 323) chose the TAM model to conduct a study that explains why salespeople adopt information technology. The authors stated that the TAM model is considered incomplete from the sales perspective, mainly because it does not include individuals (salesperson) characteristics and do not test social norms in a general sense (Schillewaert et al., 2005, p 324). In their study, the authors extended the final variables present in the TAM model. The findings of the research applied to salespeople support the TAM model, reinforcing the role of perceived usefulness as the fundamental driver of sales technology adoption and perceived ease of use as the secondary drive of adoption (Schillewaert et al., 2005, p 330). According to the authors, salespeople seem to be willing to cope with difficult in the use of a system provided that the system performs critical selling functions and enhance sales performance.

Robinson et al. (2005, p. 1623) also used the TAM model to study the impact of the beliefs and attitudes of field salespeople towards technology usage. The authors' finding support the application of the core concepts of TAM model, which are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in technology acceptance) among the salespeople (Robinson et al., 2005, p. 1629). According to the author, a salesperson that believes in the usefulness of the new technology will have a more positive attitude towards it, which also applies to the perceived ease of implementation. Furthermore, the authors also concluded that a more innovative salesperson is likely to perceive a technology as easy to implement and

that the availability of support service is also related to perceived ease of use (Robinson et al., 2005, p. 1629).

In a second study, Robinson et al. (2005, p. 407) conducted a research linking technology acceptance to adaptive selling and job performance of salespeople. The author highlights that as salespeople are generally under constant pressure to perform, they are likely to develop positive attitudes toward tools that are expected to increase their performance (Robinson et al. 2005, p. 408). However, the results of the research did not show support for the direct relationship between perceived usefulness and behavioral intentions to use technology as stated by the TAM literature (Robinson et al. 2005, p. 412). Which, according to the author, might be explained by the specific context of the individuals being studied. Furthermore, the study showed that perceived ease of use is positively related to attitude toward using technology (Robinson et al. 2005, p. 412). Evidence of the study also supports the view that behavioral intention to use technology is positively related to adaptive selling. According to the author, by using technology salespeople are empowered to be more adaptive effectively when dealing with customers (Robinson et al. 2005, p. 412).

The diffusion of innovation theory was used by Ko et al. (2008, p. 65) to study the status of CRM in the Korean Fashion Industry adoption and explore the influence of organizational characteristics in this adoption process. The study focused on 3 stages of the diffusion of innovation theory: the second stage (perception of CRM benefits), the third stage (adoption of a CRM strategy), and fourth stage (implementation level of CRM strategy) (Ko et al., 2008, p. 67). The findings of the research were consistent with the theory, highlighting that the perception of CRM benefits significantly influences the CRM adoption decision, and CRM adoption affects the implementation level of CRM technologies (Ko et al., 2008, p. 72). According to the authors, firms that perceived more benefits were more likely to adopt a CRM strategy, what is related to the importance of perceived benefits in the choice of adoption. Among the reasons for adoption were the desire to manage existing clients, increase profits and acquire new customers. Among the reasons for non-adoption of CRM were the lack of understanding, high costs, premature adoption and lack of perceived system application.

A study conducted by Williams et al. (2011, p. 1) about UTAUT, universal technology adoption and use theory, evaluated the use of the references to the theory. The study concluded that many papers cited UTAUT, but the majority only used the theory for a brief outline within the context of the discussion, often before citing the model that was actually in use (Williams et al., 2011, p. 9). According to the author, only 43 studies actually utilized the theory or its construct in the empirical research of technology adoption. When looking for articles related to UTAUT and sales technology adoption, we could not find researchers connecting and discussing the viability of this model into the salesforce context.

2.3. Synthesis of Reviewed Literature

As a first step towards the goal of answering our research question, we conceptualize the literature in process innovation and technology adoption. The two different topics were widely researched and applied previously. However, we could not find evidence that the theories were previously connected in the literature before. For this reason, we decided to create our own experimental model that connects concepts of both themes (Figure 8). The model is based on the literature previously presented and incorporate elements of different

theories. The model will be used to offer insights into the structure of the research, methodological choices regarding the structure of data collection, analysis the empirical findings and make suitable conclusions. The model will not be tested and validated by this research, as this is not the aim of the study.

By analyzing the literature, it was possible to make connections between Process Innovation and Technology Adoption. Process innovation, as explained in Process Innovation Theory, involves incremental or radical changes in the way a company executes a process. It represents a development applied to the market. Technology adoption, as explained Technology Adoption Theory, involves the generation, development and implementation of technological ideas into a firm. Technology has the power to affect the way a company executes its process. Thus, if a company wants to innovate in their processes, one way to have this change is by adopting a new technology. In the same way, if a company decides to adopt a new technology, it might be necessary to change its process. We see that both topics are closely related. In the literature, it is also possible to find similarities between the models proposed.

To develop a model connecting both topics, we chose to use the following theories: Basic model of process innovation (Figure 1), Action research spiral (Figure 2) and Rogers's Innovation Diffusion Theory (Figure 4). The choice for this specific models was motivated for the relevance that they have in the literature and also for some particularities that each model has. The choice of the Basic model of process innovation was motivated by the richness of details that the model offers in terms of phases and steps for process innovation. The choice of Action research spiral was due to the circular perspective that the model covers, having the view of innovation as a continuous process, which is aligned with the idea that a company is always developing. The choice of Rogers's Innovation Diffusion Theory was based in the fact that the model can bring an understanding of the adoption of technology in an organizational level, covering steps of the technology adoption process that can be applied to a business. In technology adoption, a variety of theories are centered in the individual adoption of a technology, which is not the goal of our research.
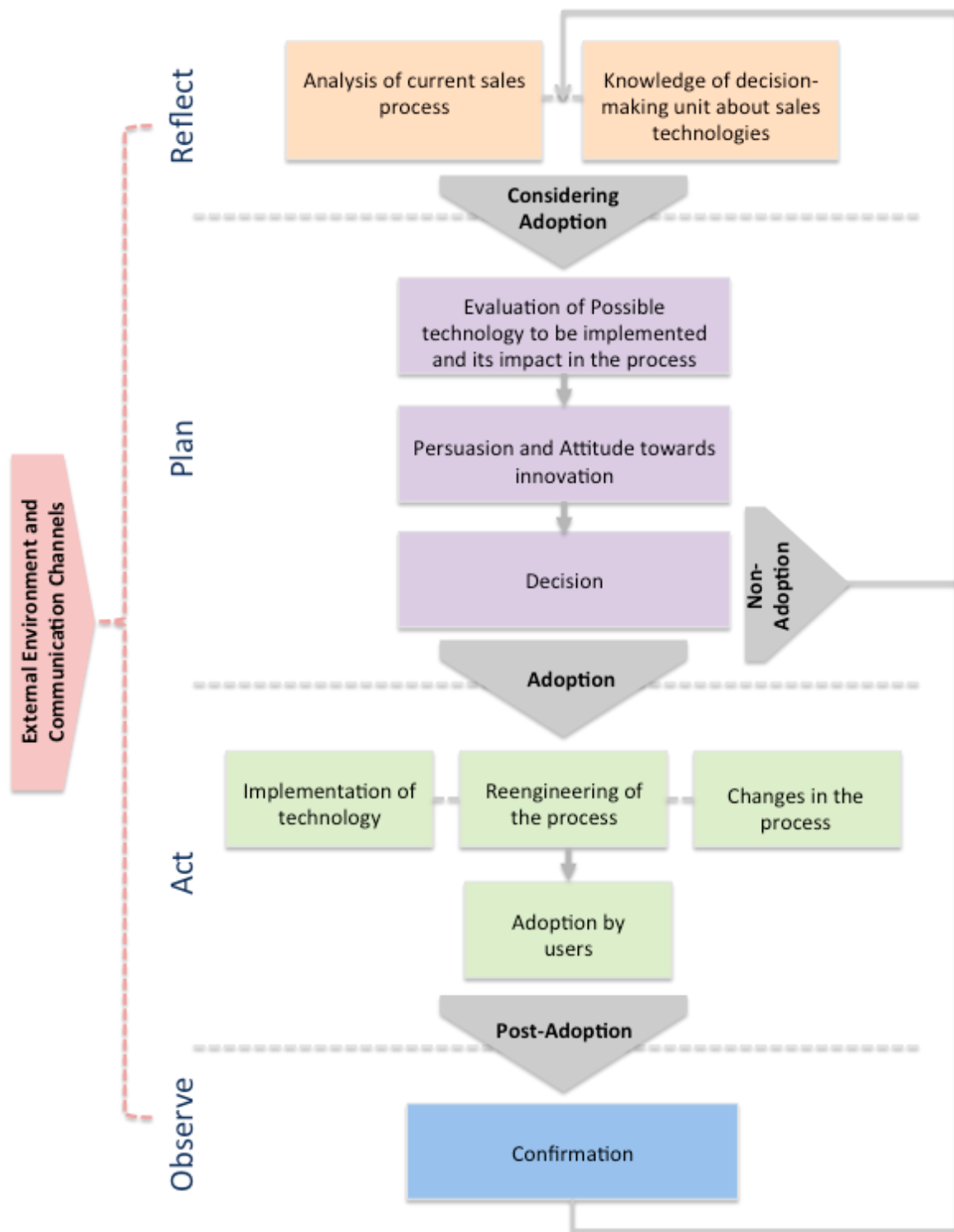
Figure 8: Model of Process Innovation Based on Technology Adoption in Sales

By combining the three models we arrived to one single figure that was named: "Process Innovation based on Technology Adoption in Sales". The figure shows a circular process with the following stages: Reflect, Plan, Act and Observe. The steps are not mandatory and might not occur in the exact order, but they represent a generalization of the process. In the first step, that is "Reflect", the company is affected by the knowledge about new

technologies and have an analysis of current sales process. The two situations do not follow an order, the company might identify a suitable technology and think about the possible implementation or identify a problem and think how to solve it by using technology. In this step, the characteristics of the decision-making unit (person or organization) act as indirect influencers to the reflection.

From the moment that the company starts to consider the adoption it is directed to the next phase, which is "Plan". In this phase the company starts to evaluate deeply the possible technology to be implemented and how it would impact the sales process. The company starts to evaluate the impact of the technology (persuasion) and forms an attitude towards that innovation, which can be positive or negative. This planning process leads to a decision of adopting the technology or not adopting the technology. This phases can be conducted as a formal process by the organization or simply be occurring informally in the mind of the individual that starts to consider the adoption of a new technology to innovate in the process.

If the company decides to do not adopt a technology, the cycle will go back to the beginning. If the company decides to adopt a technology, it goes to the next step, which is "Act". In this step, the company implements the technology and make the needed changes in the process. This changes can consist in the reengineering of the processes or only small incremental changes. The order in which these changes occur will depend on the organization's context and type of technology or innovation. As a next step, the technology starts to be adopted by the users, salespeople and supporting activities. As mentioned previously, this stage can be problematic, since it's the moment in which people have to change the way they work and the technology adoption becomes related to the individual attitude towards the use of a technology.

After the company has adopted a technology to innovate in their sales process, the next step is called "Confirmation". In this last stage, the company seeks reinforcement for the decision made, analyzing how the process occurred and if the expected outcomes were reached. In this stage, the company can choose to continue with the technology and changes or discontinue it. After that, the cycle goes back to the beginning by considering new technologies and innovation for the sales process.

As external context that has influence in this process, we highlighted the external environment and the communication channels. No company is an island, all have their process affected by forces outside their internal environment. As an external environment, we included powerful forces that can affect the technology adoption, such as customers, partners, suppliers, competitors and the stakeholders in general. As communication channels, we included the information that arrives in daily life to the company and people involved with the technology adoption. This information can influence the attitude towards a technology or process change and the way it is executed. Information is a strong contributor to recognize new technologies and to reflect on existing ones.

By creating a model, we clarified the connection between the variables of process innovation and technology adoption. This clarification occurred in the different levels of the process. The model will also be used as guidance to design the fieldwork and analysis of the results.

3. Scientific Methodology

In the following chapter, the choices regarding the scientific methodology used to develop the present research will be explored and justified. We will describe our pre-understandings regarding the topic and our philosophical viewpoints, involving the nature of the reality and acceptable knowledge. Furthermore, our research approach and literature search will be presented and explained in details. The methodological choices are strongly connected to the research question and represent a guide to develop a scientifically acceptable study and analysis.

3.1. Pre-understandings

The pre-understandings session contains the elements and conceptions that are present in our research vision about the context being studied. According to Johnson and Duberley (2003, p. 1279), in order to understand ourselves as researches in the management field, we should start to think about our own thinking. A basic insight for the research is that the researcher is always a part of the study and, only when this fact is accepted, the research can benefit from it (Stenbacka, 2001, p. 553). The pre-understanding is composed by understood knowledge, insights and experience from the researcher, which can be presented as a quality aspect and valuable input to the study being developed (Stenbacka, 2001, p. 553 - 554). Gummesson (2000, p. 60) states that the pre-understanding of the researcher around the topic is an element that guides his/her attitudes and commitments with the work. However, the same author highlights that the researchers must demonstrate theoretical sensitivity and openness to change their paradigm if reality requires him to do so.

Our personal interest for sales and innovation as a research topic emerged during the course "Strategizing in Business Development". As part of the course, all students had contact with different companies and developed a business plan for them. We worked in different projects, but noticed some common factors that affected both companies that we were studying. One of the common factors that we noticed was the need to develop a sales strategy that suits the company and the market. Having a strong strategy for sales innovation was a crucial factor to reach the desired competitive position in the Swedish market. During the development of this project, we also noticed a lack of literature regarding this topic and the struggle of the companies to find suitable guidance. This was our initial motivation to develop further studies in this subject and develop a research that would be useful for the academy and also for companies. Furthermore, we both had previous curiosity around this topic.

We finished our bachelor studies with different specializations related to Business Administration, which gave us a previous overview and academic knowledge about sales and marketing. We also had previous work experience in this field. Adriele Pradi had previously worked with B2B sales in a technology company in Brazil and developed her bachelor thesis studying the impact of CRM software to build marketing strategies. Marc Nöel de Wild developed his bachelor thesis about project management and has previous work experience in the marketing field.

Our previous academic and work experience strongly contributed for choosing the main topic of this study and for developing general guidelines regarding the start point for the research. It also contributed to select companies that could participate and be interviewed for this study. However, we aim to have an open posture to do not let our pre-conceptions

affect the outcomes of the research. We also are aware of cultural difference that could emerge from studying a culture that is different from our home countries.

3.2. Research Philosophy

Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 43) presented that a research paradigm is a philosophical framework that guides how scientific research should be conducted. Easterby -Smith et al. (2012, p. 17) states that there are three main reasons why understanding the philosophical issues is important for the research. The first reason is that the research philosophy not only involves clarification about how the evidences will be gathered and interpreted, but also how this evidences will provide answers to the questions being investigated (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 17). The second reason is that the philosophy can help the researcher to identify what designs will work better for the research, serving as a guide to avoid making blind decisions and to recognize the limitations of each approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 17). The third reason is that it can help the researcher to identify or even create designs that may be outside their past experience, adapting the research according to constraints of different knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 17).

3.2.1. Epistemology

According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 13) epistemology is concerned with the question of what is (or should be) classified as acceptable knowledge. The author presents that a central issue for epistemology is whether the social world should be studied according to the same principles and procedure as the social sciences. The position that agrees with this statement is known as positivism (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 13). When social phenomena started to be studied, the social scientists used in their research the same methods as the natural sciences (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 44). However, the suitability of the traditional scientific methods was challenged and an alternative view emerged, which was labeled as interpretivism (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 44). Positivism believes that reality is independent of individuals and the goal is to discover theories that are based on empirical research and can be scientifically verified (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 44). Interpretivism is guided by the belief that social reality is not objective, but highly subjective and shaped by the research perception (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 44). In general lines, while the positivism focuses on measuring social phenomena, interpretivism focuses on exploring the complexity of social phenomena with the goal of reaching interpretative understanding (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 44).

There are several reasons why we believe that interpretivism is the most suitable epistemological position for our research. The first one is that the literature in sales innovation is scarce, which highlights the need of gaining general understanding about the social phenomena in order to identify the elements and variables involved in the sales innovation process. As described by Collis and Hussey, (2014, p. 45) interpretivism adopt a range of methods that seek to describe, translate and identify the meaning, instead of coming to terms of frequency about the occurring phenomena in the social world. We also believe that in the context of our research question, an interpretative understanding will provide richer information in terms of words and meanings than measuring the phenomena. By formulating the research with a causal interpretative approach, we aim to capture new insights and information that will be useful for creating a picture of the sales innovation scenario inside Swedish companies. Furthermore, as in interpretivism, we believe that the social reality of sales innovation is not objective and can be influenced by the individuals and their perception as researchers. According to Collis and Hussey,

(2014, p. 45) interpretivism presents that it is impossible to separate completely what exists in the social world to the researchers mind and the act of investigating reality has an effect on it.

