

Full Length Research Paper

The relationship between salespeople's attachment styles and regulation strategies for negative emotions

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Accepted 28th October, 2011

This study examines salespeople's attachment styles and regulation strategies for negative emotions, which have considerable influence on their ability to satisfy the needs of their customers and to engage in positive selling behaviors in their frequent interactions with their customers. In particular, for salespeople experiencing frequent interactions with customers, their attachment style can be a very important factor in their relationships with customers. In this regard, this study investigates the effects of salespeople's attachment styles on their customer-oriented selling behavior and regulation strategies for negative emotions during their interactions with customers as well as the effects of their regulation strategies on their customer-oriented selling behavior. First, in-depth interviews with salespersons are analyzed to identify salespersons' attachment style and negative emotional regulation strategy from the respondent's perspective. Second, the structural equation modeling (SEM) method is used to test the hypotheses of the study. Finally, based on analysis of results, this study suggest that salespeople' attachment style had considerable influence on their regulation strategies for negative emotions as well as on their customer-oriented selling behavior. In addition, their regulation strategies had considerable influence on their customer-oriented selling behavior. This study contributes to the literature by addressing salespeople's attachment style, which has been overlooked as an antecedent of their customer-oriented selling behavior, that is, another factor that can influence salespeople's selling behavior.

Key words: Salespeople, attachment style, regulation strategies for negative emotions, customer-oriented selling behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The marketing environment has changed rapidly in recent decades, allowing firms to pay close attention to personal selling as an effective promotional tool. In particular, retailers, who are generally exposed to fierce competition in today's rapidly changing distribution environment, typically engage in similar discounting activities with the same line of products and face a lack of differentiation because of similar-looking shops and layouts. In such situations, salespeople's customer-oriented selling behavior may influence their ability to provide appropriate customer service in a flexible and effective manner and thus can be a critical factor in differentiating their firms from others (Bush et al., 1990). In this regard, a number of studies have examined how salespeople's performance can be improved and how salespeople can benefit

from internal marketing, focusing on salespeople's satisfaction with bonuses and raises (Shaw et al., 1998), employee welfare and work hours (Kotler et al., 1996), and sales performance through training and communication (Rust et al., 1996).

However, previous studies have suggested that salespeople require only monetary and nonmonetary compensation to satisfy the needs of their customers. A salesperson needs to interact frequently with his or her customers and continuously provide them with an appropriate level of customer service, which requires conscious efforts as well as the naturalness of service behavior. Salespeople's monetary and nonmonetary compensation can be seen as a means for inducing their conscious efforts or as an incentive for them to engage in

better service behavior. However, it should be first determined whether a salesperson has the necessary temperament and characteristics for providing appropriate customer service. There are two reasons for this: First, a salesperson's natural customer service behavior is related to his or her temperament and characteristics. If a salesperson has appropriate characteristics for good customer service, then the salesperson is likely to consider the needs of his or her customers (Taylor, 1983). On the other hand, if a salesperson does not show such characteristics (even with appropriate monetary and nonmonetary compensation), then the salesperson may engage in appropriate customer service behavior in the short term but fail to do so in the long term. Second, if a salesperson without the necessary temperament or characteristics is compelled to make efforts through monetary and nonmonetary compensation, then his or her efforts are likely to result in negative outcomes such as burnout or emotional dissonance (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Kim, 2006). Recent studies of psychology and personnel behavior have found that such negative outcomes can increase employee turnover; deteriorate the sense of purpose; and induce negative attitudes or behaviors in the long term (Jackson and Maslach, 1982).

If so, then what are the characteristics of salespeople that can induce natural service behavior in service encounters? Recently, a number of studies have suggested the psychological characteristics of individuals that can improve the quality of interpersonal relationships and facilitate situational adjustment. In particular, such studies have noted the individual's attachment style. The attachment style can influence the experience of interpersonal relationships as well as the cognitive, affective, and motivational aspects of interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1982; Griffith, 2004). Even in organizational contexts, attachment styles of organization members are important because organizations strive to achieve their goals through human interactions. In particular, for salespeople engaging in frequent interactions with customers, their attachment style can play a very important role in the formation of their relationships with customers. In the case of salespeople, they may become insensitive to the needs of their customers as a result of their frequent interactions and may show some selling behavior that ignores those needs (Maslach and Pines, 1977). However, the salesperson's attachment style in interpersonal relationships may have considerable influence on his or her regulation of negative emotions.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine how a salesperson's attachment propensity, which is his or her individual characteristic, influences his or her regulation strategies for negative emotions and customer-oriented selling behavior. Thus, this study contributes to the literature by drawing attention to salespeople's attachment propensity and their regulation strategies for negative emotions and offers important guidelines for

selecting and training salespeople.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Attachment styles

An individual's attachment style is a systematic pattern by which the individual can approach, enter, and maintain relationships with others and has considerable influence on his or her psychological and behavioral responses (Bowlby, 1982; Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Hazan and Shaver (1987) analyzed individual differences in interpersonal relationships by applying attachment theory to interpersonal relationships among adults. Adults' attachment styles typically reflect their tendency to make substantial efforts to approach specific individuals and form/maintain relationships with them. This tendency can influence the cognitive, affective, and motivational aspects of their interpersonal relationships (Mikulincer, 2004).

