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***Impact of Relationships in Business-to-Business: What is Communicated During the First Contact?***

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A Thesis  
in  
the John Molson  
School of Business

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### *Impact of Relationships in Business-to-Business: What is Communicated During the First Contact?*

Gwladys Tran Dinh

This study is an exploration of the social and psychological aspect of what makes the first impression between a buyer and a salesperson in the Fine Chemistry industry (pharmaceutical and cosmetics). The emphasis is placed on the buyer's appreciation of both the supplier's global offer and its salespersons' attitudes during the first meeting. The research took place in two countries: Canada and France with the purpose to find a parallel in industrial managers' understanding of relationship theories.

The results indicate an opening of the relationship marketing in a highly technical industry where the complexity of the products has always generated buyers' rational ways of thinking. Also, these findings show a difference of importance in the perception of the several relational-oriented items between the two countries surveyed.

Managerial as well as theoretical implications are discussed and limitations are provided that can be converted into practical advices for future research on a related topic.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Industrial business represents great amount of money in term of investments and exchanges. Therefore it makes sense to focus on business development in such area. The relational aspect of industrial transactions has been shown to be of major importance. Glynn and Barnes (1995) suggest that investigating the nature of the relationship is primordial to understand the “win-win” strategy (Gummesson, 1987) that leads to profits. Furthermore, Ferguson, Paulin, Pigeassou, and Gauduchon (1999) find that implementing the relationship marketing principles enhances the customer satisfaction to the point to become a competitive advantage. Then, studying relationships marketing constitutes a key issue for marketers. However, little concern has been provided to the beginning of the relationship despite its critical importance in the relationship development process. Based on Storbacka, Strandvick, and Grönroos (1994), marketing relationships can be viewed as a sequence of steps in which the first is critical because it sets up all the business association environment as it will be further developed. Thus, the first meeting will have an impact on the later-in stages of the relationship development process (Paulin, Ferguson, and Payaud, 2000).

This study proposes to investigate the social and psychological parameters intervening in a first business-to-business interview between a salesperson and a purchase manager. Gummesson (1987) defines the personal contact as a decisive step in the relationship marketing principles implementation. Given that the organizations themselves cannot effectively communicate, their employees are in charge of the dialogue. Because the literature has neglected the buyer’s view angle, this study will attempt to focus on purchase managers’ expectancies. Berry (1983) states the role of the buyer as predominant. To apply satisfying selling strategies, the buyer’s reaction is to be

well understood. Hence, the purchasing manager represents the interface between the customer organization (i.e., internal dimension) and the marketplace (i.e., external dimension). In order to match business-to-business new economy requirements (i.e., globalization), the cultural aspect will also be considered.

Given the lack of previous research in the buyer's perception of the salesperson's marketing relationship principles display during the first business meeting, a review of literature including articles from the business-to-business area but dealing with on-going relationships and the final consumer field will be discussed in order to set the current research hypotheses. Then, a section grouping results and analysis will display the major findings. Possible explanations to these results will be discussed subsequently. Finally, a brief summary of this study's main points will be provided as well as a paragraph on limitations and potential future research.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**



## **I. OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT**

### ***A. Theoretical objectives***

Marketing relationship constitutes a growing research interest. Several studies have already focused on relationships as a pertinent element in new economy business (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Dick and Basu, 1994; Paulin, 1998; Zeithmal, 2000). The authors came to the conclusion that business relationships can be defined from two perspectives: the transactional and the relational aspects. Most of the last studies have investigated the relational side leading to the conclusion that relational management of a business account enhances more customer satisfaction than the traditional product oriented strategy (Wathne, Biong, and Heide, 2001). Williams (1998) reports that a good buyer-seller contact defines long-term benefits and constitutes the purpose of relationship marketing. However, most of previous studies have treated marketing contacts in existing and profitable business relationships (Wong and Sohal, 2002) and the main dimensions suggested to define relational businesses are the following: trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Lamb, Spekman, and Hunt, 2000; Wong and Sohal, 2002), commitment (Dick and Basu, 1994; Wong and Sohal, 2002), and customer-oriented organizations (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Gummesson, 1999; Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000; Zeithmal, 2000...). Moreover, most of the research has focused on the seller's viewpoint. Since it seems of common sense that the selling firm will tend to overestimate its performance in implementing the relationship, only examining the seller's viewpoint could lead to a bias in understanding the relationship development (Wathne, Biong, and Heide, 2001). Hence, Wong and Sohal (2002) recommended the relationship quality to be seen through the