3.2.2. Ontology

One important question regarding the research philosophy is how things really are. According to Pasian (2015, p. 61), this question is related to social science and is called ontology. The author describes that the main point is whether the social entities should be considered objective entities with a reality that is external to the individuals or whether they should be considered a social construction that is built upon the perception and actions of individuals. This question is usually answered with two main opposite views: objectivism and constructivism. Objectivism is an ontological position that presents social phenomena as an external fact beyond our reach and influence, organizations are discussed as a tangible object and independent of the influence of social actors (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 19). In the opposite side, constructivism considers that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction, but also are in constant state of revision (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 20). This different views offer explanations regarding the nature of the reality, how social entities are build and what is the role of the individuals for the social entities.

Our ontological view is related to constructivism. Innovation as a process implies in changes and improvements in the way organizations perform (Rowley et al., 2011, p.77). This reality of constant changes agrees with the statement that social phenomena is produced through social interaction and is in state of revision. Khazanchi et al. (2007, p. 881) highlights that for building an innovative culture inside a company it is necessary to adopt flexible values, encouraging employee empowerment and creative freedom. This statement reinforces the role of individuals to build innovation inside a company and the influence they have in the institution. At the same time, it opposes to the view that the company is a social entity out of their reach and not influenced by their actions. Our study of sales process innovation and technologies is highly connected to the idea that the reality is not external to the social actors, but is influenced by them. We believe that reality is in a state of constant construction, interaction and improvement. By adopting a constructivist view, we will take into consideration the social interactions for building the reality and the position of individuals as active influencers in the process.

3.3. Research Approach

In our research, we will present and use different theories. Thus, it is important to recognize what is the role that those theories will have in the research. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 124) states that it is important to make explicit what is the approach that will be used to connect theory and the research itself. There are two main approaches that can explain the nature of the relationship between theory and research: inductive and deductive. According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 9) the deductive theory is the commonest view adopted in research. The authors explain that the research is formulated on the basis of what is known about the specific subject, which involves formulating hypothesis that will be scrutinized. On the other hand, the inductive research presents the theory as an outcome of the research process, which involves drawing generalizable inferences out of observations Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 11). Saunders et al. (2009, p. 127) highlights that the choice for one method or another is manly based on the nature of the research. According to the author, a topic on which the literature is wealth enough to

create hypothesis is more related to the deductive approach, while a topic that is new with fewer literature available is more related to the inductive approach.

We chose to adopt an inductive approach in our research. There are several reasons behind our choice. Our research has little literature available, which makes the inductive approach more suitable. At the same time, the inductive research has a more flexible structure and permit changes as the research progress (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 127). This is an important aspect for the topic we are researching. As the existing literature is limited, having a flexible structure will allow us to adapt the research as the work progress and more interviews are made. The inductive approach also brings a close understanding of the research context and is less concerned with generalization (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 127). We consider important to keep our focus in understanding the context and the scenario before constructing generalization or transferring it into other realities. The inductive research approach will contribute to determine new aspects that can underlay the basis for a new theory regarding sales innovation technologies. As our research is focused in one specific scenario, which is the Swedish market for traditional industry, it is not going to be possible to build generalizations to be used in other scenarios. However, an inductive research approach will contribute for the initial investigation around the topic.

3.4. Research Design

The research design is concerned with the methods that will guide the planning and execution of the research. Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 21) presents that the ontological and epistemological views cannot be divorced from issues that are related to the way the research will be conducted. Thus, the research design is strongly influenced by the choices made in regard to philosophical assumptions. Our ontological and epistemological choices are complemented by the research purpose and strategy that are formulated in this topic. We will introduce and justify the reasons behind the research design selected. Furthermore, the analysis and conclusions that will be draw from this research are also an outcome of the position adopted in these general guidelines.

3.4.1. Research Purpose

The purpose of the research is related to the goals that we aim to achieve by developing this work. Blanche et al. (2006, p. 44) presents that the purpose of the research reflects the type of conclusion that the researchers expect to have from the research, specifying what they plan to attain through their study. The author highlights that there are three main types of research purpose: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The exploratory studies are used to make preliminary investigations, employing a flexible and inductive approach as they attempt to get new insights from the phenomenon being studied (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 44). The second approach is the descriptive, which attempts to describe a phenomena accurately either through narrative type description, classifications or other methods (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 45). The third type is the explanatory study, which aims to provide causal explanations to the phenomena being studied, usually explaining how one variable affects the other (Blanche et al., 2006, p. 45).

In this research, we adopted an exploratory research purpose. According to Blaikie (2009, p. 70) exploratory research is necessary when very little is known about the topic and the context in which the research is conducted. The existing literature for sales, innovation and technology is vast. However, the literature connecting the three topics and aiming to research them in a similar context than our research is less available. As highlighted in

the theoretical framework, process innovation has not received as much academic attention as product innovation (Reichstein and Salter, 2006, p. 653; Mcelheran, 2015, p. 1198; Basker, 2015, p. 339). It was not possible to find similar literature that focused on studying process innovation in Sweden. Furthermore, the exploratory approach focuses on bringing a clear understanding of the problem, learning about appropriate data and developing ideas around the topic (Blaikie, 2009, p. 70). This characterization is very similar to our focus with the present research. We aim to gain a further understanding and identify different elements that influence sales innovation and how this process is developed inside the companies. Our focus at this point of the research is not on describing the phenomena, such as in descriptive research, or on explaining it with causal relations regarding how one variable influence other, such as in explanatory research. Thus, the most appropriate research purpose is the exploratory study.

3.4.2. Research Strategy

In order to formulate a research methodology it is also necessary to recognize and present which research strategy will be used to guide the fieldwork. The two options for the research strategy are quantitative research and qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.25). Bryman and Bell (2003, p.25) explain that the difference between quantitative is qualitative research is deeper than the fact that quantitative researchers employ measurement and qualitative researchers do not. The difference lies behind, in the foundation of the scientific methodology, and is related to the fact that the two different research strategies have different epistemological foundations (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p.25). According to the authors, qualitative research employ inductive methods, interpretivism and constructivist approach.

In our research we opted to use a qualitative research strategy. This choice is aligned with our previously presented choices for research philosophy and approach. According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p.25), qualitative research focuses on words rather than quantification, emphasizing the generation of new theories. Furthermore, the authors highlights that qualitative research is concerned with the interpretation of the social world and understand social reality as an emergent construction of the individual. By adopting a qualitative approach we expect to generate new insights and theories that will contribute for the further development of sales innovation technology as a field of research.

By adopting a qualitative approach for our research, we expect to collect different overviews and opinions using an open dialogue, which might not have been possible if we had used a quantitative research method. In this way, we will bring together practical ideas about what happens inside Swedish companies regarding sales innovation technology. The qualitative approach will allow us to analyze the words and understand what is important for the companies regarding the topic. Furthermore, it will give us the access to the necessary flexibility to explore the subject and the vision of the participants.

3.5. Literature Search

The literature search started with a general understanding about the topic. In the beginning of the search we consulted books and scientific article that could give us an overview about all the elements involved in sales. Eriksson and Kovalainen(2008, p. 47) state that textbooks on substantial issues can offer a starting point from which to find more detailed sources and help to familiarize with the research field and keywords that researchers use. This initial literature search brought us to a variety of topics that were later investigated in depth. As the subject "sales" and "innovation" are very broad and include many

subtopics, we refined our search and arrived to keywords that gave us access to the material we were looking for. Key words such as "sales innovation", "process innovation", "technology adoption in sales", "sales technology" were used when searching for literature.

As a second step, we started our literature search for the selected keywords focusing on articles and research books. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 46) scholarly journal articles are excellent sources for literature review because it is peer reviewed for quality and appropriateness. To have access to the materials we used the Umeå University Library website together with selected databases available to students, such as EBSCO, Scopus, among others. We also used Google Scholar to find articles, since it offer easy and practical search configurations. However, we checked the articles to ensure the quality of the material. One journal often consulted was the "Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management" (JPSSM, n.d.) that is internationally considered the premier journal devoted to publishing peer-reviewed article in the field of sales management and selling (JPSSM, n.d.). We haven't found any articles studying this topic in the Swedish context. However, as CRM and Sales Automation have an American origin, most of the research will be written in English.

4. Practical Method

In this chapter the method of research will be elaborated and motivated. Starting with the choice for qualitative research, followed by the method and procedure for qualitative research and the way the analysis of the data will be constructed. The chapter will be concluded with the truth criteria and the ethical considerations that have been made prior to the research.

4.1. Qualitative Research View

According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 293) quantitative and qualitative research are composed by a set of distinctive preoccupations, reflecting their epistemologically grounded beliefs about what constitutes acceptable knowledge. According to the authors, a key difference between the two types of research is that the object of analysis of natural sciences are incapable to attribute meaning to the events and environment, different of people. As a result, qualitative researchers express commitment to view events and the social world through the eyes of the people they are studying (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 293). To answer our research question, we opted to develop a qualitative research that will reflect the object of study, sales process innovation, through the eyes of the people who are responsible for the area.

Regarding the structure of qualitative research, Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 298) states that most qualitative researchers prefer an orientation that entails as little prior contamination of the social world as possible, avoiding the imposition of a frame of reference on people. By keeping the structure of the work to a minimum, researchers expect to enhance the opportunity to genuinely discover and reveal the perspective of the people they are studying (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 298). As a result, qualitative research adopts a strategy that does not delimit areas of enquiry too much and focus on asking fairly general rather than specific research questions. Taking this recommendation into consideration, we followed the recommendations of the literature to design a structure that will reflect purely the opinion of the participants over the topics of the research.

4.2. Qualitative Data Collection Method

According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 298) because of the preference for a loosely structured approach to collect data, qualitative researchers opt for methods that do not require the investigator to develop very specific research questions and devise instruments for those questions. As we are conducting an exploratory research, we opted for keeping the structure to the minimum required to address the research topic. According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 298), interviewing is an extremely prominent method of qualitative research data collection. Hair et al. (2011, 190) states that an interview is where the researcher speaks to the respondent directly. According to the author, interviews are helpful for gather data in complex and sensitive issues, using open-ended questions to collect information. We opted for conducting interviews because it will enable us to have close contact with the companies being investigated, which is important to understand the context of the participants. As we are developing an exploratory study, the interviews will also allow us to explore openly the topics and gain new insights as the interview progress. Myers (2009, p. 119) states that a good interview help to focus on subject's word, using their own language rather than imposing one's own.

According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 298) the emphasis of the interview in qualitative research is on greater generality in the formulation of the initial research ideas focusing on understanding the interviewee's point of view. Qualitative interviews tend to be flexible, being adapted to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and readjusting to emphasis on the significant issues that emerge (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 342). Having flexibility is a key point on our choice for the interview method, mainly because the participants have different contexts and ways of work and we need to adapt to that in order to make the interview relevant. Rambling and going off tangents is encouraged in qualitative interview as it gives insights into what is important for the interviewees (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 342). The interview can also follow any schedule or guide, varying the order of question and even wording to focus on the important emergent issues (Bryman and Bell, 2003, 342).

4.3. Interview Structure

According to Hair (2011, p. 190) interviews can vary from being highly unstructured to highly structured. Unstructured interview are conducted with a flexible approach while structured interviews are conducted in a consistent and orderly manner. Myers (2009, p. 121) states that semi-structured interviews are somewhere in between structured and unstructured interviews, involving the use of some pre-formulated questions but with no strict adherence to them. The approach is important in an interpretivist epistemology, where the researcher is concerned in understanding meaning of the phenomena (Saunders, 2009, p. 322). Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 346) states that if the research has a fairly clear focus for the interview, rather than a general notion, the semi-structured interview will be helpful to address the issue that is being studied. As in our research we adopt an interpretivist epistemology and have a specific focus for the data collection, we opted for using semi-structured interviews. Another reason for having a semi-structure interview is that we will be two people conducting the interviews and, as noted by Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 346), if more than one person is to carry out the field work, in order to ensure comparability on interviews, semi-structured interview can be applied. The semi-structured interviews will also be helpful to gain new insights in the topic (Saunders, 2009, p. 322)

According to Saunders (2009, p. 320) in semi-structured interviews the researcher have a list of topics and questions that has to be covered, although the structure may vary in the interviews. The research can omit or reorganize the list according to the particular interview, considering the context in which it is taking place (Saunders, 2009, p. 320). The researcher can vary the order of the question or even ask additional question given the particular events being discussed (Saunders, 2009, p. 320). Similarly, Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 343) states that in semi-structured interview the researcher has a list of questions often referred as interview guide. According to the authors, questions can emerge during the interview, however will be asked in a similar way and wording. The emphasis should be on the interviewees' frames and understands issues and events, which reflects what the interviewee views as important and explain his understandings, patterns and forms of behavior (Bryman and Bell, 2003, p. 343).

In order to formulate our interview guide (Appendix 2) we started thinking about what are the main topics that have to be addressed by our research. We selected a few general questions concerning the context of the company, customers, sales processes, sales technologies and technology adoption. According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 348) the crucial point is that the semi-structured interview guide allows interviewees to reach their

ways to the participant's view of the social world and have flexibility when conducting the interview. We had a series of goals for our interview. We started off with easy questions about the participants' context to create enthusiasm in order to increase the probability of a deeper dialogue and collecting the required qualitative data. Starting with understand what is the role of salespeople is in the company, followed by how the sales process happens inside the company. An important goal for us was to understand how the sales process changed over the years and how it changed and to identify if the company introduced new technologies for sales in the past years, as well as finding out if the company plans to introduce new technologies for sales in the next years. The goals following from that information are to identify the reasons why companies want or don't want to innovate in sales, and to understand how the companies prioritize in process innovation. From these goals, we created an interview guide that we developed after a first pilot interview. The resulting interview guide can be found in Appendix 2.

These general questions allowed us to keep flexibility and explore new insights as the interview developed. We also used the resource of probe questions, which is helpful for the interviewee to explain and build their answers (Saunders, 2009, p. 322). As the interviews developed, we also could improve the way it was conducting, adapting to the market's vocabulary and industry terms. We started our interviews with contextual questions, as we needed the background information to be able to understand the role of sales for our participants and their companies and to confirm information that we could digitally find about our participating companies.

4.4. Sampling Method

According to Hair et al. (2011, p. 163) a sample is a relatively small subset of the population that is drawn using either probabilistic or non-probabilistic methods. According to the author, a careful consideration of sampling design issues is necessary to select a sample. Nonprobability sampling is typically used in qualitative research and used to describe, discover and develop theory (Hair et al., 2011, p. 163). Sanders (2009, p. 233) states that in non-probability sampling techniques the issue of sample size is ambiguous and there are no rule. According to the author, in qualitative research, the validity, understanding and insights gained from the data are more related to the data collection and analysis skills than with the size of the sample (Saunders, 2009, p. 234). To select our sample, we combined two non-probabilistic methods.

As our goal is to investigate Swedish companies, we started using the network we gained during our previous courses. We first contacted a consulting company that we got to know during one course and that could recommend more companies to interviews. So our sampling started with judgmental sample. According to Hair et al. (2011, p. 175), judgmental sample, also referred as purposive sampling, involve selecting elements for a specific purpose. Purposive sample enables the researcher to use their judgment to select cases that will be the best to answer the research question and meet the research objectives (Saunders, 2009, p. 237). Other advantages of judgmental sample are their convenience, speed and low cost (Hair et al., 2011, p .175). This first interview was crucial for our understanding of the market, since the consultancy company had conducted projects related to sales development. This company also has a strong network in Sweden and could recommend to us other companies that would fit inside our sample. So, as a second step, we used snowball sampling.

According to Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 356) snowball sampling is sometimes used to contact groups of people for whom there is no sampling frame, which is the case in our research. Snowball sampling or networking is used in studies where it is essential to include people with experience of the phenomenon being studied (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p.132). One of the questions you would ask them is that they know anyone else who has been through the same experience with whom they could put you in touch, extending the sample of participants (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 132). As the final question of each interview, we asked the participants if they could recommend us other companies, one reason for this approach is to ensure that we would contact companies that have the potential to contribute to our research questions and fit our sample requirements.