Such attachment styles have important implications for firms because organizational members' cooperation, solidarity, and confidence formation may depend on their attachment styles (Mallinckrodt, 2000; Rom and Mikulincer, 2003). In particular, for salespeople facing frequent interactions with customers, their attachment style is likely to have considerable influence on their psychological responses to the formation and maintenance of their relationships with customers as well as on their selling behavior.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) classified adults' attachment styles into three categories: secure, avoidant, and anxious attachment styles. First, individuals with a secure attachment style tend to maintain a positive view of their relationships with others and be comfortable revealing themselves. Such individuals tend to be comfortable about relationships with others (Griffith, 2004; Vicary and Fraley, 2007); show a high level of confidence; be devoted, satisfied, and interdependent; and expose themselves (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Hendrick and Hendrick, 1989; Mikulincer, 2004; Mikulincer and Nachshon, 1991). Accordingly, they strive to cope with negative emotions in interpersonal relationships in a positive manner. Second, individuals with an avoidant attachment style tend to avoid intimate situations and seek control of their relationships with others. In interpersonal relationships, they maintain their distance from others and feel no need for self-disclosure. Accordingly, given negative emotions in interpersonal relationships, they are more likely to use strategies for avoiding such relationships than positive coping strategies. Third, individuals with an anxious attachment style tend to hope for intimate relationships but do not believe that others would reciprocate, and thus, they tend to feel no satisfaction with their interpersonal relationships and make efforts to control their relationships (Collins and

Read, 1990; Kirkpatrick and Davis, 1994; Simpson, 1990). In addition, they are bashful in social situations and are anxious about interpersonal relationships, and thus, they tend to lack conviction and assertiveness and have a negative view of self-value (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Mickelson et al., 1997). Accordingly, such individuals tend to pursue others' support when facing negative emotions in interpersonal relationships, but they regard such support as unlikely.

Salespeople's solutions to problems in their relationships with customers may vary according to their attachment style. Interpersonal interactions can vary according to individuals' attachment styles. This is also the case in interpersonal relationships with customers. In an interpersonal relationship, an individual's attachment style can influence his or her commitment to the relationship as well as his or her choice of strategies for coping with relationship problems. Similarly, even in interpersonal relationships with customers, the choice of the coping strategy and behavior may vary according to the salesperson's attachment style.

Emotion regulation strategies

Emotion regulation refers to coping strategically with situations by changing one's positive and negative emotions or emotional expressions (Ekman and Friesen, 1975). Dodge (1989) and Kopp (1989) suggested that the regulation and control of negative emotions are necessary for positive social relationships and stressed the need for considering emotion regulation strategies for smooth social relationships. In the case of salespeople, they face frequent interactions with customers and frequently experience negative emotions in the process of satisfying the needs of customers. Smooth interactions with customers require strategies for properly regulating negative emotions. Regulating negative emotions is important in social relationships (Dodge, 1989; Friedman and Miller-Heringer, 1991; Wegner and Wenzlaff, 1996). Thus, to engage in effective selling behavior, salespeople need to regulate their negative emotions in the selling process.

Emotion regulation strategies deal directly with both the cause and effect of emotions experienced by individuals. It is important not only to regulate emotions in interpersonal relationships but also determine how such emotions can be regulated in an effective manner. Previous studies have produced mixed results in terms of types of regulation strategies for negative emotions. However, many researchers typically divide type of regulation strategies for negative emotions into active/positive and avoidant/distributed regulation. In addition, many studies have proposed self-suggestion strategies for reducing the amount of effort and tension. Such strategies avoid negative emotions through social support and focus on cognitive restructuring by changing the thought process.

Accordingly, regulation strategies for negative emotions typically include active regulation, avoidant/distributed regulation, support-seeking regulation, and self-suggestion regulation.

First, active regulation strategies focus on identifying alternative solutions and solving problems by evaluating alternative plans. That is, they suppress or inhibit one's negative emotions (Schneider and Shiffrin, 1977) and foster behaviors reflecting a positive view of oneself (Saarni, 1997). Active regulation strategies can provide salespeople with opportunities to see positive aspects of a problem, thereby suppressing or inhibiting negative emotions and facilitating a clearer understanding of the problem. In addition, such strategies can help individuals to better understand themselves and solve problems by facilitating the recall of similar problems in the past. Second, avoidant/distributed regulation strategies focus on neither self-assertion nor cooperation. Instead, they literally neglect conflicts and avoid tension and frustration (Saarni, 1997). These strategies strive to avoid and disperse existing problems by deliberately activating other combined networks when individuals face negative emotions (Bower, 1981). In addition, they allow individuals to be alone and avoid other individuals or situations (Walden and Smith, 1997). Salespeople can use avoidant/distributed regulation strategies to avoid a problem by recalling situations that are unrelated to the problem; escaping from unfavorable situations; or attributing it to today's misfortune. Third, support-seeking regulation strategies allow an individual to securely maintain his or her self-respect and self-concept through personal interchange with others within his or her support network, and thus, they can help negative responses to problems (Walden and Smith, 1997). Salespeople can use support-seeking regulation strategies to seek comfort or help/advice from coworkers or seniors to address negative emotions in their relationships with customers. Through such strategies, they can express their displeasure with customers, share feelings, or seek psychological assistance. Fourth, Hochschild (1983) examined flight attendants' emotional labor and suggested that self-suggestion regulation strategies can help maintain positive image. Salespeople can use self-suggestion regulation strategies to recall certain phrases (for example, "the customer is king") during the selling process. Thus, such strategies can help salespeople to better understand their customers' negative attitudes from the perspective of their customers.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Salespeople's attachment styles and emotion regulation strategies

Individuals' use of strategies for regulating negative emotions varies according to their needs and objectives.