customer's eyes. Indeed, this is also one of the major results in Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster's article (1993). Looking at the effect of corporate cultures on a supplier's performance they found a discrepancy between the supplier's self-report and the actual customer's perception of the supplier's client-orientation.

Therefore, the current study proposes to look at the beginning of the relationship and especially at the first face-to-face interview between a salesperson and his prospect in business markets. In particular, this study will focus on the buyer's rather than on the seller's point of view in order to determine how the buyer actually perceives the seller's efforts during the first interview and how the traditionally used variables (trust, commitment, and customer-oriented organization) impact on the development of the business involvement. In particular, one of the important aspects of the proposed study is to examine the psychological characteristics of the relationship beginning (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Rich, 2001). With regards to the corporate culture's impact on performance, Deshpandé et al., (1993) described four dimensions (Market, Adhocracy, Clan, and Hierarchy) the supplier can belong to. With each dimension is associated a level of business performance (from best for Market, to poorest for Hierarchical culture). The current research will attend to confirm these results in a one-industry context.

### ***B. Managerial objectives***

With the globalization of the economy, companies have to deal with more competitive marketplaces. This is especially true for business-to-business firms that evolve in even more monopolistic environments and for which the relational aspect of the business deal is decisive: acquiring new profitable customers has become an issue as vital

as keeping loyal clients. Therefore, one can question why a buyer will get involved with a supplier company to the point of developing and entertaining a long-term business relationship. The first steps of the business interaction are of critical importance due to the possible negative consequences of a relationship failure for both parties (internal as well as external costs, like damage effects on a company's reputation (Gassenheimer, Houston, and David, 1998). Moreover, managers will be interested in understanding what are the reasons for a buyer to psychologically be involved in a business relationship. Although industrial buyers are known to be rational while making a purchase related decision and attempt to focus essentially on the product features as well as on the global service associated with it, they are probably also influenced by more psychological aspects. Gassenheimer, Houston, and Davis (1998) report an anecdotal story, on how a firm lost its customer when the salesperson dealing with this customer retired. This story basically shows the danger for the selling firm when individuals become the only one link in the relationship. Wong and Sohal (2001) present a similar example of customer loss following a salesperson's defection. This means that even in the industrial market, social links can overcome the transactional aspect of the purchase.

The current study intends to explore under which conditions a salesperson is favorably influencing his interlocutor and what are the psychological arguments that constitute a strong competitive advantage. In other words, this research will assess the customers' expectancies in order for the selling firm to better understand and meet its prospect needs.

### ***C. Cross-cultural objectives***

Cross-cultural psychology investigation has both theoretical and managerial implications. From the theory perspective, only a few studies have looked at cross-cultural differences in business-to-business contexts due to methodological problems. Therefore, the current study will improve the theoretical knowledge by showing the similarities or dissimilarities among quite similar cultures (French Canada and France) in business markets.

On the managerial side, the new economic trends (globalization of the exchanges) induce international perspective for many business-to-business companies. Thus, marketers need to understand that within the same industry, even if cultures are fairly close, differences of perceptions can occur, making international strategies of customer prospecting vulnerable. For instance, several studies have shown the importance of the Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance dimensions (Hostede, 1980 and 1991) in the Canadian and French perceptions of relationship development. This calls for a different management of the business association and the present study will address guidelines to develop adequate partnership.