In these requirements we were not looking for companies within one particular industry or sector, but we looked at to Swedish companies in general. Also we did not segregate in terms of size, because both younger sales processes of small companies and more mature sales processes of international companies would contribute to our research. However we focused on organizations that were selling B2B and aiming for either national or international growth, which means that the companies should have a strong emphasis on business development, instead of companies that were settled and focus mainly on maintaining their market share. We were looking for well-developed sales processes as well as companies innovating in their sales process. Targeting companies near Umeå, enabled us to conduct our interviews in person, enhancing the dialogue that might be limited on phone or skype interviews. So by focusing on the Umeå area we aimed to get deeper information from each interviews and made the snowball sampling more effective, as many of our interviewees had good contacts within companies in the area.
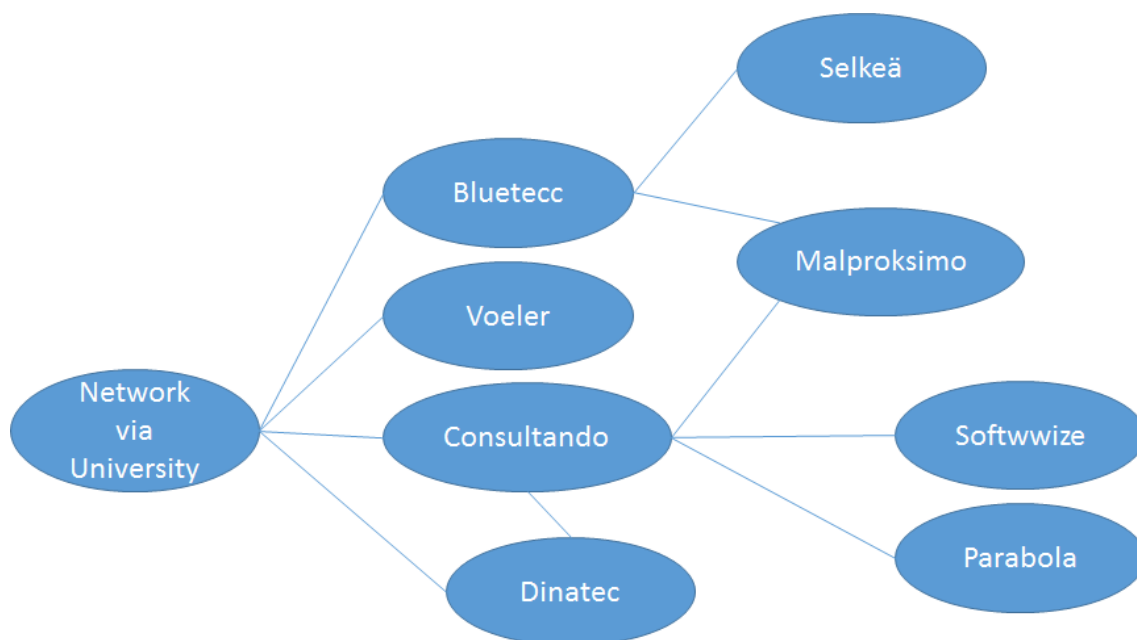
Figure 9: How Snowball Sampling led to interviews with eight organizations

In the sampling method we described more about the choice of Salespeople within the selected companies as participants to our research. This choice is not without risk, as we described in the introduction, the academic access to sales organization is low, due to the

fact that salespeople are highly action oriented and focused on achieving their revenue goals (Donaldson, 2007, p. 21). As expected, many companies that were recommended to us were willing to participate, however not all of them had the available time. So it was essential to contact a high number of companies and find those who could participate in the interviews. Also the snowball sampling gave us access to phone numbers of individuals within the targeted sample, with reference from earlier interviewed participants. The fact that we got the personal contact details gave us the opportunity to avoid the companies' office phones or 'info@company.se' mails and instead directly call individuals with pre-knowledge of what they were doing and references from their contacts that were positive about our interview, made it more interesting to them to make time for our research and easier for us to promote the value of cooperation to them directly. In a way, this was our process to 'sell' ourselves to the company.

4.5. Qualitative Analysis

4.5.1. Preparing the Data

We started preparing the data for the qualitative analysis short after the interviews occurred. According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 488) the data collection, analysis and development of proposition are an interrelated and interactive set of processes, which helps to shape the direction of data collection in an inductive approach. As we are using an inductive approach, after each interview we focused on the transcription and discussion of the information gathered. This process helped us to identify new topics that emerged and improve the following interview. The general guidelines of the semi-structure interview did not face a significant change during the process, but we could adapt our way to conduct interview and vocabulary to be more efficient and clear.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 485) the task of transcribing audio-recorded interview is time consuming since it covers verbal and nonverbal communication. Our choice to transcribe the interview right after it happened helped to document the contextual details that were not mentioned by words. We also documented other resources that were used by the interviewee to answer the questions, such as drawing on paper or on the keyboard of the interview room. In the interviews that were conducted by phone, we tried to collect insights from the voice tone changes and expressions used by the participant.

Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 131) states that is it is critical for the research to establish an understanding of the contextual framework within the research, which will enhance the sensitivity to the data that will be collected and interpreted. Very often qualitative studies provide a detailed account of what is happening on the setting being investigated, those details are important because of their significance for their subjects and account of the context within which people behavior takes place (Bryman and Bell, 2003, 295). As we acknowledge that our personal interpretations might influence the way our empirical findings are summarized and presented, we therefore chose to include direct quotes from our participants and to supply the readers with extensive overview of the empirical findings.

4.5.2. Analytical Procedure

To analyze the data collected during the interviews we used the template analysis. According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 490) a thematic analysis is essentially a list of the codes or categories that represent the themes revealed from the data that have been collected. By using the thematic analysis we believe that we can arrive to general topics

that will allow us to answer the research question and reach the proposed practical contributions. Among the different ways to use thematic analysis, we chose the template analysis. According to King and Horrocks(2010, p. 168) template analysis is well suited to studies that have particular theoretical or applied goals that have to be incorporated into the analysis.

Template analysis allows the researcher to define prior themes, which are created in advance of the analysis process and incorporate important theoretical concepts for the aims of the study (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 168). We started our field research having in mind general topics that are related to our research question, which are sales technology, sales process and technology adoption. The process through which the initial template is designed depends of the extent that the study has structured research question (Thorpe and Holt, 2008, p. 221). From the initial general topics we arrived to specific topics that emerged during the interviews. This way we could design and add new codes to our template analysis. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 490) presents that the template will be subject to revision in the process of analyzing interview transcripts, which leads to new codes being revised and added.

According to Thorpe and Holt (2008, p. 221) the key component of template analysis is the design of a template into which different chunks of data can be categorized. After the interviews, new codes were added to the general themes of our template analysis creating chunks and building the hierarchical relation between them. The template approach allows categories to be displayed hierarchically, which helps in the analytical process (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 505). The template was constantly consulted and updated to cover all the new findings of the interviews.

4.6. Truth Criteria

According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 308) qualitative research aims to capture the multiplicity and complexity of the world, and this aspect is present in the research questions and in the ways the study is conducted. The unique characteristics of qualitative research put forward a mix of pressures for evaluate how successfully the research project has completed its task and purpose. Bryman and Bell (2003, p. 399) state that there are discussion among qualitative research about the relevance of quantitative criteria, reliability and validity, for evaluating the qualitative research. The authors refer to the article of Guba and Lincoln (1994) and present alternative criteria to evaluate qualitative research based on trustworthiness and authenticity. Similarly, Tracy (2010, p.849) proposes a common language for the excellence in qualitative research. The author presents eight criteria that can reflect quality in this research method. We decided to use this approach as it includes a number of reflections regarding the research and covers the complexity mentioned by the other authors. The eight criteria are elaborated in the on the next page.

Table 1: A display of the "Eight Big-Tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research (Tracy, 2010, p. 840) and the way each criterion was achieved in this research.

Criteria for Quality	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve	How we applied it in the research context:
Worthy topic	The topic of the research is • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting	Sales is a crucial part of the organization. It is in sales that the product/service reaches the market. Sales people usually work autonomously supported by guidelines and technologies. Academically, the topic has not receive the expected attention, especially if we consider all the changes that happened in the area in the past years. By connecting sales, technology adoption and innovation we expect to contribute for developments in the areas.
Rich rigor	The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex • Theoretical constructs • Data and time in the field • Sample(s) • Context(s) • Data collection and analysis processes	In this research, we aimed to have a critical view in order to select the appropriate theoretical framework and methodological choices. In our introduction and theoretical framework we presented the vision of different authors over the same topic to enrich the academic background. The methodological choices were carefully made and applied in the development of the work. Our sample was selected by snowball, what gave us access to the local network and the participants were carefully selected to address the diversity of B2B business in the area. The data collection and analysis processes followed the guidelines provided in the Practical Method Chapter. The semi-structured interview method allowed us to collect information in an open way, interviewees could speak freely about the topics.
Sincerity	The study is characterized by • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s) • Transparency about the methods and challenges	As qualitative researchers, we described with transparency our preconceptions around the topic. Being aware of our possible internal biases made us reflect even more about the data collection and analysis. We aimed to minimize the effects of our personal perceptions in the work. As we are working in pair, we could talk to each other and confirm the impressions to make sure it is reliable.
Credibility	The research is marked by • Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (nontextual) knowledge, and showing rather than telling • Triangulation or crystallization • Multivocality • Member reflections	During the whole work, we tried to be descriptive with how we conducted the research. Explanations in details were provided in the Methodology and Practical Method chapter. We also tried to conduct the interview in pairs and confirm our perceptions with the interviewee during the interview and among us after the interview. We also illustrated our data analysis presenting the context of the interviewees and using quotes to bring credibility to our findings. The analysis was also conducted by the two authors, which extensively discussed each of the topics in order to bring quality and validity to our findings.

Table 2: (Continued) A display of the "Eight Big-Tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research (Tracy, 2010, p. 840) and the way each criterion was achieved in this research.

Criteria for Quality	Various means, practices, and methods through which to achieve	How we applied it in the research context:
Resonance	The research influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through • Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalizations • Transferable findings	In our research report, we aimed to have a good aesthetic merit. The text was written and reviewed several times in order to improve the flow and make it more interesting to the reader. We avoided technical terms and jargons in order to make a comprehensible report for all audiences. We also provided illustration of processes, such as the sales process of each company, to complement the textual resources.
Significant contribution	The research provides a significant contribution • Conceptually/theoretically • Practically • Morally • Methodologically • Heuristically	Our contribution is focused in the theory and practically. In the theoretical field, we are connecting new areas, which are process innovation and technology adoption in sales. This is an initial challenge to bring focus for the importance of this topic and explore it more in depth. Our findings were also related to the existing literature, which bring specific contributions to the models. Practically, we expect to contribute for the development of sales departments in the region. By leading the interviewees to a reflection about the sales model used, we aimed to bring new perspectives and questions around the way sales is executed today and how technology could improve it.
Ethical	The research considers • Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research)	Procedural ethics were considered since the conception of this work.. In the report, we stated clearly how we followed the ethical principles. Some information about the participants were not displayed according to our ethical statements for anonymity and confidentiality. For this purpose the company names are replaced by fictional names, that don't relate to the original names of the company. The fictional names are a style choice, which makes reading the report more fluent.. The public details per company were limited to the city where the company is located and the broad segment of the market in which the companies operate.
Meaningful coherence	The study • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other	We believe that our work is consistent and reach its final goal by answering the research question. We provided a good description of how Swedish companies are adopting new technologies to innovate in their sales process. The methods and procedures were chosen accordingly in order to create coherence in the whole work. We tried to build connections between all chapters to demonstrate how it fits together.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 183), in the context of a research, the ethical considerations refer to the appropriateness of the researcher's behavior in relation to the rights of those who are the subject of the work or are somehow affected by it. The authors

state that ethical issues can emerge in any part of the process, since the formulation of the research topic until the final research report. The researchers have to ensure that the research is both methodologically sound and morally defensible to those who are affected by it (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 184). In our research, we have been considering ethical issues since the moment we chose our research topic. Saunders et al., (2009, p. 185) presents a list of general ethical issues that can emerge during the research process. We used this list to describe how we deal with each topic concerning ethics in the present research:

- <u>Privacy of possible and actual participants</u>: All the information regarding the companies that were contacted to participate in the research and those who actually participated was kept as private and only been accessible to the researchers and supervisor. The list was not displayed in other channel.
- <u>Voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw partially or completely from the process</u>: All the participants agreed in giving us the interview and were free to withdraw the participation before, during and after the interview. The participants had our contact (email and cellphone) and could tell us any time if they do not want to participant anymore.
- <u>Consent and possible deception of participants:</u> The participants were aware of the purpose of the research and the way the data would be further analyzed. At the beginning of each interview we explained our research topic in general lines, to do not influence the answers, and at the end we gave more information about the research and our deadlines.
- <u>Maintenance of the confidentiality of data provided by individuals or identifiable participants and their anonymity</u>: As the collected data involves private information, we kept it safely stored in our personal computers and reliable cloud services. Using safe storage services and not displaying their names in the final thesis report also ensured the anonymity of the participants. At the beginning of each interview we also explained to the participant that their interview would be anonymous and that the data would only be used for the purpose of this research.
- <u>Reactions of participants to the way in which you seek to collect data, including embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain and harm:</u> All the participants were aware about the interview format, average time and local in which the interview would happen. They were also free to make suggestion about the most suitable local and time for the interview. During the data collection we did not face any situation involving embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain and harm.
- <u>Effects on participant of the way in which you use, analyze and report you data, in particular the avoidance of embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain and harm:</u> The final outcome of the research was also made clear to the participant. By the end of the interview we also compromised to send him a copy of the final report.
- <u>Behavior and objectivity of you as researcher</u>: As interviewers, we aimed to have a professional behavior before, during and after the interviews and ensure that the interviewees were comfortable with their participation. We also aimed to keep the data collection and analysis inside the agreed scope.

5.   Empirical Findings

As described in the previous chapter, qualitative research has been performed to collect the required research data. The findings from that data are combined in this chapter. To give the reader some background to understand the findings, we started with the context of the participants. To fully comprehend how sales processes are innovated, it is essential to understand how the sales processes of the participants are working, therefore these are excessively explained before getting to the core of the chapter: displaying the findings on sales technology and technology adoption.

5.1. Context of Participants

Eight interviews were conducted among either sales managers or CEO's with a strong role in sales. As mentioned before, all companies are selling business to business and innovative in either their technology or their approach, however the industries are diverse; Consulting (Consultando), innovative software solutions (Softwwize), high-tech manufacturing (Dinatec, Parabola, Bluetecc, Voeler, Selkeä) and innovative technology service (Malproksimo). Three of the eight companies were 3-5 years old and growing in Sweden, while trying to set international sales goals. The other five companies are well established in Sweden and at least one other Nordic country, with growth ambitions and sales goals in central Europe, the UK, the US or worldwide. Four of those already have sales in more than two continents.

The results of our interviews with these companies are presented in this chapter as the empirical findings of our research, using the structure of the eight core interview questions as a guide.

Table 3: Overview of Interviews

Participant Fictive name	Location	Segment	Interview Duration (minutes)
Consultando	Umeå	Consulting	48
Softwwize	Umeå	Software and Services	46
Dinatec	Vindeln	Manufacturer	27
Parabola	Umeå	Systems	27
Malproksimo	Umeå	Software and Hardware	20
Bluetecc	Umeå	Manufacturer	52
Voeler	Örnsköldsvik	Technology	21
Selkeä	Umeå	Telecom	50

5.2. Sales Process Innovation

In this part of the chapter the sales processes and developments in the sales processes are displayed, they will be followed by the application of sales technology in 5.3.

5.2.1.   Customer Market

All the interviews started with general questions about the company. By asking general questions we could understand the context of the business, which is very important for a

qualitative study. We also felt that this questions worked as an ice-breaker to make the participant comfortable with the research and the interviewers. One general question that was asked is about the customer. Understanding the customer is important because the series of activities within the sales process are focused on the customer.

As a consultancy company, Consultando is different from the other companies we interviewed. They have two segments of customers, large mature enterprises with growth ambitions and small inventive projects or innovative start-up's that need help in forming initial business plans. Competition is not high in the innovation consultancy, however the limited available time per customer is the biggest challenge.