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) presented a method for regulating emotions that depends on the individual's attachment style. Carver et al. (1989) suggested that the use of emotion regulation strategies is closely related to the individual's attachment style. The choice of emotion regulation strategies for interpersonal relationships can vary according to the individual's attachment style. Thus, an individual's attachment style can have considerable influence on his or her ability to cope with problems in interpersonal relationships as well as on his or her psychological development (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer, 2004; Mikulincer et al., 1993).

The stronger the salesperson's secure attachment style, the more likely the salesperson is to understand, respect, and support his or her customers; reveal himself or herself; and thus understand and respect his or her customers when problems arise.

In addition, such salespeople are likely to obtain support by talking with their seniors and coworkers about various problems because secure attachment styles can lead to flexible cognitive systems in interpersonal relationships, resulting in positive attitudes (Collins and Read, 1994; Kobak and Sceery, 1988; Vicary and Fraley, 2007) toward interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, the stronger the salesperson's avoidant and anxious attachment styles, the less likely the salesperson is to allocate resources to their interpersonal relationships, resulting in their preference for avoidant and controlled relationships (Collins and Read, 1994).

The stronger the salesperson's avoidant attachment style, the less likely the salesperson is to seek intimate relationships with customers. Such salespeople are not likely to reveal themselves and are likely to maintain their distance from customers. Salespeople with anxious attachment styles tend to hold themselves in low regard in terms of their ability to be recognized in interpersonal relationships and lack self-confidence.

Accordingly, such salespeople are more likely to avoid problems than to seek positive solutions or obtain support from their seniors or coworkers when experiencing negative emotions because of their preference for avoiding problems for fear of experiencing rejection or a sense of loss (Mikulincer, 2004; Mikulincer and Erve, 1991). In this regard, we propose the following hypotheses:

H₁: Secure attachment styles have positive effects on active, support-seeking, and self-suggestion regulation strategies and negative effects on avoidant/distributed regulation strategies.

H₂: Avoidant attachment styles have negative effects on active, support-seeking, and self-suggestion regulation strategies and positive effects on avoidant/distributed regulation strategies.

H₃: Anxious attachment styles have negative effects on active, support-seeking, and self-suggestion regulation

strategies and positive effects on avoidant/distributed regulation strategies.

Salespeople's regulation strategies for negative emotions and customer-oriented selling behavior

Several psychologists have clarified that individuals' satisfaction with their life and behavior toward others varies according to their choice of regulation strategies for negative emotions. Saarni (1997) determined the existence of a diverse range of strategies for coping with negative emotions but found that not all are useful in the long term, particularly when avoidant attachment styles are not useful in the long term. Schwarz and Clore (1983) suggested that if individual fail to seek a clear reason behind their negative emotions, it has negative effects on individual's evaluative judgments like satisfaction with his or her lives and that this has negative effects on his or her interpersonal relationships. This suggests that strategies for regulating negative emotions can influence individuals' satisfaction with their lives; interpersonal relationships; and behavior in interpersonal relationships. Suppressing or avoiding negative emotions is not an effective regulation strategy for reducing tension, whereas sharing emotions with others can help solve problems. In addition, understanding others can have positive effects on an individual's satisfaction with his or her life and on considering and understanding the needs of others. When a salesperson experiencing negative emotions strives to have positive attitudes toward solving a problem, he or she can share the problem with his or her seniors and coworkers and attempt to understand the customer's attitudes from the perspective of the customer, which is likely to facilitate his or her positive selling behavior. However, avoiding problems and isolating oneself can induce one to avoid one's relationships with customers, which can suppress positive selling behavior. In this regard, we propose the following hypotheses:

H₄: Active, support-seeking, and self-suggestion regulation strategies have positive effects on customer-oriented selling behavior.

H₅: Avoidant/distributed regulation strategies have negative effects on customer-oriented selling behavior.