## **II. THE FINE CHEMISTRY INDUSTRY CONTEXT**

The Fine Chemistry industry includes the manufacturing and the selling aspect of non-heavy chemicals<sup>1</sup>. The current study more specifically focuses on pharmaceutical and cosmetics firms. Because of an exacerbated competition in this industrial context, the product innovations constitute the main avenue for a company to survive.

The Fine Chemistry industry is defined by several technical rules and laws. Some of them are grouped in universally adopted legislations as Pharmacopoeia and GLP (Good Laboratory Practice) or BLP (Bonnes Pratiques de Laboratoire). However, large pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies have also created internal rules. These rules are often even more complex than the worldwide recognized ones. They describe all the technical qualities the raw material has to possess as well as the steps in the purchasing process. Those internal laws seem to be more present in North America than in European firms where the purchasing process appears to be more tolerant.

In both continents, the Fine Chemistry industry presents large technical barriers that are often perceived as a handicap to develop more relational based business relationships. Intuitively, when all the rules are followed concerning the product and the purchasing process, there is not much room left to the relational aspect. The chemical product can even be chosen on mail-order catalogues prior to the first physical meeting between the buyer and the salesperson. It is only if the product is selected that the buyer meets the salesperson to negotiate the price. As a consequence of this place of the technical high standards in the decision-making process, for most of the buyers, it could be that there is

not even a choice between two competitors once all the technical requirements have been fulfilled. This may be why some of the largest pharmaceutical companies developed partner-based relationships with a few suppliers that regularly meet the client's requirements. Thus, a relational oriented relationship could be created but it would be directed toward the organization rather than toward the salesperson. Nevertheless, Yau, McFetridge, Chow, Lee, Sin, and Tse (2000) advocate the idea that the manufacturing industry is the most favorable one to develop relationship marketing concepts as social bonds or trust, among others. The veracity of these opposite assumptions constitutes one of the major issues the current study proposes to assess.

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<sup>1</sup> by heavy chemicals it is meant: plastics, solvents, and other polymers.

### **III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES**

#### **A. MARKETING RELATIONSHIPS**

As a general definition, relationship creation and maintenance can be viewed as a customer and supplier commitment in collaborative exchange episodes (Anderson, 1995; Wong and Sohal, 2002). Business exchange episodes encompass all the interactions between the salesperson and the buyer. The purpose of this study is to examine the first face-to-face of these collaborative exchanges: the first interview.

Indeed this study hypothesized the following general model where the dependent variable to be evaluated is the ability for the supplier and its salesperson to be perceived as more client-oriented than its competitors in order to get the customer account (i.e., to build a profitable relationship). This item also constituted the dependent variable in Wong and Sohal's (2002) study. The independent variables expected to influence this output are the fit between the organizational aspect of the selling and the buying firms as well as the fit between the salesperson and the buyer on personal perspectives. The importance of word-of-mouth (WOM) will indicate the impact of the supplier's reputation on the buyer's willingness to do business with this supplier. And the latter variable constitutes an intervening variable in the global model. The number of decision-makers variable is probably moderating the relationship between the organizational as well as the personality aspects of the selling firm and the dependent variable. Finally, the impact of the respondents' culture on the overall model will be assessed as a second moderating variable (model presented in figure 1).