Participants Softwwize, Dinatec, Malproksimo, Bluetecc, Voeler have mainly large mature and often multinational customers that cover the majority of their revenues. Even though some of them sell to smaller customers too, the focus lies on the relationship based contact with their largest customers. When asked about the customer, Malproksimo gave a similar response as participant Softwwize: "*We have really big clients, and of course we have SME clients also, but you know 20% stands for 80% of the revenues.*" It is relatively easy to keep track of the sales process in this case, as Dinatec mentioned, because the large companies they deliver to have "*well defined product managers, salespeople and marketing people*". The challenges with these kind of customers can be the high influence that they have, as Softwwize mentioned, they aim to prevent their biggest customer from "*loving you to death*", meaning that they avoid to fall for the trap of focusing the development solely to the needs of one customer or giving that customer the exclusive rights to be the only user of their products. Another challenge is that by having a small amount of large customers the company has to keep track of their developments and change very fast. As Dinatec mentioned:

"*We are not in the driver's seat, it's the big manufacturers… that are in the driver's seat, they decide about technology and change.*"

A similarity that these participants (Softwwize, Dinatec, Malproksimo, Bluetecc, and Voeler) have is that they produce and deliver very innovative products, but mainly focus their sales to more traditional companies. The growth of the participants companies shows that the market needs their products, but not always is ready enough to understand easily the benefits of their products. This is particularly the case when expanding sales outside the Nordics. As Malproksimo mentioned: "*Our perfect client is a mature client, who knows that they can make their business more effective with our solutions*". Voeler faces similar challenge to create the market and mentions that it is necessary to "*Create the opportunity by training the customers to see the benefit they will get from our equipment*". In the same way Softwwize and Bluetecc emphasize the importance of teaching the customers about the value of their technology.

Participants Parabola and Selkeä had different type of customers compared to the others. Instead of a small group of very large customers, they have a more equal divided customer base with many smaller customers. The difference between the two participants is that Selkeä has an economy of scale and sells products to many customers in bulk, while Parabola sells on a more specialist base, small amount of custom for a client made technology from which every single product and therefore every single customer carries a big part of the revenues. Consultando and Dinatec have in common that they both recently started sell to customer groups new to them, and are therefore developing

different sales processes that are required to be able to sell to their two different segments of customers. In the graphic below is showed how the participants can be divided into three groups concerning customer and market.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Companies: Softwwize, Dinatec, Malproksimo, Bluetecc, Voeler	Companies: Parabola, Selkeä	Companies: Consultando, Dinatec
Unequal divided revenue over a small group of large customers	Larger and more equal group of Small & large customers	Two segments of customers that require different sales approaches
Immature markets	More mature markets	
Challenges within creating the market and teaching the customer.	Challenges within managing relations	

Figure 10: Participants Divided by Type of Customer and Market

5.2.2. Sales Process Development

After the questions about the customer market in which the participants operate, we continued to the core questions, starting with how the sales process of the company is structured.

Regarding the sales process, the companies Softwwize, Dinatec, Malproksimo, Bluetecc and Voeler have some similarities. Their market is still immature and the customer do not understand completely their technology. Within this group, both Softwwize & Dinatec are more feeling-based towards their sales process, not following a step-by-step plan in approaching current or potential customers. There are multiple reasons for that, Dinatec for example, mentioned that systemizing sales wasn't a priority so far, because it was easy to keep track of the small group of big well defined customers. In that company, the sales is divided in regions, for example Sweden is divided into 3 regions, with a sales manager for every region who autonomously decides how to sell and whether or not to follow certain steps.

At the company Softwwize, there is a one man salesforce. As a reason for not having a clear guide of the sales in steps the participant answered that might just be because they are not there yet, however mentions: "*I hope it's more about the unique way of selling this technology to a low number of qualified clients*" and "*six to seven [clients] is still quite ok to handle*". The uniqueness refers to the type of very expensive, tailor made high technological product that is sold. Therefore, deals rely on strategic decisions of clients, because it requires them to switch from the existing technology to the new technology of Softwwize, which will be a long term investment for them. A big part of the sales is based on physics and technology discussions with clients that have an engineer with knowledge of the type of used physics. Though there is no sales process on paper, there are certain stages that are considered by the company when selling. For start, the participant mentioned that: "*the real success comes when our clients are successful, when they start pushing out their products*". The participant mentioned that he bases his sales process in the following approach:
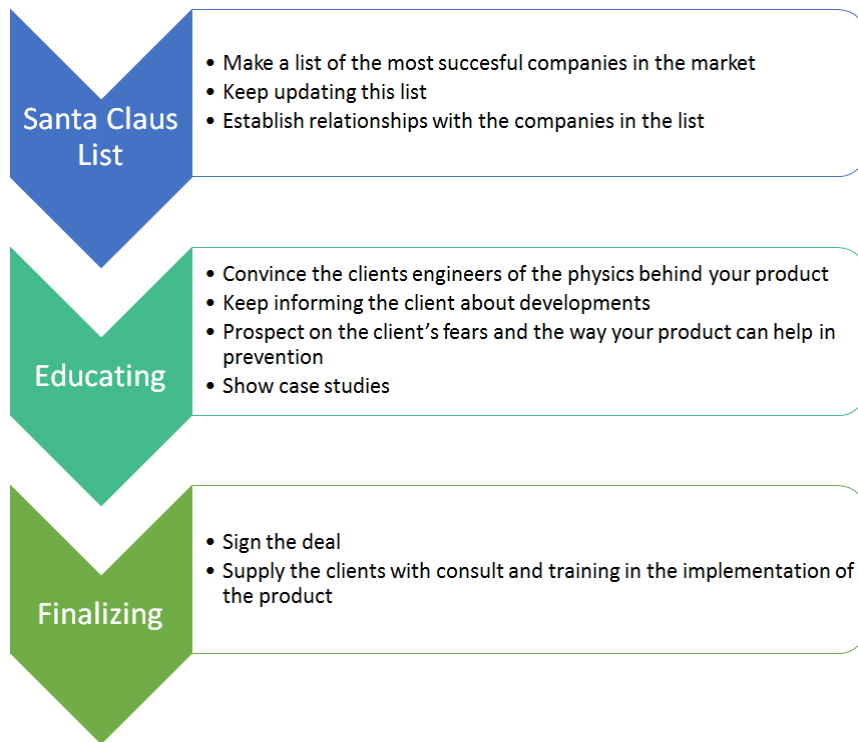
Figure 11: Sales Process Softwwize

Malproksimo is operating in a similar market situation as Softwwize, with a highly technological product from which the hardest part is teaching the customers about it's value. They both share that it takes a long time to convince customers of doing the investment in their product. When asking how much time the selling process takes, the answer was: "*It is not fast, if it is a big business it can take to about one year actually. Small businesses can be 3 to 6 months*" (Malproksimo). The big difference between these mentioned participants is the size and maturity of their company. Softwwize has around 7 big clients and one salesperson, while Malproksimo has over 200 clients.

To keep track of the sales, Malproksimo used to have their sales through a handful of partners, who then took the responsibility over the sales. However a change of business plan from selling products to selling services that required their products, initiated the development of Malproksimo's own sales process "s*ales transformed 3 to 4 times actually*" (Malproksimo). Most of these transformations involved the adoption of technology in sales. Strategically the biggest change was to stop selling products through dealers and starting to sell services that involved their products directly to the customer: "*So our customers are paying us per month for using our products, but in the beginning it was a one time off the bottle, that was the big change*" Also sales approach changed focusing on the benefits the product will bring to the customer:

"And now we are selling more customer benefits: this is what you [client] can save with our product and so."

The biggest challenge in the sales to the end-users, is teaching the customer: "*I mis-thought that companies would know what is (our industry) today but many didn't know what it was so it was very very early*". The participant mentioned that the reason for the slow process is that "*it's the market that needs to be more mature*". The company puts effort into educating the market, a priority is to teach the customer about the savings, for example 15% on fuel costs, that can be made using Malproksimo's products, however

"*they say, no we don't believe that*". The best scenario is when it's possible to show the customer examples of the results from previous projects "*we have so many good examples, so we can use them to shorten the sales process*". However, as the market is not mature yet, examples are often not enough. So the only remaining way is asking the customer "*let's make a pilot so you can test and see it for yourselves*" (Malproksimo). A pilot is costly and takes about 3 to 6 months. In the sales process, Malproksimo follows fixed procedures and documents everything, so the salespeople can do a forecast of sales that is used to plan the production of the products. After the pilot, it will still take some time to implement the products for the customer and to train the customer in using it.

Attract customers
- Through Marketing
- Through Exhibitions

Contact
- Follow a fixed series of steps in contacting the customer
- Document everything about the customer and the taken steps in the sales process

Convince
- Teach the customer about the savings they can make
- Give the customer examples of results from previous projects
- Suggest a pilot to show the value in reality

Activate
- Perform a pilot, which takes 3 to 6 months
- Sign a service contract, enabling the customer to use your products
- Train the customer in using the products
- Keep supporting the customer as a service

Figure 12: Sales Process of Malproksimo

This sales process changes however when approaching new markets, for example "*in the UK market we have a partner selling strategy. As we don't have salespeople there, we have to work with partners*". The same strategy also applied to the US market. Becoming known through cooperation with partners before establishing an own sales force in the new geographic market.

Bluetecc and Voeler incorporate partners in their sales both in their home market Sweden and while expanding worldwide. They are similar in the way that they are extremely specialized, being the only suppliers of their type of technological solutions in the world and experiencing competition only from more traditional substitute solutions. Like all the companies mentioned before, they operate in markets that are not yet mature, making teaching the customer about their technology the biggest challenge. Voeler mentioned that it is essential to be good friends with the main players in the industry. Their market is spread worldwide, however in a specialist environment the world is very small. An advantage of this industry is, according to the interviewee, that the customers are not competing with each other. Therefore, Voeler can and does use the network of customers to find new prospects. In many cases, customers support the sales process in their country, for example in China. Voeler now have representative sales partners in Asia, North

America, continental Europe and Scandinavia. Their sales process has intermediary partners. However, it has a strong influence of Voeler that has to install all equipment on the location and has to educate and train the customer to use it. The participant mentions "*we cannot say that we are following strict sales rules*", in essence the sales process is based on networking, so in any new market company apply the following circle of process:

Figure 13: Sales Process of Voeler

The company of Bluetecc is in a similar situation than Voeler. However, the company has existed for longer time and has more established process. Their name is known in the market, but the potential customer still need to be educate about the technology. Therefore they work very close together with their biggest customers and dealers, which are construction companies, who then educate the end-users about the technology. Currently, Bluetecc sales process is rather reactive than active.

"The customers contacts us, they hear about the project, more than we contact them."

The company also mentions that the dealers of their product can influence the choice for their technology. According to the company, "*engineering companies that are working with a project define the project tools that should be done with [our technology]*". Besides that, the company also get to know about potential projects through magazines, other end-users. But important is that "*our customers, they also obviously want to get the project, so they lead us to that project*" So or sales is about responding to the projects that we hear about "*through our customers, people that get in contact with us and through engineering companies*". Then the process becomes very technical, "*we need to get data from the project*". And when the project data is clarified, synchronization with the constructor is needed, that means according to the participant: "*integrating our offer into their offer to the end customer*" and "*obviously we try to show them that there is added value in using us, also that they should held that to end customers*". This process from the moment projects come in is "*the easy sales process*". Before that, there is a long-term process of educating the industry. Teaching constructors what the technology and product are and teach them "*how to sell it*". In that, it is important to teach about the value of the

technology before sending out quotations. The interviewee told that it is too expensive sending out quotations to companies that don't understand the value this technology offers them. The company aims to educate the market by participating internationally in "*magazines and trade shows*". Going to conferences of the industry and making as clear as possible what the benefits of their products are, educating how and why the products "a*re more economical, environmental, technically advanced and have such a high quality*". The sales process according to the participant is:

Educating the market
- Educating the market through magazines
- Educating the market at conferences and trade shows

Educating current customers
- Educacte constructors of optimal use and value of your products
- Educate constructors in how to educate the end-user

Finding projects
- Finding projects in which the product can be applied through customers
- Finding projects in which the product can be applied through engineering companies
- Finding project in which the product can be applied through magazines
- Finding project in which the product can be applied through contacts among current end-users

project knowledge and synchronisation
- contact stakeholders to receive project data
- Synchronise with the constructor, integrating the offer into their offfer to the end-user
- Convincing the constructor of the added value they can add by using the product in their projects.
- Steer the constructor into teaching the end-customer about these added values

Maintaining Relationships
- Keep the constructors as close partners to enable more sales in the region where the constructor operates
- Store professional and personal data of customers that would help in maintaining the relationship in databases

Figure 14: Sales Process of Bluetecc

With the participants above, we showed the findings from the companies operating in markets that are not yet mature. In other hand, Parabola and Selkeä operate in markets that are more mature. They have less focus on educating their customers about their technology, as their customers are often familiar with similar technology from competitors. And as Selkeä explains "*we normally like if the reseller has been selling our competitors, because he knows the products and type and knows how to sell them*". Educating the market doesn't play the essential role that it did in the first group of participants. The products of Parabola and Selkeä are not similar. While Selkeä sells large amounts of products through a network of dealers and resellers, Parabola sells directly to the end-users.

Parabola has a sales team divided into selling to four different sectors. The main customers are original equipment manufacturers of these sectors, who need the products either for their own technological development, for their marketing or for training purposes. As the products are such a big investment, their process sales is based on *"long-term negotiations"*. It can be a product that big manufacturers are interested in developing, *"we offer them a workshop and do a feasibility study for the manufacturer in our system"* (Parabola). It is a long process until they decide to go for the final development, then Parabola develops and builds the machine for and with the customer. And the man hours for both, the software and hardware development, are sold to them in one offer.

Sell the man-hours for developing a product for a manufacturer

Help manufacturers with product development projects by offering workshop space and a feasability study

Develop long-term relationships with manufacturers
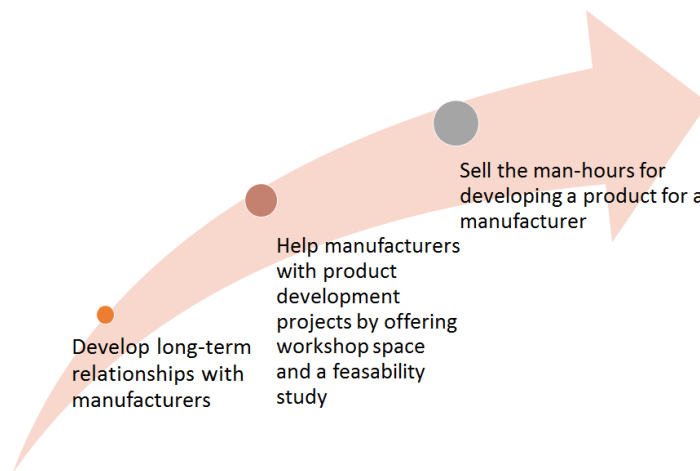
Figure 15: Parabola's sales process for product development projects of their customers

Other type of sales are for the dealers of the type of machines that Parabola produces. This process starts with meeting these dealers through partner manufacturers, customer days, exhibitions or trying to find connections in their head offices.

Finding dealers
- Get a global list of dealers from the manufacturers the company already works with
- Get in contact with dealers via activities organised by manufacturers
- Get a contact from a decisionmaker at the head office of the dealers

Contact
- Sending emails with product value and specifications
- Follow-up calls to ensure that the potential customer notices and evaluates the sent the information.
- Early stage meetings with these potential customers for example at exhibitions

Attract
- Qualify the customers
- When qualified, visit the head office of the customers in person

Figure 16: Parabola's Sales Process towards Dealers

In some cases, Parabola also follows a reactive approach when customers contact them first. From that moment, they will start in the same sales process with contact over email and phone. When the products are sold for training purposes, there is a different approach: "*We look for the location of schools there and we know who they are and they are trying people to become operators. We look to the requirements*". Just like earlier participants, Parabola emphasizes that their sales are very technological:

"It is not like selling a biscuit, you don't sell with that type of sales here, this is more scientifically based."

Also there are no fixed steps in the selling process, every salesperson is allowed to do the sales in their particular way. In that sense, Selkeä has a different approach, being more structured in the sales process, having more restrictions on the freedom of each salesperson. Also there are no sales directly to the end-user. "*We normally have distributors first in a country and can almost say that this is the importer for a typical geographic area*" (Selkeä). Those distributors are specialized in different customer segments: banks, insurance companies, different industries, etc. The company mentions that: "*we try to find distributors with resellers in different areas*". Selkeä focusses on telecom and IT companies as end customer, so the aim is to find resellers within the distributors' network that "*have this coverage in their network*". So it's searching distributors with resellers in the IT and Telecom industry that cover different geographic areas.