Relationship between salespeople's attachment styles and customer-oriented selling behavior k

An individual's attachment style can influence his or her behavior in social relationships (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Mikulincer et al., 2009). Ames et al. (2011), Mikulincer (2004), and Rice et al. (1997) suggested that attachment styles have close relationships with social competence and adjustment, and mentioned that an individual's attachment style is what determines how the

individual perceives and analyzes to his or her social interactions, and respond to these. Accordingly, salespeople's responses to their customers may vary according to their attachment style. Kobak and Sceey (1988) proposed that the stronger the employee's secure attachment style, the more likely he or she is to adjust to coworkers to engage in positive behaviors. In addition, the stronger the salesperson's secure attachment style, the more likely he or she is to have a positive view of relationships with customers and to accept and be satisfied with such relationships (Carnelly et al., 1994; Simpson, 1990). Accordingly, the stronger the salesperson's secure attachment style, the more likely he or she is to form strong relationships with customers and engage in positive behaviors toward customers. This suggests that secure attachment styles are more likely to facilitate long-term relationships than the other attachment styles (Marmarosh et al., 2009). Thus, secure attachment styles may facilitate salespeople's consideration for and adjustment to customers and induce customer-oriented selling behavior. On the other hand, the stronger the salesperson's avoidant and anxious attachment style, the less likely he or she is to be satisfied with relationships with customers and be interested in interpersonal relationships, resulting in their failure to cope sensitively with customers' responses (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). The stronger the salesperson's avoidant attachment style, the less likely he or she is to take an interest in relationships with customers and be sensitive to customers' responses. Thus, they are not likely to engage in positive selling behavior. In addition, the stronger the salesperson's anxious attachment style, the less likely he or she is to show self-confidence in interpersonal relationships; the more likely he or she is to be shy in social situations. Accordingly, a salesperson with avoidant and anxious attachment are not likely to be engaged in customer-oriented selling behavior. In this regard, we propose the following hypotheses:

H₆: Secure attachment styles have positive effects on customer-oriented selling behavior.

H₇: Avoidant attachment styles have negative effects on customer-oriented selling behavior.

H₈: Anxious/ambivalent attachment styles have negative effects on customer-oriented selling behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and the interview format

We conducted in-depth interviews with salespeople to examine their regulation strategies for negative emotions for two reasons. First, this method can provide a better understanding of salespeople's attachment styles and regulation strategies for negative emotions from their perspective. Few studies have considered attachment styles and regulation strategies for negative emotions from the perspective of salespeople. Second, because a quantitative analysis focuses on identifying causal relationships between

variables to verify well-established theories (Bryman, 1988), there is no need for using a quantitative method to examine and describe a particular phenomenon, culture, or behavior for a given group. Qualitative methods have the advantage of offering conclusions not possible through quantitative methods in terms of describing field experiences, observations, or daily cases (Atkinson, 1990; Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989). The participants were selected based on the four criteria in Spradley (1979):

- i) Participants should have a thorough understanding of the subject.
- ii) Participants should currently belong to the cultural situation.
- iii) Participants should be able to spend a sufficient amount of time for the interview.
- iv) Participants should be non-analytic (if possible).

The final sample included 11 salespeople (5 men and 6 women). The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 43, and they sold a wide range of products, including clothing, shoes, sports equipment, home appliances, and kitchen utensils. Each interview began with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and lasted for approximately 50 min. The content of each interview was analyzed to ask more concrete questions in the subsequent interview. The interviews were conducted by a researcher who made efforts to establish intimate relationships with the participants. The interview atmosphere was informal, and the interviews were conducted in the form of conversations and took place at the same place for psychological comfort.

In addition, for the reliability and validity of interview results, this study implemented discussions with research colleagues, use of proper reference data, repetitive confirmation, and confirmation with members to be free from researcher's subjective prejudice, securing reliability and validity of the interviews (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A series of these actions helped to prevent the researcher's subjective prejudice.

Item refinement

Based on the items acquired from these interviews as well as on those from previous studies, we obtained a set of survey items. To confirm the appropriateness of the initial set of questions, we omitted irrelevant ones. In addition, we formed a professional discrimination group consisting of one graduate student pursuing a doctoral, an undergraduate student majoring in marketing, and one researcher with a doctoral degree in consumer behavior. This group examined whether there were items with overlapping meanings. Through this process, we removed some items and finally classified the items for each variable to improve content validity.

Validity and reliability tests

Pilot test to refine and further validate of the measure was undertaken by 50 salespeople. The primary purpose of the pilot test was to ensure that the questions were well understood and that a reasonable amount of time was given for completing the questionnaire. Based on the feedback from the pilot test, we revised several items. According to the results, regulation strategies for negative emotions produced a total of four factors. All the items for each factor yielded factor loadings exceeding 0.5, and their Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.7, indicating satisfactory reliability. Table 1 lists these items.

Data collection and procedures

The data were obtained from department store salespeople. The survey yielded a total of 432 responses. However, when questionnaires with a lot of missing data were excluded, the final

Table 1. Pilot test result of regulation strategies for negative emotions.

Construct	Measures	Factor loading	Cronbach's α
Active regulation strategy	Striving to see the positive aspect of the problem	0.735	0.74
	Striving to see it as an opportunity for becoming more mature	0.714	
	Aiming to understand a situation or a problem more clearly	0.696	
	Trying to understand the reason for my negative emotions	0.658	
	Striving to solve the present situation based on similar experiences in the past	0.639	
Avoidant/distributed regulation strategy	Working harder		0.73
	Trying to escape from a situation or a problem associated with negative emotions	0.729	
	Recalling other things that are irrelevant	0.699	
	Ignoring the immediate situation	0.658	
	Striving to completely erase a problem in my mind	0.671	
Support-seeking regulation strategy	Thinking it to be unlucky	0.654	0.79
	Asking my coworkers and seniors to understand and comfort me	0.792	
	Talking about my feelings with coworkers and seniors	0.727	
Self-suggestion regulation strategy	Asking for help or advice from coworkers and seniors	0.736	0.78
	Asking coworkers and seniors to understand and comfort me	0.757	
	Talking about my feelings with coworkers and seniors	0.704	
	Asking for help or advice from coworkers and seniors	0.678	

sample size for analysis was 423. The age of the respondents ranged from 27 to 45, and approximately half of the respondents were between 25 and 34. In addition, 59% of the respondents were female, and 53% had one to five years of sales experience.