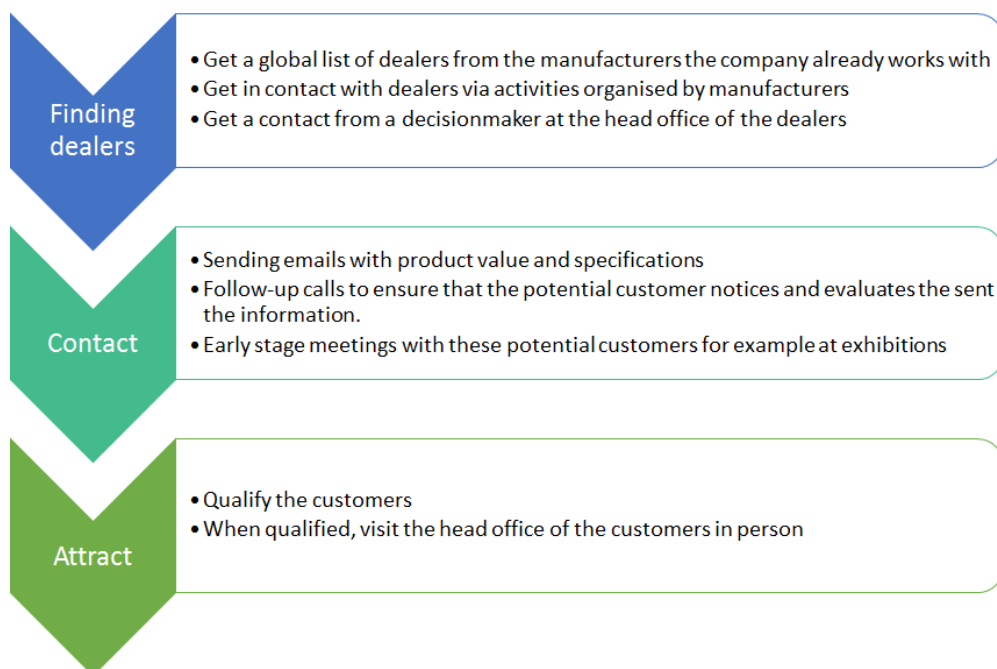In the sales process behind this, cooperation between the sales department and marketing department together with the distributors is needed to reach the end-customer. "*Campaign consists normally in incentives for all those 3, but of course we need those to get access to resellers, so we combine effort to reach the customer*". This distribution system is organized like this, to reduce the amount of sales staff needed: "*If we would cut these guys out, we would need to have the right contact with resellers, so we would need to have at least 10 to 15 times the number of sales people we have today*". However, when penetrating new geographic markets, the company first tries to find a potential reseller, before approaching a distributor. As soon as selling through resellers starts, the company has "*profit to give to the distributor as well*" as this distributors normally sign a contract with the participant's company. When a contract with a distributor is signed, cooperation will be important to grow in the market. So agreements are made to hire a salesperson from the distributor, who is then working half for Selkeä and half for the distributor. Having part-time local salesperson per region makes it easier to cooperate with the distributor and to adapt to the many different ways of selling in different countries.

"Then it is more of following the process of this resellers and how they work to reach the end customer. We are more support to the existing flow than having our own."

Through this employee the distributor will be educated, supply chains will be aligned and joint efforts are made to reach the resellers and end-users in the sales. Future investments on the sales process will be about those resellers "*we have to be closer to the reseller*" (Selkeä) followed by "*we need to automate because between the reseller and the distributor we can not talk directly. We need to have a smarter way to do it*". For now the sales process looks like this:
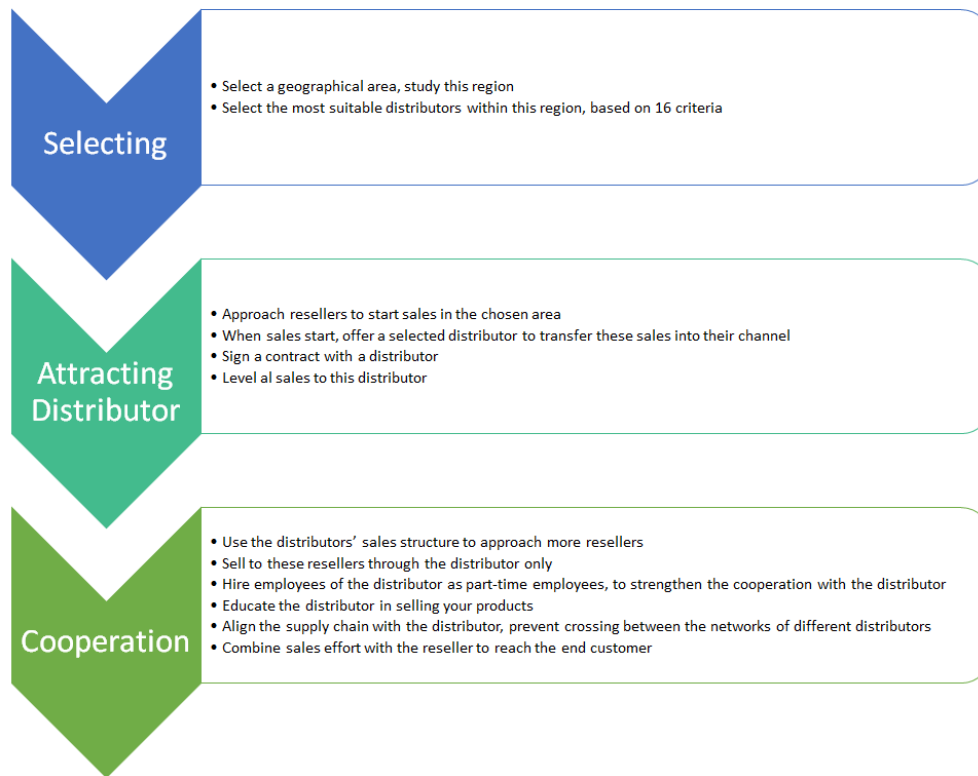
Figure 17: Sales Process of Selkeä

Within all the previous participating companies, sales were rather long-term and time consuming. However, for Consultando, the speed was the most important factor of the sales process. The company does not have a fixed step by step process for sales, but is looking for that in their attempt to grow internationally. Their strategy is to connect with people, get in quick and understand client's main problems immediately and consists that:

"*Better do it fast and good than to do it perfect and slow.*"

The respondent mentioned "*As a consultancy, we are one way or the other selling our time*" and "It´s very easy to fall into a trap, where it's impossible to disconnect yourself from a business". Therefore they create personalized consultancy packages in order to reduce the amount of hours of the consultant, which also makes the consulted company less dependent of the consultant and therefore should create more value while reducing spent time. This will be a more systematized work than what the company used to have, when expanding geographically it will not be possible anymore to visit companies in person and spend time with the CEO's of customers. However, with the larger mature customers, the respondent said "*we need to sit down with the CEO or the management team, it's difficult to have that mechanical approach, so right now we are with the large customers limited to this geographical area*". For this reason, the traditional sales process will be continued to maintain market share around Umeå with larger customers. For the smaller starting companies or projects, the sales process developed from direct sales with meetings and calls, to more efficient digital sales, with minimal or no meetings.

This direct approach sales of Consultando consists out of the following steps:
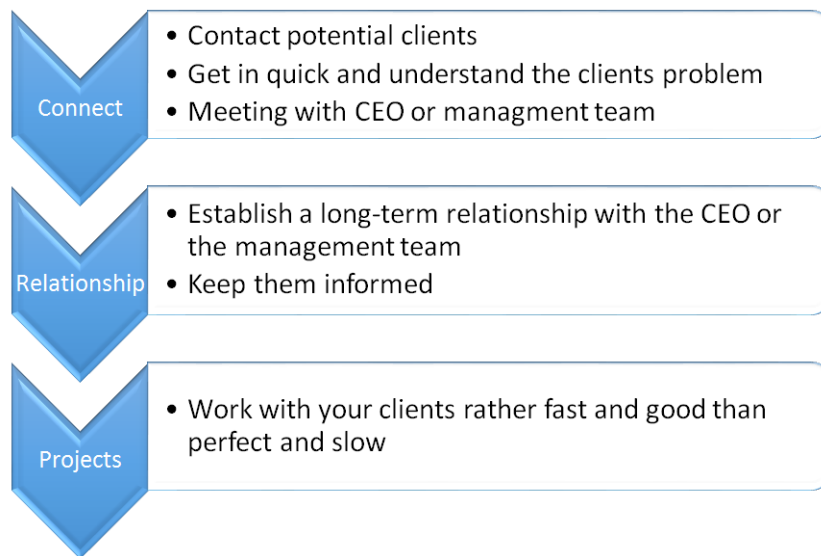
Figure 18: Sales Process of Consultando towards Big and Mature Companies

For the smaller projects and start-ups, the process is mechanized and more digital:
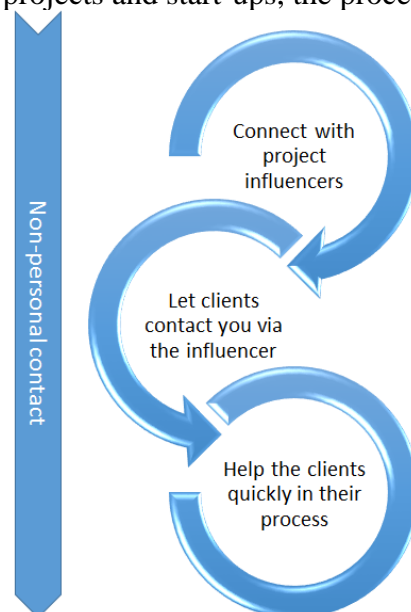
Figure 19: Sales Process of Consultando towards Smaller Projects and Start-ups

5.3. Sales Technology Adoption

This part of the chapter shows the findings on the adoption of sales technology, supporting or extending to the sales processes that were displayed in the previous pages.

5.3.1. Adoption and Use of CRM

After understanding the sales process, we started questions to investigate how the companies are using sales technologies. The adoption and use of CRM software is a central point in our investigation. From the companies that were interviewed, the participants Parabola, Malproksimo, Bluetecc and Selkeä were using a CRM system. Participants Consultando, Dinatec and Voeler were not using and Softwwize had recently acquired CRM software and is in process to implement it.

A variety of reasons for not using a CRM system emerged. One participant pointed as the main reason for not adopting a CRM system the size of the company: "*[When asked about the use of CRM system] Not yet. We are two small for that*". However, among the participants that are not using a CRM system there are companies of different sizes. Dinatec pointed that implementing a CRM system would be very difficult since they have autonomous operations in different regions: "*We have divided the Swedish market in three regions, so each region's sales manager takes care of his customer in his territory*". Softwwize presents that another reason for not having a CRM software in use is the time necessary to set up the software, his company acquired the software but is still working on the configuration of the system: "*We have a CRM system, unfortunately not in use yet. But we have investigated this year to transfer all the clients into that so we can share information of all the clients, deals and contracts numbers, inversions, how many runtimes*". Among the participants that do not use CRM software, the participant from Dinatec points that he intend to use it in the future and see as a main reason for the adoption the support that it will provide for the sales activities: "*[With a CRM system] We get a more systematic system support of sales activities*".

Among the participants that are not using a CRM software, some point out that the close relationship with customers makes less necessary to adopt a software. Dinatec mentions that "*We have close contact with them so we know it quite well*". Voeler also has close contact with customers and partners:

"***I mean, our industry is like a small family in Sweden […] it is a very close operation. Right now I have been 3 weeks out traveling meeting customers and representatives.***"

The same is true for Softwwize, that mentions: "*[We keep track of our clients now] mainly with excel sheets, because so far it has been let's say 6 or 7 real clients, and 6 or 7 is still quite ok to handle*". Bluetecc, a user of CRM software, recognizes that many companies in his network do not use a CRM software for the same reason as Dinatec and Voeler, the ability to manage relationships without the software. However, Bluetecc points that the lack of CRM might be creating blind spots when looking to the full sales process: "*We have heard from different companies with a variety of dealers that they haven't used CRM system because it is easier to just keep track of the dealers. But they didn't look to the end customer. Or they did look at them but did not keep track*".

Among the participants that are using a CRM software, Bluetecc points that his CRM software has a very high importance in the sales process: "*We have been using the CRM for 10 years or something. Without that you can't do business*". The way that the participants use the CRM software also diverge, some use it only to store information, while others use it to support the sales process and steps. Malproksimo states that the CRM software is used for both purposes: "Y*es we have CRM's, we have SalesForce, so we try to use to document everything and use the working steps in the sales process*". The use of steps of the sales process inside the CRM software was also highlighted in the interview with Parabola: "*We just put one customers. Then they come to the next step, we qualify that customer, obviously we talk to them and qualify them. They can be a valuable customer. Then we just set activities like calling on that date. Then it send you notification. Then we put a product to work with this customer, this is the price and that is weight of the moneywise.[…] Then basically we say ok, next stage we send them a quotation. […] Then we say ok, from this sales one to three marks we will close the deal*". Bluetecc mentions that his CRM software do not allow him to keep track of the steps in

the sales process: "*[Using steps of the sales process in the CRM system] is a goal that I have. But with the CRM system that we have it does not allow us to do that. [...] So this is something that CRM system does not allow, to have a sales process with many dealers to the same end project*". Selkeä also mentions that he is still not using the CRM software to keep track of the sales process and steps due to difficulties in the implementation process and adherence of salespeople:

"T*hat's a tough one. To have some kind of diary that we could follow, no, we are not there yet. Definitely not. It has been hard to get them to do that.*"

Another application of the CRM software pointed by the participants is to collect information: "*Yes and obviously the CRM system track all the information, contact, quotations… And we have obviously known and standardized information for calling him, follow up information, like if he is skiing or his dog died, important to get the relationship scope to next time you call. So it's a lot of different things*"(Bluetecc), "*We keep track in our CRM of the distributors and of the selected resellers [...] it's more of keeping track of people and of all the different contacts you need to have because you have the administration, supply chain, sales, marketing.*"(Selkeä). Malproksimo states that he also uses the CRM system to generate report and support his sales team: "*[The CRM system] it's for the sales people for the guys and girls to get through the reports*". Selkeä mentions the importance of storing information in order to avoid losing it in case salespeople leave the company: "*It is more keeping track to be not that vulnerable if the sales guy would leave. Because we saw that network was quite big, especially in the resellers. It takes so long to establish distributors. You need to keep track of it that some of them leave and new one comes in and that was starting point*".

Bluetecc also points the use of CRM to balance efforts between old and new customers: "*I mean it is so important, there is so many projects out there and it's so easy to fall into just handling everything that comes inside as new and then you forget the old project*". The same participant points the importance of CRM to update the contact with the prospecting company in a long term sales process: "*Because the sales process we have been working with projects that take 6 years to the moment the first contact occurs to when they use our product, so they have been changing people, so if we won't have a way to handle those in a good way we will forget about it*". Malproksimo also mentions the investment made in the CRM software to have access to a high quality tool: "*Well I believe that the SalesForce is actually the best CRM system. It is also the most expensive system, but we started to use it now. I think it is user friendly for users, and it can work with a lot of reports for me*".

Selkeä also brings information about the challenges involved in changing from one CRM software to another: "*We are probably gonna upgrade it on the coming 12 months. Is just that is so much work that we don't want start, but we have to do that*". The participant also highlights the need to integrate the CRM software with other existing technologies in the company: "*We have a BI tool that is really good, but then you don't have the CRM information. You need to combine the two things. When you see that a distributors and want to discuss the mix of product and have statistics and combine it. We want to have it in one place*"(Selkeä). The participant mentions the difficulties to keep update in the new technologies and adapt it to the the company business: "*If we were starting the company today it had been much easier, we start from the beginning and can choose advanced tools from the beginning that has everything integrated. To integrate can take years, and*

then upgrade and then new tools come out. It is hard to throw away everything and start from the beginning is such a hassle"(Selkeä).

5.3.2. Adoption and Use of Sales Automation

After understanding the use and adoption of CRM systems, we started to investigate the use of sales automation tools. The sales automation tools involve a broad concept with different kind of technologies. To simplify and cover all the possibilities of use, we tried to ask about individual types of sales automation tools. In general, most of the companies justify that they don't focus on adopting automation tools due to the complexity of their product and sales process. Among the companies that adopt some kind of automation, it is more related to automatizing part of the administrative work involved in the sales process.

The most used tool for sales automation was related to automatizing the quotation and invoicing processes: "*We use like basic quotation tool only. A quite basic configurator*"(Dinatec); "*But we do have now an invoice system that makes life much easier for me, and much more trustworthy*"(Softwwize); "*Yes, yes, obviously we have Monitor ERP system [...] You know, ERP system more or less for all bureaucracy, send in quotations, some sort of financing and having a record of the products*"(Parabola). The participant from Selkeä also points the use of ERP systems and BI in their process.

Our interviewee from Softwwize, a company that uses a system for automation in quotation and invoicing services, mentions as main benefit of this technology the standardization of the process and the decrease of administrative workload into his daily life: "*Before that I could not make a standardized quotation, I had to do it more or less in word, calculate everything by myself, figure out all the numbers on paper so today it is more standardized*". Other participant, Parabola, points that the implementation of sales automation tools increases the bureaucracy involved in the work: "*[about sales automation tools] but yes, more technology and tools, but then there is all the bureaucracy*". Selkeä mentions that the company adopts some sort of automation, but more related to marketing activities that influence the work of salespeople: "*Because we use a lot of regions when we do the local campaign together with reseller and distributors. Because we offer them to do the how flow. [...] We do part of it and they do part of it and get leads back. So it's going to be more now when we have been using new web tools. We want to integrate the email with the web as well. The choice of web tools is also based on the CRM integration*".

Some participants have interest in improving their sales automation tools or implementing a new one in the future: "*[when asked about sales automation tools] Yes maybe in the future*" (Malproksimo); "*We are looking into replacing that [basic sales automation quotation system] for a more advanced sales configurator for instance, configuring the products to rationalize the products*" (Dinatec). Softwwize also points that he aims to automatize part of the marketing, which today is in hands of the sales department, by working in partnership with another company: "*We had a meeting with a local marketing agency [...] and we are trying to get that integrated in our work*". Bluetecc also has the goal to build automation around their communication activities using the CRM system, replying when asked about automation in communication via e-mail:

"*The idea is that we were going to do something like that, but we don't have the ability. We want them to change the CRM system so they could handle this kind of scenario.*"

Among the companies that don't adopt sales automation tools or adopt only in small parts of the process a variety of reasons emerged, such as the lack of maturity in the market "*But we see right now we have so many good examples so we can use them [sales automation tools] and shorten the sales process. But I believe it's the market that needs to be more mature*" (Malproksimo), the complexity of the product "*We have a very modular system so we can't actually do that [sales automation]. The quotation is like too much money. […] Our market is very special. It is a very tailored application for the customer*"(Voeler) and the long-term sales process "*So you are not selling like this or at the phone, you must give a presentation, then you are making quotations and then if then if the customer put this in the budget for the next year*"(Voeler). One of the participants that use sales automation also points that it is not possible to rely only on automatic, since the business situation is very dynamic: "*Obviously there is a practical and technology involved. We can't only rely on automatic, it just give you the automation and is there. We are working in dynamic situation* (Parabola)". Selkeä also mentions that automation might be used only when the relationship between company and customer is already well established, replying when asked about sales automation use in the sales process:

"*No, because then you will assume that you can reach the same type of relationship with automation and I haven't seen it yet. It is more the other way around, when you establish the relationship you can start automating so you can concentrate on the important stuff.*"

One of the participants also registered that he had tried to use sales automation tools in the past, however it was not successful due to the lack of knowledge in the market around his product: "*That's why we tried some years ago to simplify the quotation process to automate that date came in and quotation was almost done automatically and sent. That did not work in this situation, because they still need to educate the customer about what you are getting. I had to stop that process because we sent so many quotes and the take rates were down*". Which is similar to the reason pointed by Malproksimo for not using sales automation tools.

5.3.3. Adoption and Use of Other Technologies

After asking about specific technologies, CRM and Sales Automation, we explored the other technologies that are used in the sales process. In this general question about which technologies are involved in the sales process, the participants cited some group of technologies: website, blogs, e-mail, LinkedIn, Skype, web application and java applications.

The use of the website for sales purposes or support to sales activities was cited by many participants. Among the function of the website, there are the access to private material: "*So we have login's regarding service and parts and documentation and things like that, so customers can login on our website and get caught of service manuals, part manuals*" (Dinatec), "*They can login, they can have services, login services and all that they want us to do. […] We actually now try to setup 24/5, not 24/7, in at least one language, English*" (Selkeä).

Another function on the website is the possibility to get information about product and price: "*So far we have a rough configurator, where you can look at if I have a certain brand or have a certain size of the product, […] so you can get a rough idea on our*

website from that product configurator with pricing and everything"(Dinatec), "*Yes, we have some web tools for that. So you can go into our website and put in some parameters. And then you can get the sales information*" (Malproksimo).

Consultando mentions that the website is not a direct sales tool for his company, however it helps to build a relationship with customers: "W*e don't see the web as a direct sales tool, but it's an important confidence builder. We know that people look there and come back and say something. So having a nice website with relevant information is probably vital in going forward*". The use of blogs inside the website was also mentioned by Consultando: "*We are so small yet, but we try to use blogs [...] we need to be seen as relevant with some kind of knowledge, so we do a lot of things for free, to spread knowledge*". The same participant points that a challenge in the use of this approach is to measure what is the return: "*But then the conversion, how do you convert people that like us or at least appreciate what we say to paying customers. That's the main thing*". Bluetec points that the website is not used with login function, for example, because he doesn't trust the structure of the webpage: "*We don't have login because I don't trust that site too much. Because if the wrong person gets access to the website it becomes dangerous. So what we do is that we try to keep it very personal the practical information*".

Another tool mentioned often by the participants was the e-mail. Dinatec mentions that e-mail is used to keep the customer informed: "*Of course we inform [the customer] through our website, do mailings about product news, product changes things like that through certain addresses we have in our customer file*". Softwwize also mentions the use of e-mail to reach new prospects: "*That's part of my sales process, finding new guys and also visiting, and finding new guys by linked-in and also email contact*". The email is also used by Parabola to follow up after a first personal meeting: "*We meet them in different ways, we meet them during the customer days in the OEM or we meet them during the exhibitions, or we basically have a connection from the head office they send an email and say about the product*". Another technology that was mentioned by Softwwize together with email to prospect new clients was the LinkedIn:

"*I'm using LinkedIn a lot, to pinpoint new guys in some companies many times […] I have Linked-In premium account which makes it easier for me to see a little more information and send in-mails to people there.*"

Another point often mentioned is also the role of long distance online communication. Many participants mentioned that they use Skype technology and other long distance communication software to have meetings with prospects and clients: "*Before in the meeting we had to go there and see them. But now, we use skype just to see each other face. Basically we are closer. We can have a job discussion, some ice breaking basic talk*" (Parabola), "*Yes, a big difference [in the sales process from the past] is the technology in communication. Face to face meetings are important but with Skype, YouTube, you can do a lot from the office*" (Voeler).

Participants also mentioned the use of Power Point Presentations inside their sales process: "*[about the use of technology in the sales process] PPT and technical reports and so on"(Voeler)*, "*We don't have to be there to have our PPT presentation about our product or them about their company face to face, we can just do it here*" *(Parabola)*. Another resource mentioned was the use of Excel files to organize information (Malproksimo). A participant additionally mentioned the use of an online application to

support the sales process, besides the CRM, he also uses website such as Basecamp and Trello.

Bluetecc also developed an internal technology to solve an issue in their sales process. The company identified that the dealers of their products had problems to design a project using their technology for the final customer. So they created a Java Application that makes the design easier and also brings the information of the end customer to their databases: "*Because people didn't know how to design it, so we had to give them a tool to make it easier. But we say this is our software and we want to have a communication over this projects. So we tell them that in order for you to use this, it is going to be all the data that they are putting in this our information. So we store it here. […] It is a client server; it is downloaded as java-based application. In order for this to run they need to log in. We set up the server login process*". The same company is already planning an evolution in the system that would work as an "Inverse CRM", which would bring information of the projects being executed by the dealers directly to the company and make the sales process easier and more innovative.

About new technologies that companies would like to introduce in the future, Softwwize mentioned an improvement on the system to monitor customer activity in their product: "*Because if we would have real time connections with all our installations, we could navigate and have an idea of how much they are running our technology and the end user installations and also pushing out new burshens, back fits, listening to what kind of physics are they using, such things. That would be a future scenario with building trust and also how to use the cloud in my work*". Another idea mentioned by Parabola in the interviews was the use of virtual reality glasses to improve the demonstration processes: "*Obviously media will be more durable and more capable. Media conferences and sounds will develop. Application maybe like binoculars [virtual reality glasses] you can just send your app in to the client by email or message, instead of just filming it. We can be in a virtual reality environment to get a meeting. […] We can just walk around in this environment and have a discussion in virtual reality and have sorts of workshop and talking there*". The participant adds that this product is still under development.

5.3.4. Adoption of Technology in General

The investigation of technology adoption combined insights from the question referring to CRM, sales force automation and other technologies that will be summarized in the following paragraphs. Regarding to the use of technologies in the sales process, a variety of aspects were mentioned to justify the decisions of adopting or not adopting a new technology. Some reasons were linked to internal influence and others to external context. Dinatec states that the process of adopting a universal technology for sales inside his company is very connected and slowed by the fact that the wide geographical operation requires customization and autonomy from each of the units: "*They [sales team] have individual setups in each country, where they configure their products […] so it's very hard, we just have to be flexible*".

On the other hand, a participant in a company with a lean team also states that he would like to do more and implement new things in the marketing that would support the sales process, but is limited by his time and skills: "*Also I'm thinking how we can do marketing out of that. As a salesman perhaps I'm not the right guy to put it in public, whereas I can do it when I do it for you as a client, for you only. When it goes public then it is too much*

for a salesman". Similarly, one participant is aware of the possibilities that technology can bring, but limited by how to implement and execute it:

"Yes, the digital thing is huge, and I don't think that anyone knows now exactly how to do it yet. We are not different, we don't know how this will look like in 5 years. What can you do, how can you reach people and reach them in an efficient way. It's fascinating but I don't know yet." (Consultando).

The available time to focus on technology adoption in the sales process is also mentioned by Bluetecc in the interviews: "*My biggest concern now is how to handle [the project to implement a new sales technology]. […]. Every day is my struggle to hand over sales process to other people. So I can focus on innovation of the process. […] That's what I should do and want to do, but I am just struggling with the business daily things*". The influence of the cost in the sales process is mentioned by Consultando when talking about a company that successfully introduced a new technology in their sales: "*Yes I've seen him, the CEO, he is quite public in what they are doing, he is talking at alumni events and so I used that case actually to inspire others, and I know also that that system that they have is quite expensive, so it's not for everyone*". The uncertainty involved in the decision of changing technology and making upgrades is also stated by Consultando: "*We've come very far in 6 months' time but before we decide that our web will probably look a little bit different maybe, but until then less is more. Otherwise we'd be talking about the wrong things for the wrong target groups […] but not that much technology right now, we look at several things but we haven't decided what would be best for us*". The same participant highlights the need to measure the return of the investment made in new technologies. Other factors more related to external forces influencing the decision of adopting new technologies in the sales process were also mentioned.

Dinatec mentioned that the speed in which they adopt new technologies is regulated by the technology that their dealers use: "*We are a lot dictated by the level of our customers' sophistication, I would say. […] They are quite Excel based still, so most of them have very basic sales processes and basic sales tools. We had a quite advanced sales tool as a retail business […], so we cannot run away from our customers to fast either, because we have to match up a little bit towards their needs and their mapping*".

Malproksimo mentions that their business partners contribute to speed up the technology adoption inside the company: "*Yes, everything goes very fast right now, because we have a partner platform. If we go back 10 years then the lifetime of a platform could be 10 years. Now the lifetime is about 2½ years. So the market is going very very fast*". Malproksimo and Bluetecc also mention that the speed in which they adopt new technologies, such as sales automation tools, is limited by the maturity of the market: "[*sales automation and contribution to the sales process] No i don't think so, but it depends on the market, so the market needs to be more mature*"(Malproksimo), "[*sales automation tools] that did not work in this situation, because they still need to educate the customer about what you are getting*"(Bluetecc).

Another factor that was highlighted by Bluetecc was the past experiences of the participant with unsuccessful sales technology: "*That's why we tried some years ago to simplify the quotation process to automate that date came in and quotation was almost done automatically and sent. That did not work in this situation, because they still need to educate the customer about what you are getting .If it comes back to we generating*

quotation maybe it would work". Selkeä also highlights the difficult to persuade salespeople to engage in the use of CRM: "*It is very difficult to get salesforce to really keep the CRM updated. Everybody had experienced that. So you really need. We bought a CRM system, we did a huge project and it was so smart. It took 6 months and we realized that sales guy didn't use"*. From this past experience, Selkeä decided to implement technology process in a more incremental way: "*But we have learnt to do not try to build a system before you had tried it out without the system. So it's about excel staff before we sit down with the guys and talk how we should solve"*.

Selkeä also points that the adoption of new technology in sales influences other areas, such as IT and administrative personnel, which may cause resistance from them: "*It is hard to throw away everything and start from the beginning is such a hassle. You have IT problems, to get the integration, to change the routines from the administration. They want to have routines in a certain way. If you would change everything for them they get very distracted. There is a challenge to get them on line with it"*.

6. Analysis

In chapter four is described how the template analysis is used to define prior themes of research, which were created before the analytical process based on the explored theoretical models. In chapter six first the theme of sales process and sales process innovation will be analyzed, followed by the use and adoption of sales technologies. Finally there will be a synthesized view on the analysis and the outcomes of the theoretical framework.

6.1. Reality of The Sales Process

The sales process of B2B companies is, according to the literature, very focused, complex and technically orientated (Lilien and Grewal, 2012, p. 3) When mirroring these characteristics to the first findings, many of our participants state that their sales are complex indeed, it's not like selling clothes or biscuits, as Parabola's participant mentioned. The complexity comes from the fact that our participants face the challenge of having to teach their customers in detail about the technology and the physics behind the technology they sell to make them understand the value. This underlines that salespeople have a high responsibility in transferring knowledge, as salespeople had their role transformed into knowledge brokers, with the focus on transferring knowledge about the product or service to the customer (Verbeke et al., 2011, p. 422).

The complexity of the sales creates a contrast with the fact that most of our participants did not have clearly defined steps in their sales processes. Some companies, such as Softwwize and Dinatec, explained that they were looking into structuring it, but so far they didn't really have a process described on paper. According to them, the most important part of sales is networking and having strong relations with customers. The execution and therefore the steps that are taken are feeling based and might differ per customer. Nevertheless, these companies confirmed their interest in one way or another structuring sales more in the future. In the same way that Zoltners et al. (2008, p. 115) and Donaldson (2007, p. 21) already highlighted that sales, as a topic of research, did not receive representative academic focus compared to the importance to organizations, we can also say that sales does not receive the level of focus of organizations that might be expected.

6.2. Usefulness of Process Innovation

Companies choose to have well-structured sales processes or prefer a more personal feeling based sales process. As laid out in the findings, both philosophies still result in a series of steps that have to be taken to achieve certain sales goals, and these series of steps developed over time. We have seen a diversity of ways of how companies innovate their sales processes, Hulting and Atuahene-Gima (2000, p. 445) state that salespeople should be more committed to innovation. According to Papazoglou and van den Heuvel (2007, p. 79) the lack of process innovation prevents companies from benefiting from the potential of modern web technology in sales. Therefore companies should have activity flows to specify the integration and coordination of process improvements (Merino and Elguezabal, 2005, p. 1). This mentioned, the analysis of our findings shows that the companies with the more structured sales processes are innovating more in their sales process as well. Selkeä, for example, had huge challenges implementing a new technology in sales, because the salespeople were less willing to adopt new ways of working. Therefore years of effort from the top management were required to realize innovation. According to the participant from the company, this implementation would

have been easier if it was planned and adopted from the beginning, in other words, if there would have been an innovation process before the need for innovation emerged.

Bluetecc also confirmed that innovation in sales is a strategic topic. The new ideas usually originate from the CEO and not from the salespeople. Therefore, without a structure for innovating the sales process, or without a creative strategy, the process would not be innovated until external forces or higher management push a company or the sales people to do so. Most of the participants do not prioritize sales innovation and dedicate time for the activity, unless the market requires them to adopt it. On the other hand, Malproksimo activated the sales innovation processes when the organization experienced a strong growth. This made the company able to innovate by own choice in a time that there is a high cash flow, instead of being forced to innovate later by external factors because, and while, revenues were going down.

6.2.1. Effective Implementation of Sales Process Innovation

Many theories in sales innovation are based on the Capability based perspective on process innovation, developed by Pisano (1997, p. 34). In essence this perspective is based on learning by doing, creativity and rapid development (Pisano, 1997, p. 42). This method seemed to work for Parabola, where sales managers can autonomously decide how to sell. This independence and responsibility of the salespeople might have influenced the adoption of many new technologies within the sales processes. The company today can be considered far in front of other companies in terms of use of modern technologies in sales. However the participant from Selkeä is negative towards this capability based approach, stating that they do not introduce new systems before testing it and solving what needs to be solved. His statement can be connected to the knowledge based approach, an approach that tends to be much more systematic and emphasizes the importance of acquiring knowledge before actively changing the processes (Gopalakrishnan et al., 1999, p. 148).