Measures

All the constructs were operationalized as multi-item constructs. Scale items from previous studies of attachment styles, regulation strategies for negative emotions, and customer-oriented selling behavior were adapted. The measures of attachment styles were adapted from Collins and Read (1990) and Kim (2007). These measures were modified to suit the context of the present study. The respondents indicated their agreement with each item by using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The measures of regulation strategies for negative emotions were those items refined through the in-depth interviews, the pilot test, and the pretest. The respondents indicated their agreement with each item by using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The measures of customer-oriented selling behavior were adapted from Saxe and Weitz (1982). The respondents indicated their agreement with each item by using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the measurement items to determine whether they had

appropriate properties to represent each construct. The items were then employed to examine the structural relationships in the model. For testing the fit of the model, χ^2 , the comparative fit index (CFI), the non-normed fit index (NNFI), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were considered.

Measurement model and structural relationships in the model

The results of the confirmatory analysis indicate that the measurement model had acceptable construct validity and reliability. That is, χ^2 was 1107.74 with 791 degree of freedom (df), and the overall fit statistics (GFI= 0.92, AGFI= 0.91 CFI= 0.92, NNFI= 0.91, SRMR= 0.048) indicated that the measurement model provided a good fit to the data. All the factor loadings for the constructs exceeded 0.65, and the composite reliability of each scale exceeded the 0.70 threshold for acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978), indicating that the measures were internally consistent. Convergent validity is indicated when path coefficients from latent constructs to their corresponding indicators are statistically significant (that is, $t > 1.96$). All the items loaded significantly on their corresponding latent construct. All the scales exceed Nunnally's (1978) suggested Cronbach's alpha level of 0.70. Tables 2 and 3 shows the results and the correlation matrices for the constructs, respectively, and

Table 2. Measurement items, standardized factor loadings, construct reliability, and Cronbach's alpha.

Item	Standardized factor loading	Construct reliability	Cronbach's alpha
Secure attachment			
I feel comfortable when I rely on others.	0.743		
In case of some trouble, others will be with me.	0.683	0.78	0.76
I hope to adjust myself to other's need.	0.692		
It is relatively easy for me to form close relationships with others.	0.721		
I don't feel uncomfortable being close to others.	0.699		
Avoidant attachment			
I find it difficult to believe others.	0.732		
I feel uncomfortable being intimate with others.	0.685	0.82	0.79
I become nervous being too intimate with others.	0.691		
I find it difficult to rely on others.	0.724		
In case of some trouble, I find it impossible to rely on someone who is with me.	0.708		
Anxious attachment			
When I need someone, no one will be with me.	0.762		
I think that others are unwilling to be intimate with me	0.734	0.75	0.73
I am worried that others may not want to be with me.	0.727		
I am worried that the one I love may not love me.	0.671		
Active regulation strategy			
Striving to see the positive aspect of the problem.	0.831		
Striving to see it as an opportunity for becoming more mature.	0.737		
Aiming to understand a situation or a problem more clearly.	0.748	0.71	0.71
Trying to understand the reason for my negative emotions.	0.693		
Striving to solve the present situation based on similar experiences in the past.	0.662		
Working harder.	0.659		
Avoidant/distributed regulation strategy			
Trying to escape from a situation or a problem associated with negative emotions.	0.808		
Recalling other things that are irrelevant.	0.764	0.84	0.81
Ignoring the immediate situation.	0.721		
Striving to completely erase a problem in my mind.	0.659		
Thinking it to be unlucky.	0.638		
Support-seeking regulation strategy			
Asking my coworkers and seniors to understand and comfort me.	0.749		
Talking about my feelings with coworkers and seniors.	0.683	0.81	0.77
Asking for help or advice from coworkers and seniors.	0.704		
Self-suggestion regulation strategy			
Keep repeating witty remarks related to selling, such as "The customer is king"	0.787		
Keep repeating in my mind that I'll be all right.	0.691	0.73	0.72
Striving to understand the situation facing the customer.	0.725		
Enduring the memory of the worst situation with the customer.	*		
Customer-oriented selling behavior			
I will try to help customers achieve their goals.	0.803		
I will try to achieve my goals by satisfying customers.	0.737		
I will have the customer's best interests in mind.	0.769		

Table 2. Contd.

I will try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.	0.684
I will try to influence customers by information, not by pressure.	0.647
I will offer the product that is best suited to the customer's needs.	0.703
I will try to find out the product that would be most helpful to the customer.	0.735
I will answer customers' questions about products as accurately as I can.	0.672
For a customer with a problem, I will try to offer a product that can help solve the problem.	0.629
I am willing to disagree with a customer to help him or her make a better decision.	0.657
I will try to provide customers with accurate expectations of what the product can do for them	*
I try to figure out what the customer's needs are.	0.722

* This item was dropped from the confirmatory factor analysis because of its nonsignificant t-value.

Figure 1 and Table 4 shows the results of the path analysis. As shown in Figure 1 and Table 4, all fit indices indicate that the model provided a good fit to the data (χ^2 with 793, $df=1110.26$, $GFI=.91$, $AGFI= 0.89$, $CFI= 0.90$, $NNFI= 0.92$, $SRMR= 0.051$).

Effects of attachment styles on regulation strategies for negative emotions (H1, H2, H3)

Secure attachment styles had positive effects on active regulation strategies ($\beta= 0.682$, $t= 9.133$, $P<0.01$), support-seeking regulation strategies ($\beta= 0.679$, $t= 8.946$, $P<0.01$), self-suggestion regulation strategies ($\beta= 0.632$, $t= 8.224$, $P<0.01$) and negative effects on avoidant/distributed regulation strategies ($\beta= -0.664$, $t= -8.517$, $P<0.01$). Avoidant attachment styles had positive effects on avoidant/distributed regulation strategies ($\beta= 0.653$, $t= 8.341$, $P<0.01$) and negative effects on active regulation strategies ($\beta= -0.692$, $t= -9.269$, $P<0.01$), support-seeking regulation strategies ($\beta= -0.749$, $t= -10.275$, $P<0.01$), and self-suggestion regulation strategies ($\beta= -0.673$, $t= -8.828$, $P<0.01$). Anxious attachment styles had positive effects on avoidant/ distributed regulation strategies ($\beta= 0.635$, $t= 8.268$, $P<0.01$), self-suggestion regulation strategies ($\beta= 0.572$, $t= 7.375$, $P<0.01$) and negative effects on active regulation strategies ($\beta= -0.627$, $t= -7.836$, $P<0.01$) and support-seeking regulation strategies ($\beta= -0.669$, $t= -8.528$, $P<0.01$). Therefore, the results provide support for H₁ and H₂ and partial support for H₃.

Effects of regulation strategies for negative emotions on customer-oriented selling behavior (H₂₋₁, H₂₋₂)

Active, support-seeking, self-suggestion regulation strategies had positive effects on customer-oriented selling behavior ($\beta=.736$, $t=10.073$, $p<.01$) ($\beta=-.722$, $t=-9.992$, $p<.01$). $\beta=0.659$, $t=8.472$, $P<0.01$), and avoidant/distributed regulation strategies had negative effects on customer-oriented selling behavior ($\beta=-0.722$, $t=-9.992$, $P<0.01$). Therefore, the results provide support for H₂₋₁ and H₂₋₂.

Effects of attachment styles on customer-oriented selling behavior (H₆, H₇, H₈)

Secure attachment styles ($\beta=.699$, $t=9.302$, $P<0.01$) had positive effects on customer-oriented selling behavior, and avoidant attachment styles ($\beta=-0.674$, $t=-8.887$, $P<0.01$) and anxious attachment styles ($\beta=-0.681$, $t=-9.098$, $P<0.01$) had negative effects on customer-oriented selling behavior. Therefore, the results provide support for H₆, H₇, and H₈.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the relationship between salespeople's attachment styles and their regulation strategies for negative emotions and customer-oriented selling behavior was examined. The results are summarized as follows: First, salespeople's attachment styles had considerable influence on their regulation strategies for negative emotions (H₁, H₂, and H₃). In the case of secure and avoidant attachment styles, hypothesis and result of analysis are same, but in the case of anxious attachment style, hypothesis and result of analysis are different. Anxious attachment style use self-suggestion as well as avoidant/distributed for regulation of negative emotions. This indicates that the anxious attachment style induced not only the salespeople to avoid problems but also encouraged them to understand the needs of customers. This result may be due to the characteristics of anxious attachment styles, that is, anxious attachment styles may induce salespeople to hope for intimate interpersonal relationships but also cause anxiety by making them believe that others would not reciprocate and thus reject such relationships (Collins and Read, 1990). Thus, this dual propensity may allow for the coexistence of the need for forming and maintaining intimate interpersonal relationships and that for rejecting and avoiding others. This suggests that it may be possible for salespeople with anxious attachment styles to have positive attitudes through proper training and socialization (Feeney and Noller, 1990). In other words, even for those salespeople with anxious attachment styles, appropriate management

Table 3. Mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrices.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mean	3.35	3.04	3.72	3.26	3.44	3.71	3.83	4.02
S.D.	1.72	1.63	1.32	1.35	1.34	1.41	1.36	1.39
1. Secure attachment	1.0							
2. Avoidant attachment	-0.31**	1.0						
3. Anxious attachment	-0.22**	0.25**	1.0					
4. Active regulation strategy	0.60**	-0.34**	-0.27**	1.0				
5. Avoidant/Distributed regulation strategy	-0.42**	0.58**	0.43**	-0.24**	1.0			
6. Support-seeking regulation strategy	0.58**	-0.38**	-0.58**	0.49**	-0.27**	1.0		
7. Self-suggestion regulation strategy	0.48**	-0.35**	0.26**	0.31**	-0.19*	0.23**	1.0	
8. Customer-oriented selling	0.62**	-0.46**	-0.48**	0.64**	-0.55**	0.51**	0.43**	1.0