Both the knowledge based and the capability based perspectives on process innovation seem to be effective for the participants. Parabola is highly innovative through their more flexible sales processes from their capability based approach. At the same time, Selkeä achieves high growth rates in sales through the knowledge based approach. The disadvantage for Selkeä is the time that was needed to develop the sales process further. The advantage is that there is more control over the development of the innovation and knowledge about the innovations does not depend on individuals, but more on organizational knowledge, which reduces the risk involved when individuals leave the company.

Papinniemi (1999, p. 98) created a very systematic model that fits within the capability based perspective that, in some way, is consistent with the way Selkeä developed their sales process, by very carefully analyzing the potential effects of all changes in the sales process. However this model is too broad to apply purely to sales innovation, it's more for innovating processes in general and decision-making on which processes should be improved. Having a basic model for process innovation would probably limit sales process innovation, as it would focus on the biggest candidates for innovation first. None of our participants considered sales innovation a priority, it usually received less attention compared to service and product innovation processes.

To speed up the systematic knowledge based approach of process innovation and create a flow, the sixth phase model of Papazoglou and van den Heuvel (2007, p. 80) would be more applicable. The model consists of Planning (1), Analysis and Design (2), Construction and Testing(3), Provisioning(4), Deployment and Execution(5) and Monitoring(6). Selkeä would, in this model, be in the sixth phase regarding their deployed CRM system. Consultando would, with their development of the sales process towards service packages for consulting on distance, be in the phase of provisioning, while implementation of technology in their sales system would be in the planning phase.

Another point important to notice is that speeding up the sales process innovation is not always useful. In the case of Dinatec, the rate of effective development in sales strongly depends on the innovation rate of their customers. When manufacturers of the shared end product are your main customers, processes have to be very much aligned with the customer, making it less effective to raise the priority of sales process innovation. Falling back to the basic model of process innovation of Papinniemi (1999, p. 98) would be better in this case, to analytically decide where process innovation is most needed, before running ahead of the customers. However, it is important that there should be a driving process enabling process innovation, which might be limited when using a linear model like the basic model of Papinniemi.

Action research could turn linear models into improvement circles, with the goal of introducing continual progress instead of just introducing single developments. The model would force companies to review and reflect on the current situation with the aim to plan improvements, keeping sales innovation on the agenda. Bluetecc is a company already working that way, continuously looking for progress and evaluating previous developments. The same situation is found in Malproksimo to an even larger extent, which adopted a series of radical changes during the period of strong growth of the organization. The company focus on activating sales process innovation instead of waiting for the market to demand changes. This process prevents that ideas are stored too long before the implementation and teach organizations to keep learning, creating more knowledge about the way the organization can innovate its sales processes.

Malproksimo clearly shows the value of innovation circulation, that was described by DiBella et al. (1996, p. 363), who stated that organizations that fail to learn are suboptimal or dysfunctional, while continuously learning organizations should be capable of generating competitive capabilities to strengthen its business performance in a market, as written by Slater and Narver (1995, p. 66). Applying the action research model might be an interesting way of both benefiting from the creativity of more loose models, and simultaneously generating knowledge about the process innovation within the company, instead of individual learning. The action research model would be relatively easy to implement, compared to more complex and specific models, therefore it could fit with the interviewed companies, it can be a basic but effective tool to keep sales process innovation on the agenda.

6.3. Technology Adoption

In general, the participants have a good knowledge about sales technology and the benefits that it can potentially offer to the company. All the companies interviewed have some sort of technological influence in their sales process. The technologies adopted covered a wide range of functionalities, from the most basic use of e-mail to improve communication with customers to the development of software that facilitate the

understanding of the product. The adoption, or non-adoption, of this technologies in sales is influenced by internal and external forces, which is consistent with Damanpour (1991, p. 556) that describe the adoption of innovation as a mean of changing the organization, motivated by changes in internal or external environment. To facilitate the analysis, the aspects that influence the technology adoption were grouped in four general categories: External context, usefulness, sales configuration and uncertainties.

6.3.1. External Context

One crucial element for the adoption of technology companies identified by this research is the external context. The participants pointed often that their decision to adopt, or not adopt, a technology was influenced by other elements of their supply chain. Dinatec, for example, mentioned that: "*We are a lot dictated by the level of our customers' sophistication, I would say. [...] They are quite Excel based still, so most of them have very basic sales processes and basic sales tools [...] so we cannot run away from our customers to fast either, because we have to match up a little bit towards their needs and their mapping*". In this case, the customer is unintentionally influencing the speed of technology adoption at Dinatec by using a system that wouldn't adapt with some advanced sales tools. Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 1995, p. 165) does not consider this limitation unintentionally imposed by the supply chain as one of the external forces affecting technology adoption. The author explores the concept of compatibility for innovation adoption, however it is focused on the values and norms of a social system, which does not apply for the situation mentioned by Dinatec.

Malproksimo also highlights the role of the business partner to increase the speed in which the company grow and adopt technologies: "*Yes, everything goes very fast right now, because we have a partner platform*". This situation is consistent with the prior conditions norms of social system proposed by Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 1995, p. 165) and the effect of subjective norm in TAM2 (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000, p. 187). As the partner probably is a strategic stakeholder for the business, he or she can influence the technology adoption. According to Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 187) the subject norm affects the intention of people perform a behavior, even if they are not themselves completely favorable, if they believe important referents think they should and they are sufficiently motivated to comply with the referents.

Malproksimo and Bluetecc pointed a third type of external influence in the technology adoption. Both companies mentioned that some sales tools, in this situation the sales force automation tools, are not suitable to their business because the market is not mature enough. According to Bluetecc, which had an unsatisfactory experience with a similar tool in the past: "*That [sales automation tool] did not work in this situation, because they still need to educate the customer about what you are getting*". As sales technology refers to IT that can facilitate the performance of sales tasks (Hunter and Perreault Jr., 2007, p. 17), if the companies do not perceive that the new sales technology will enable them to fulfill their sales role because the market is not prepared there is no need for considering adoption. Thus, the maturity of the consumer market has an influence in the technology adoption. This specific aspect is not yet included in the theoretical models for technology adoption.

Customers, partners and market maturity in general were mentioned in the interview as external forces that influence the technology adoption process. Furthermore, according to the interviews, the influence of the external context is not restricted to the initial stages

of the technology adoption flow, but also is present in more advanced phases, such as after the adoption when the company is measuring if it brought the expected outcomes, such as in the Bluetecc previously presented situation. This finding goes beyond the technology adoption theories presented in chapter Technology Adoption Theory, which restrict external influence mainly to the first stages of the process.

6.3.2.   Usefulness of the Technology

For the participants, the usefulness of the sales technology plays a fundamental role in the technology adoption. The participants consider the usefulness of the technology from different perspectives, such as their previous experience, perceived adequacy to the sales process and general priorities. This finding is consistent with the perceived usefulness aspect of the Technology Adoption Model (Davis et al., 1989, p. 985). In the TAM model, the perceived usefulness is related to the prospective user's subjectivity perception that one specific application will increase the job performance in the organization context. In the sales role, as described in the Chapter 1.3.3, performance is a key factor.

According to Rogers (1995, p. 224) the compatibility of an innovation with an existing idea can either increase or decrease its adoption. This statement is consistent with the outcomes of our interviews. All participants, at some point, had contact with sales technology tools; such as CRM systems and sales force automation. Bluetecc is an example of how a previous experience had a positive impact in the perceived usefulness of the CRM system. The interviewee was personally involved in the past with CRM software sales and has a vast knowledge about the benefits of the software: "*We have been using the CRM for 10 years or something. Without that you can't do business*". From his previous experience with CRM, he also highlights that other companies might be missing opportunities for not adopting it. In the same way that a positive experience influences the perception of usefulness and the speed of adoption, a negative experience also has the power to slow down the adoption of technology. Selkeä had a previous experience with CRM implementation that was not as good as expected and for this reason is more cautious in the technology adoption: "*But we have learnt to do not try to build a system before you had tried it out without the system. So it's about excel stuff before we sit down with the guys and talk how we should solve*". From the interviews, was clear that the perceived usefulness of sales tools was influenced by previous experience and knowledge.

Another aspect frequently mentioned as influencer to the technology adoption was the perception of how the tool would positively impact in the sales process and worth the substitution of the current adopted method. This perception is similar to the concept of relative advantage in the Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 1995, p. 213), which is the degree that an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes. For some interviewees the current process is bringing the expected outcomes, which postpone the technology adoption of sales technologies. Voeler, for example, points that a CRM software is not a need, since the company maintain a close relationship with its clients: "*I mean, our industry is like a small family in Sweden […] it is a very close operation*". Softwwize also mentions that the company focus on a few number of big clients, which makes the operation easy to control without a CRM software: "*because so far it has been let's say 6 or 7 real clients, and 6 or 7 is still quite ok to handle [with excel]*". Similar consequence can be identified in the adoption of sales automation tools. Selkeä, for example, mentions that the company does not adopt automation in the sales process because it would not bring the same results as the current process: "*[Do you use*

automation in your sales process?] No, because then you will assume that you can reach the same type of relationship with automation and I haven't seen it yet."

On the other hand, the participants consider a priority the technology adoption of innovations with a strong relative advantage. The technologies widely adopted by the interviewee usually have a strong job relevance, which is described by Venkatesh and Davis (2000, p. 191) as the perception regarding the degree to which the technology is applicable to the job function. Among the sales automation tools adopted by the companies, the most common were tools that support the administrative activities that are performed by salespeople, such as ERP system, invoice systems and quotation systems. Softwwize mentions that: "*Before that [invoice system] I could not make a standardized quotation, I had to do it more or less in word, calculate everything by myself, figure out all the numbers on paper so today it is more standardized*". The wide adoption of this systems can also be linked to the fact that it offers an evident benefits in the short term, increasing the focus on the core role of sales by decreasing the time spent on administrative work, with a reduced uncertainty or dubious results. This system also brings a smaller change in the sales process if compared to the implementation of other sales technologies, such as CRM software, which can position them among the higher priorities in the technology adoption.

Another factor that must be highlighted is that, from the four companies that were interviewed, one has recently changed their CRM software and two expect to change it in the future. According to Rogers (1995, p. 185) the last stage of technology adoption is not the adoption itself, but the confirmation. In the confirmation stage the individual seeks reinforcement for the innovation decision made and might reverse this decision. Among the companies that adopt CRM, none of them planned to discontinue the use of the software, but to implement a new one that has a higher suitability with their use goals and usefulness for the task execution.

6.3.3. Internal Context

Another aspect that was mentioned by the participants in the technology adoption is the effect of the internal context of the company. The way that a company is structured, the particularities of the sales process and the other technologies that already in use can influence the decision of adopting sales tools. The consideration of the internal context and how a technology would impact it, was often stated as the reason for adoption or non-adoption of certain technologies. This thinking about how an idea would apply in a specific context can be compared to Rogers' (1995, p. 170) persuasion stage. According to the author, for developing a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward an innovation, the individual might mentally apply the new idea to anticipate the future situation and decide whether or not to try it.

The format of the sales process is often mentioned as a factor evaluated in the technology adoption. As described by Chapter 5 the sales process of the participants had different formats. When applying a technology, the participant evaluates how to suitable it would be for this specific context. Voeler, for example, mentioned that sales automation would not be suitable to their sales process: "*We have a very modular system so we can't actually do that [sales automation]. The quotation is like too much money. […] Our market is very special. It is a very tailored application for the customer*" *(Voeler)*. In the same way, other participants are planning to adopt in the future technologies that they consider to be suitable for the current sales process, such as the "Inverse CRM" mentioned by Bluetecc

and the use of real time monitoring by Softwwize. Thus, the evaluation of the suitability of a technology to the sales process is essential in the process of adoption.

The participants also mentioned particularities of the business operations as affecting the technology adoption. These particularities can cause complexity to the technology adoption. Rogers (1995, p. 230) defines complexity as the degree to which an innovation is perceived a relatively difficult to understand and use. This concept refers to the technology itself and do not completely address the effects of complexity applied to one specific business situation. The concept of sales technology tools seem to be clear to the participants, but it becomes complex when they think about how to apply it to their business context. The participant Dinatec, for example, mentions the importance and benefits of CRM, but his decision of not using it is influenced by the complexity of the business operations: "*We have divided the Swedish market in three regions, so each region's sales manager takes care of his customer in his territory*". Implementing a sales technology is a complex operation in this scenario because the company will have to deal with a variety of issues, such as regional differences, implementation programs, local requirements, etc.

Another internal influence in the technology adoption is the compatibility of the innovation with the technology currently used by the firm. Rogers (1995, p. 223) mentions compatibility as an influencer in persuasion stage of his theory. However the author considers compatibility in mainly three aspects: socio cultural values and beliefs, other previously introduced ideas and client needs for innovations. This concept does not address the compatibility of one technology with other existing technologies to integrate the system. Selkeä mentions this issue: "*We have a BI tool that is really good, but then you don't have the CRM information. You need to combine the two things*".

The need for compatibility between the existing tools with the new technologies influences the technology adoption process. Selkeä even mentions the effort of getting rid of one technology and implementing another: "*If we were starting the company today it had been much easier, we start from the beginning and can choose advanced tools from the beginning that has everything integrated. To integrate can take years, and then upgrade and then new tools come out.*" Similar compatibility issues can be observed in Softwwize, which already has a CRM system but is still waiting to make the integration of the system with other activities of the firm: "*We have a CRM system, unfortunately not in use yet. But we have investigated this year to transfer all the clients into that so we can share information of all the clients, deals and contracts numbers, inversions, how many runtimes*".

Another aspect that was identified as an influencer in the sales technology adoption process is the time. This finding is consistent with Damanpour (1991, p. 560), who states that organizational slack has an effect in the adoption of technical innovation. Many participants mentioned that would like to do more regarding sales technology, however, their roles and responsibilities do not let them enough time to dedicate to it. Bluetecc, for example, recognizes the importance of focusing in the adoption and development of sales tools, but has a struggle to find time for it: "*My biggest concern now is how to handle… I also work with sales projects and is too much for me. […] So that's why I would want to do a strategic sales process development and product development. That's what I should do and want to do, but I am just struggling with the business daily things*". A

similar scenario is mentioned by Softwwize, who is considering to outsource a part of activities that are support to sales instead of internally adopting tools.

6.3.4. Uncertainty

The uncertainties of sales was mentioned as a factor influencing the technology adoption process. According to Rogers (1995, p. 12) the uncertainty about technologies is what motivates the individual to seek for more information. By seeking new information, the individual will reduce the uncertainty about the advantages and disadvantages of the innovation. The participants mentioned the uncertainty in different ways.

Consultando mentioned one influence of the uncertainty in the technology adoption process. For the participant, the lack of knowing what is the best way of using the technology, in this case the website, makes him cautious about how to use it until a bigger decision evaluating more factors is made: "*We've come very far in 6 months' time but before we decide that our web will probably look a little bit different maybe, but until then less is more. Otherwise we'd be talking about the wrong things for the wrong target groups […] but not that much technology right now, we look at several things but we haven't decided what would be best for us*". This is consistent with Rogers' theory, since the participant seeks more information to make the process more certain and, while the participant does not feel comfortable with the evaluation of alternatives, his actions regarding technology adoption are suspended. Another important factor highlighted by Consultando was the need to reduce the uncertainty around the return of the investment and effort in sales technologies: "*But then the conversion, how do you convert people that like us or at least appreciate what we say to paying customers. That's the main thing*".

Another type of uncertainty that was mentioned in the interview is regarding the efficiency of use of sales technology due to implementation issues. Selkeä mentioned that, in the past, they had big investments in implement a CRM system. However, the outcomes of this implementation was not as expected. The adherence of employees to the system was smaller than expected. The employees were not using the CRM system as proposed for a variety of reason. For this reason, the participant has become more cautious in the implementation of new software. This type of uncertainty and risk could not be solved by additional information, since it is based in one specific experience and context.

The uncertainty and risk was also mentioned as an individual perception. While some companies have online systems that can be accessed by the website, Bluetecc is more cautious in the use of website: "We don't have login because I don't trust that site too much. Because if the wrong person gets access to the website it becomes dangerous. So what we do is that we try to keep it very personal the practical information". Although the companies have usually a collective decision making process, the individual perspective can strongly influence the perspective over the technology as highlighted by Rogers (1995, p. 251). According to the author, the influence of personality variables in innovativeness is evident. However the topic is not explore in depth due to the difficulties of measuring personality in interviews. This is the case in our research, the only insight that can be extracted is only that personal perceptions can influence the organizational decision regarding technology adoption.

6.3.5. Particularities in the Adoption and Use of Sales Technologies

As mentioned in the Introduction (Sales Technology), CRM can be defined in two concepts: As a philosophy and as a technology, in which CRM as a technology is a part

of the sales process and as a philosophy is a part of the sales strategy. During the interviews it is possible to notice that, although not always the companies were using the technology, they all had a strong orientation to the philosophy. This orientation is reflected in their sales process, as previously described, which is focused in building a relationship. Among the companies that were using a CRM technology, it is also possible to notice a divergence among the applications. The most common use of the software was for collecting and storing information. The use of CRM as a tool for keeping track is not yet widely spread. The difference among the application is explained by technical limitations of the software and lack of adherence and use from the sales team. In the companies that were not using a CRM tool, alternative solutions are used to substitute the CRM, such as Excel files and close relationship with the clients.

The most common sales automation tools adopted by the participants are those related to the reduction of administrative work, which is consistent with the purpose of the sales automation tools that is to increase the productivity. These tools have a direct and visible impact in the daily life work and do not represent a disruptive change. Automation tools that represent a big change in the way the companies execute their sales process were not yet adopted. Some other technologies were adopted in the process as well. Those technologies are not considered sales automation tools, but can have a direct effect in the productivity of the sales force. One example is the use of remote communication tools, such as skype, and the use of professional networks for prospecting, such as LinkedIn.

6.4. Synthesis of Analysis and Theoretical Framework

Sales do not receive the expected level of focus of both organizations and academics. However, organizations are generally very interested in structuring sales and adopting new technologies. In most companies, sales innovation process receives attention either by the higher management or by salespeople, especially when external forces motivate the salespeople to sell in new ways. The companies with the most structured sales processes, were also innovating their sales processes more than the companies with less structured sales processes. Innovations were implemented through both the knowledge based and capability based perspectives, and both lead to successful sales within the participating companies.

The basic model of process innovation by Papinniemi (1999, p. 98) is without pure specification on sales not effective for innovating in the sales process, because companies would not prioritize sales process innovation above the innovation of other processes in the company. Specifying the model to sales will be more effective and can be combined with action research to convert the linear innovation process into circular innovation learning cycles. Considering sales technology, companies have good knowledge over the benefits of sales technologies.

The theoretical framework lead to the development of a model connecting both the basic steps of Papinniemi with the action research spiral and Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory, motivated by the relevance of the different models in the literature and particularities that each model has. Future research is needed to test the model in the market, however we could see similarities and functionalities of the model back in the interviews, both on the innovation process and the adoption of technology.

The adoption of sales technologies is affected by external context of the company: the sophistication of the customers' sales systems can hinder the adoption, the demands for

innovation from partners increases the speed of adoption and immature markets make certain sales technologies ineffective as market has to be educated before sales automation can be applied. Within the internal context of the companies the adoption of sales is influenced by the company's structure, the compatibility with technology that is already in use and the amount of organizational slack or available time for creativity next to the time spend on short-term sales objectives. Similarly, uncertainty of the usefulness and right application of sales technology can slow down the adoption of sales technology.

7. Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding about how companies in Sweden are incorporating new technologies to develop their B2B sales, innovating in the way they structure their process in sales and gaining competitive advantages in the market. The study also aims to build a theoretical connection between two topics: process innovation and technology adoption. To guide our research work, the following research question was developed:

"How do Swedish B2B companies adopt technologies to innovate in their sales process?"

7.1. General Conclusions

This research shows that Swedish companies do not adopt technology in a homogeneous way to innovate in the sales process. First of all, the sales process differs widely from one company to another, according to the particularities of their product, market and customers. The way that sales technology is used also changes from one company to another. Even the same system, a CRM software for example, can be adopted for different functions according to the company's needs and capabilities. None of the companies consider the sales process innovation as a priority. The topic receives less attention when compared to product innovation in most of the firms. Companies, in general, avoid to pro-actively adopt technologies that would make big changes in the way their sales are conducted at the moment. The introduction of new technologies to innovate in the sales process is therefore moderate and pushed by market forces.

The companies have a good knowledge about the available sales technologies in the market, such as CRM and Sales Automation, and the potential benefits that it can bring. Among the companies that adopt a CRM system, most of them adopt it to store information about clients and sales transactions. The sales automation systems are widely used to decrease the amount of administrative work involved in the salespersons' daily lives. The application of these sales technologies is usually focused on improving the way that the salespeople actually do their job, but does not represent big changes in the sales process itself. The innovation process is incremental in the adoption of CRM and Sales Automation Technologies. For the companies that are not adopting these sales technologies, or that adopt one of the technologies and not the other, the reasons usually lay within two factors: (1) the way their process is currently conducted is satisfactory or (2) because they don't believe that the sales tools would be applicable to their situation. Therefore, they don't feel that there is a need for process innovation in the sales process that justifies the investment in technology adoption.

In order to understand the full picture, it is also important to look at the context of the company (Figure 10). Most of the companies operate in markets that are not yet mature or offer a product that has cutting-edge technology. According to the participants, those markets usually require a close relationship with clients, investments in the market's education and a tailored sales process. In these markets, the sales has a strategic consulting role. As a result, the company's primary focus is not on introducing technologies to improve the sales efficiency, but on creating and penetrating new markets. The investments in the development of the product and product innovation are also important in this scenario. The process innovation might come in a second plan in the

future, when the market is more mature. Among the participants of the research, it was clear that the more mature the market, the more they had adopted technologies to innovate in their sales process.

7.2. Theoretical Implications

As mentioned previously, the literature in process innovation does not receive the same academic attention as product innovation. This is especially true in the sales context, in which process innovation for sales is a rare topic. With our research we aimed to bring more attention to the area and start to bridge one specific gap, which is the connection of process innovation with technology adoption. The investigation of process innovation and technology adoption in sales context is new to the literature. Therefore, the insights captured by our exploratory study can contribute for further development in the literature. With our research we identified what influences the choice of adopting sales technologies and how it is related to developments in the sales process.

Furthermore, we explored how the sales process developed over time, how technology affected it and why companies choose not to adopt a technology. As a result of our analysis, we arrived to some convergences with the existing theory in technology adoption, but also have recommendation to enhance it. We believe that some of our findings can contribute to developing the Roger's Innovation Diffusion Model, as we explain in the following bullet points and in the table shown in Appendix 4.

- The Prior Conditions, which are factors that precede the "Knowledge Stage" used in the model, do not refer directly to the Market Matureness as one factor that might influence the company before the technology adoption process. It was highlighted by our research that market matureness influences the adoption and use of technology (Chapter 6.3.1).

- The Compatibility factor, highlighted by the theory as an influencer in the "Persuasion Stage" of technology adoption, does not address the compatibility and potential integration between the new technology and the existing technology. One important finding from our research is that when companies are evaluating the adoption of new technologies, they take into consideration how the new technologies would integrate into the software and systems that are already in use. Simultaneously they consider how the new technologies would integrate with the technologies used by their partners and customers, when this integration affects these stakeholders (Chapter 6.3.1 and Chapter 6.3.3).

- The Complexity factor, highlighted by the theory as an influencer in the "Persuasion Stage" of technology adoption, focuses primarily on the complexity of technology usage. According to our findings, however, the complexity factor should be broadened to include the effort of the implementation and integration of new technologies. This includes the training of employees, migration of data and the effect on the daily work within other internal departments (Chapter 6.3.3).

Findings of our research were also consistent with the Roger's Innovation Diffusion Model, such as the influence of the norms of the social system as a "Prior condition" to adoption, the influence of the compatibility of ideas and relative advantage in the "Persuasion Stage" and the importance of the "Confirmation Stage" for the technology adoption. As these findings were based in a qualitative research, it is important that further

research is conducted to confirm the relevance of the data and if it's possible to generalize the findings to other contexts. Furthermore, the theoretical model that was developed based on the existing literature (Figure 8, Chapter 2.3) can also contribute to create a first impression of how the innovation process is related to the technology adoption process.

Another contribution of our research is direct in the sales field. As previously mentioned, sales has been historically studied from a US perspective. This focus on the American context might be creating generalizations that are not true in the other locations. By focusing on the Swedish market, we could theoretically contribute to bring another approach to sales. By adopting a qualitative approach, we could bring new insights outside the traditional studied sales process. With semi-structured interviews, we also avoided biasing the research by imposing existing ideas.

7.3. Managerial Implications

It has become clear that there are many different views on sales and that customers, partners and the maturity of the market have a strong influence on the adoption of sales technology. Also the perceived usefulness of sales technology increases the willingness to adopt new technologies into the sales process. This is affected by the sales manager's previous experience, perceived adequacy of the technology and general priorities. Having a well-defined sales process also contributes to a higher rate of sales technology adoption.

In most of the companies we interviewed, the development of sales is seen as very important to essential, however does not receive the attention and focus of similar important aspects of business development, like product and service development. The existence of a well-defined sales process is connected to the general priorities of a salesperson, which is highly action-oriented and focused on achieving revenue goals, as described both by Donaldson (2007, p. 21) and the research participants. We conclude that having a well-defined sales process makes it more amiable to prioritize on a strategic level and can therefore lead to the creation of time for the evaluation and implementation of sales technology.

The philosophy on sales technology is different among the interviewed companies, divided by (1) internal: making sales easier for the salespeople, and (2) external: making it easier for customers to buy the products or services. The latter is less common, as only Bluetecc adopts the externally oriented philosophy. Other companies can use the general lack of externally oriented philosophy as an opportunity, because adopting this philosophy would most likely give them a competitive advantage. Also the appearance that companies don't prioritize sales innovation, implicates potential opportunities. If companies would prioritize sales innovation more, they would distinct themselves and therefore might reach competitive advantages.

Among the participants, there is a big variety of contexts, from young to well-established organizations and from operations in very mature markets to completely immature markets (Table 3 and Figure 10, chapter 5). It is therefore not likely that there will ever be a one-size-fits-all approach to a sales innovation process, however, the created model as shown in the end of Chapter 2 can be used as a base, from which companies may develop a sales innovation process specifically for their type of context and selling. Another important matter is that the organizations can learn from the different processes, philosophies and sales technologies that are accumulated by the different research participants as shown in Chapter 5. The chapter also contributes to a peak view of sales

practices that are inventive now, but perhaps common in the near future, for example, the inverted CRM and educative meetings through Virtual Reality Glasses.

This report can contribute to a bigger awareness of the possibilities within sales innovation as well as the awareness of the needed effort to effectively adopt sales technology. Additionally as one of the participants mentioned, the type of interviews that were conducted helped the participant to explore his own sales process by repeating it to the researchers. We trust that the acknowledgement that there is a lack of attention to sales innovation, both according to the theories and participating companies, will trigger and contribute to an increased focus on sales innovation.

7.4. Limitations and Future Research

This research has some limitations that are important to mention. The first one is that the data collection was based only on interviews with sales managers. Their vision about the sales process and use of technologies might diverge from the vision of the salespeople, who are the users of the sales technology in their daily lives.

A second limitation of the research is that the participants were located in the Västerbotten region, geographically not representing whole Sweden. This choice was due to the access that we have to the companies in the region and to the use of snowball sampling, in which the participants pointed other companies from their network. A benefit of this choice is that most interviews were conducted face-to-face, which contributes to creating trust between the interviewers and interviewees and for the richness of the non-verbal communication in the qualitative data collection. However, we recognize that it might not represent all companies in Sweden, especially those in different industries from our participants.

Another limitation is that the only used method for data collection was conducting interviews. The interviews could have been complemented by other methods, such as observation and using other documents that confirm the sales process. This complementarity has the potential to bring more information to the research. However, having contact with sales managers was already challenging, as they are very busy and action-oriented. Other methods for data collection would also require the accessibility to the company, which might face issues regarding the availability of the sales managers in the organization.

A fourth limitation is the language barrier in the literature. As CRM and Sales Automation are American topics and Sweden is the highest ranked non-native English speaking country, we assume that it is unlikely that there is perfectly relevant research that was written in the Swedish language only. However, a limitation is that we cannot be entirely sure of this assumption.

There are several possible future research topics within sales technology. As future research, we believe that it would be interesting to explore the technology adoption and use of sales technology, applying a quantitative approach. This would offer the possibility to test and validate a model that explains how companies adopt technology. The model created in the theoretical framework (Figure 8) could also be further developed and tested. Another future research can be focused on the innovation and changes in the sales process over the years. We noticed that sales process and innovation are not widely connected in the literature, and a research about the topic could start to fill this gap. As a suggestion,

we also believe that is important to have more studies conducted out of the US context. With our findings, it was evident that some existing sales process models do not match the reality of firms. The decentralization of studies could help to spread the topic and analyze the differences between contexts.

We decided to focus the interviews on the sales managers, since they are the most suitable people to answer strategic questions regarding the evolution of the sales process, adoption of technology and future plans. However, it would be interesting to develop further research that not only covers the opinion of the sales managers, but also the real life application of sales technology by salespeople.

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Appendix 1

TECHNOLOGY AND CHANGES IN THE SALES PROCESS

Traditional seven steps of selling	Technological Transformative Factors in the Selling Process adapted from Moncrief and Marshall (2005, p. 14)	Internet Integration into the Selling Process based adapted from Long et al. (2006, p. 676)
(1) Prospecting	Telemarketing, Internet prospecting and selling, Database marketing, CRM.	Business databases, Buyer corporate website, Contact company via e-mail, Use of online ads that link to the marketer or directly to a sales rep, Use of good placement on keyword searches; Effective use of the website and blogs, Prospect via e-mail communications, Business databases, Access to buyer's corporate website and their employee blogs, Required online registration for free access to content on the seller's website, E-mail communications with prospect.
(2) Preapproach	Use of softwares for customer background and data, Internet for general research.	Two-way e-mail communications between seller and the prospect before initial meeting, Buyer's employee blogs or website, Existing internal databases or CRM systems, Business databases.
(3) Approach	Tellecommunications advances.	Direct prospect to sales rep's (or marketer's) website for FAQs, Preparation of prospect with relevant webcasts, Confirmation of upcoming meeting via e-mail, Possibility to review information from prior e-mail communications with prospect.
(4) Presentation	Laptop for presentation, VCR for presentation, Variety of multimedia resources available.	Real-time online demonstration or pre-recorded video for online viewing Online catalogs.
(5) Overcoming objections	Tellecommunications advances.	Use of website to refer prospect to the seller's website for: FAQs and product information, success stories or case studies, favorable online reviews from independent websites, business buyer chat room or online user's group.
(6) Close	Tellecommunications advances, Internet selling.	Possibility to answer buyer questions on product specifications, pricing, and availability on the spot via online interface to the home office, Use of e-mail for trial closes, Iron out additional details via e-mail.
(7) Follow-up	Increased effectiveness of communication through technology.	Follow-up with e-mail to confirm terms and status of order, Possibility to Provide online access to order status, Possibility to refer buyer to post-purchase support resources available at your (seller's) website including user's group, Use of e-mail targeted communications to business buyer, e.g., newsletters, webinars, whitepapers, case studies, Instruct buyer on use of secure business buyer portal for re-orders, invoice payment, and other routine matters.

Appendix 2

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

General questions about the Company

- Can you start telling us more about the company?

Main questions

- Who is your customer?
- Describe your selling process?
- What technology do you use in your selling process?
- How do you use this technology?
- How did your selling process develop over time?
- Do you plan to introduce new technology in your sales process in the future?
- What are the main challenges you are currently facing in sales? How do you plan to overcome them?

Snowball Sampling question

- Which companies would you advise us to contact for similar interviews?

Appendix 3

GUIDELINES PRE AND POST INTERVIEW

Pre-interview procedure:

Introduce each other:
- Explain briefly the purpose of the work and clarify possible questions.
- Explain the issues related to anonymity and confidentiality.
- Inform the interviewee that he/she will be recorded.

After-interview procedure:
- Explain more about the research and how the data will be used.
- Confirm that the research will be send to the participant when it is ready.
- Clarify possible questions.

Appendix 4

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS TO ROGERS' DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS

PRIOR CONDITIONS
1. Previous practice
2. Felt needs/problems
3. Innovativeness
4. Norms of the social systems

- Market Maturity

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Characteristics of the Decision-Making Unit
1. Socioeconomic characteristics
2. Personality variables
3. Communication behavior

Perceived Characteristics of the Innovation
1. Relative advantage
2. Compatibility
3. Complexity
4. Trialability
5. Observability

- Technology compatibility with current used technology.
- Technology compatibility with customers' technology.

- Complexity of the implementation and use of the technology in the company's context.

I. KNOWLEDGE

II. PERSUASION

III. DECISION
1. Adoption
2. Rejection

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

V. CONFIRMATION
Continued Adoption
Later Adoption
Discontinuance
Continued Rejection

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