** , P<0.01; * , P<0.05

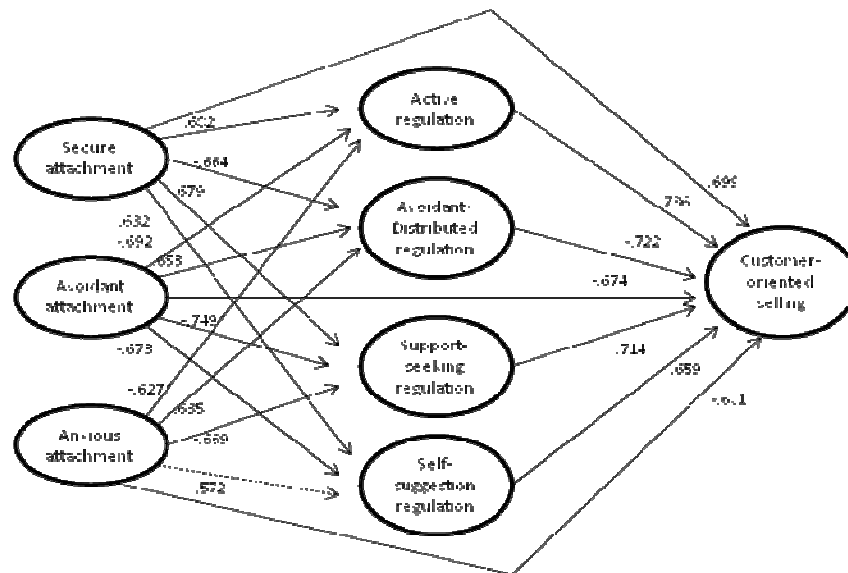


Figure 1. Path analysis results.

and training may induce them to engage in positive selling behavior, resulting in increased profitability for their firms.

Secondly, the respondents' regulation strategies for negative emotions had considerable influence on their customer-oriented selling behavior (H₄ and H₅). Active, support-seeking, and self-suggestion regulation strategies had positive effects on customer-oriented selling behavior. On the other hand, avoidant/distributed regulation strategies had negative effects on customer-oriented selling behavior. This suggests that, the active regulation strategy encourages salespeople to have a positive view of a problem, strives to use a problem as an opportunity for development, and attempts to understand a situation, an objective and clear manner. This suggests that active

regulation strategies can facilitate fundamental problem-solving processes and foster positive attitudes toward others (Swinkels and Guiliano, 1995). The support-seeking strategy pursues assistance from others. Organizational members rely on coworkers to suppress negative emotions, maintain positive thoughts about themselves, thereby gaining the ability to address their negative emotions (Kirsch et al., 1990). The results suggested that salespeople who are willing to seek advice and comfort from their coworkers or seniors are likely to engage in positive selling behavior for maintaining smooth relationships with customers. In addition, self-suggestion strategies are fully known to salespeople through the process of their socialization and training. In the case of service employees, positive service attitudes

Table 4. Path analysis.

Path	β (t value)
Secure attachment → Active regulation strategy	0.682 (9.133**)
Avoidant attachment → Active regulation strategy	-0.692 (-9.269**)
Anxious attachment → Active regulation strategy	-0.627 (-7.836**)
Secure attachment → Avoidant/Distributed regulation strategy	-0.664 (-8.517**)
Avoidant attachment → Avoidant/Distributed regulation strategy	0.653 (8.341**)
Anxious attachment → Avoidant/Distributed regulation strategy	0.635 (8.268**)
Secure attachment → Support-seeking regulation strategy	0.679 (8.946**)
Avoidant attachment → Support-seeking regulation strategy	-0.749 (-10.275**)
Anxious attachment → Support-seeking regulation strategy	-0.669 (-8.528**)
Secure attachment → Self-suggestion regulation strategy	0.632 (8.224**)
Avoidant attachment → Self-suggestion regulation strategy	-0.673 (-8.828**)
Anxious attachment → Self-suggestion regulation strategy	0.572 (7.375**)
Active regulation strategy → Customer-oriented selling	0.736 (10.073**)
Avoidant/Distributed regulation strategy → Customer-oriented selling	(-9.992**)
Support-seeking regulation strategy → Customer-oriented selling	0.714 (9.879**)
Self-suggestion regulation strategy → Customer-oriented selling	0.659 (8.472**)
Secure attachment → Customer-oriented selling	0.699 (9.302**)
Avoidant attachment → Customer-oriented selling	-0.674 (-8.887**)
Anxious attachment → Customer-oriented selling	-0.681 (-9.098**)

χ^2 with 793 df=1110.26 GFI=0.91, AGFI=0.89, CFI=0.90, NNFI=0.92, and SRMR=0.051. **, P<0.01 * , P<0.05.

may be maintained through the self-suggestion process (Hochschild, 1983). Accordingly, when a salesperson uses a self-suggestion strategy, he or she is likely to engage in customer-oriented selling behavior. The avoidant/distributed strategy is a passive strategy for regulating emotions through encouraging individuals to take an interest in their lives outside their organizations (Kirsch et al., 1990). A salesperson using this strategy can fall into the so-called emotional numbness status, thinking of nothing and having no interest in his or her interaction with customers. This reduces the level of service quality and is likely to induce passive attitudes among salespeople. Accordingly, salespeople fail to form smooth relationships with customers, and as a result, they are less likely to engage in customer-oriented selling behavior.

Thirdly, the respondents' attachment styles had considerable influence on their customer-oriented selling behavior (H₆, H₇, and H₈). Specifically, secure attachment styles had positive effects on customer-oriented selling behavior, and avoidant/anxious attachment styles had negative effects on customer-oriented selling behavior. This suggests that the stronger the salesperson's secure attachment style, the more likely he or she is to rely on and trust his or her customers; the more likely he or she is to have smooth relationships with them; and the more likely he or she is to engage in customer-oriented selling

behavior to take into account the needs of customers. On the other hand, the stronger the salesperson's avoidant/anxious attachment style, the more likely he or she is to use a defensive strategy in dealing with customers; the more likely he or she is to show indifference to customers; and the less likely he or she is to engage in customer-oriented selling behavior.

MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

The results have important implications for marketing. Firstly, the applied attachment theory which is considered mainly in psychology, marketing to examine the effects of salespeople's attachment styles on their regulation strategies for negative emotions and customer-oriented selling behavior. Although, a number of studies have applied attachment theory to general interpersonal relationships, yet, very few have considered it in the context of commercial relationships. Attachment theory emphasizes that the attachment system plays a particularly important role in stressful situations (Bowlby, 1982) and that salespeople's choice of strategies for coping with conflicts and stress varies according to their attachment style (Bartholomew and Shaver, 1998; Collins, 1996). In commercial relationships, the customer takes the leadership position which creates a stressful situation for the

salesperson. Accordingly, commercial relationships are much more likely to be stressful than general interpersonal relationships. A salesperson experiencing a high level of stress is likely to engage in negative selling behaviors. However, the salesperson's attachment style has considerable influence on his or her choice of the coping strategy as well as on his or her selling behavior. This is a very important factor for corporate performance. In this regard, this study contributes to the literature by applying attachment theory to commercial relationships and by introducing an important variable for future research on marketing.

Secondly, previous studies focusing on the performance of salespeople have typically focused on their satisfaction with bonuses, raises, and employee welfare or on their performance enhancement through training and communication. However, few studies have examined the affective aspect of salespeople that experience in the process of offering services. In particular, there is a need for a multidimensional analysis of the strategies that salespeople employ to regulate negative emotions and the relationship between such strategies and selling behavior. In addition, managing employees' emotions in an effective manner is an essential condition for the growth and survival of any organization (Stewart, 1997). Many theories about organization and management focus only on the reasonable and rational image and activity of organizations, ignoring the emotions of organizational members as well as emotion regulation strategies. However, given that employees' emotion regulation ultimately becomes the foundation of customer satisfaction, there is an urgent need for considering their emotion regulation.

Thirdly, the results for salespeople's emotion regulation strategies for their interactions with customers suggests a need for considering educational programs for effectively managing regulation strategies for negative emotions. Such programs can give salespeople a coping strategy for the effective regulation of negative emotions. A salesperson's emotions are not simply individual emotions but are important factors that can influence even corporate performance. Therefore, firms should provide their salespeople with appropriate training and support, so that such emotions can be turned into positive outcomes for both the salespeople and firms.

Fourthly, the results have practical implications for the selection of salespeople. Selecting employees whose temperament and personality traits are appropriate for sales and providing them with effective training and socialization opportunities can be an important source of competitive edge. Thus, managers should carefully select new salespeople. In other words, it is important to have selection criteria that consider not only the employee's standard background (for example, his or her academic background, appearance, and knowledge) but also his or her psychological characteristics and temperament. In addition, firms should have appropriate training programs for existing employees to further foster positive behaviors. That is, negative emotions can be regulated to be

positive ones if employees are provided with appropriate education and training, particularly for those with anxious attachment styles. Such efforts should facilitate positive interpersonal relationships. In the corporate context, retaining and training talented salespeople is more likely to be profitable than hiring and training new ones.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has some limitations. First, this study failed to include salespersons from various kinds of occupation in collecting data. Since the sample largely consists of department store salespersons, there will be limitations in generalizing the results to salespersons in all kinds of occupation. Second, future research should examine salespeople's motivation for employing regulation strategies for negative emotions. The specific reasons for regulating negative emotions in relationships with customers should provide a better understanding of how such motivation can be reinforced and how negative emotions can be suppressed or inhibited and thus, provide new opportunities for developing better regulation strategies. Third, Attachment styles may have considerable influence on salespeople's responses to and behavioral strategies for their interactions with customers as well as on their regulation strategies for negative emotions. Thus, future research should examine the relationship between salespeople's attachment styles, responses and behavioral strategies. In addition, there is a need for developing strategies for inducing positive selling behavior among salespeople. Fourth, we focused on the relationships among salespeople's attachment styles, regulation strategies for negative emotions, and customer-oriented selling behavior. However, future research should consider the variables that may moderate these relationships. Such research efforts should be useful from the practical perspective.

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