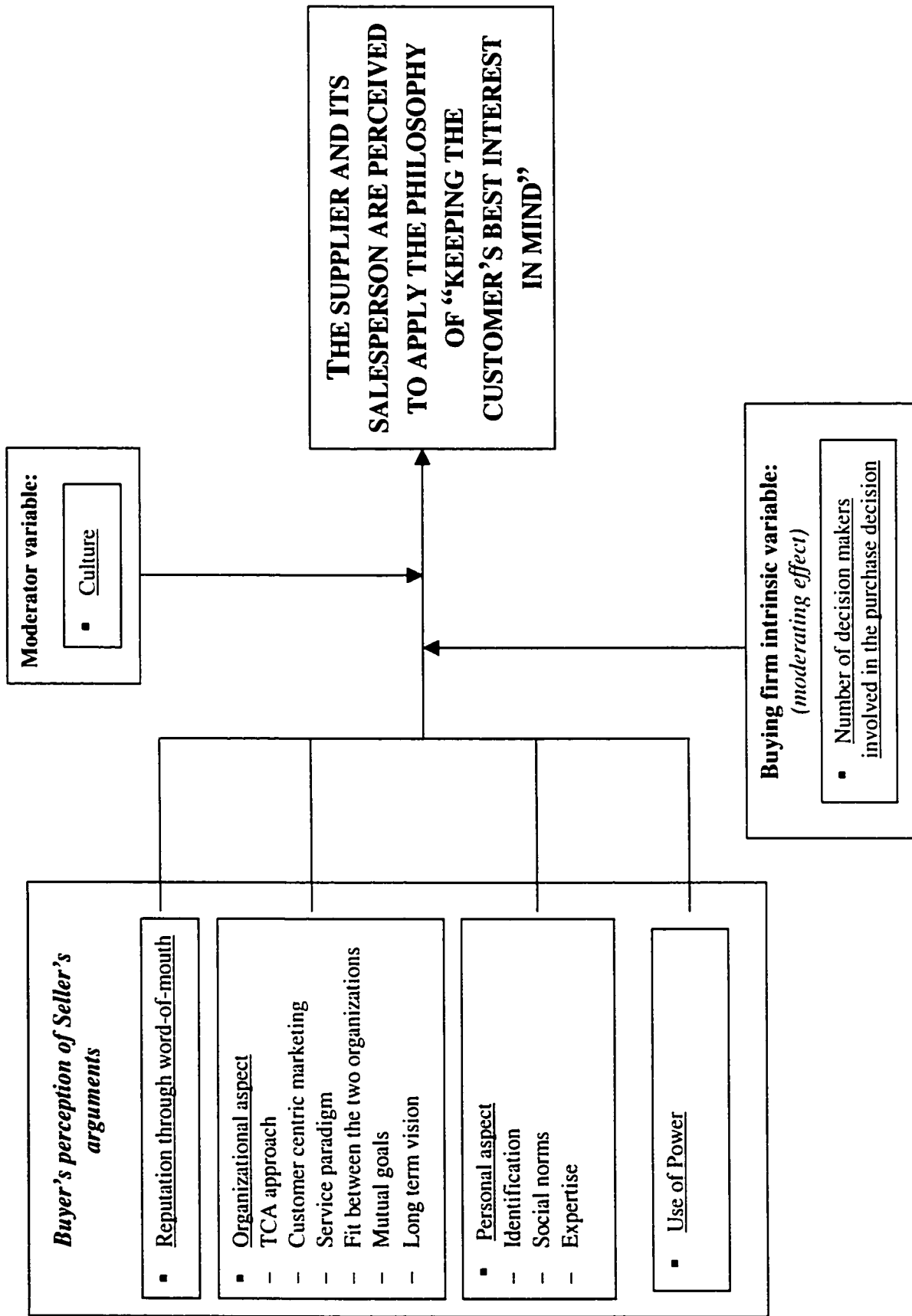


Figure 1: Social and Psychological variables leading to the relationship development from an industrial buyer' viewpoint



This early step in relationship development corresponds to the stages of “awareness” and “exploration” as stated by Williams (1998). The “awareness” phase will be represented in the current study by the buyer’s perception of the supplier’s reputation and the remaining variables will be integrated to the “exploration” step.

The impact of product features on a purchase decision in business-to-business markets has been widely investigated. Moreover, some studies have focused on the characteristics of a successful product (Cooper, 1979; Cooper and de Brentani, 1984). The authors conclude that successful products in competitive markets are perceived to be of superior quality (better meeting customers' needs in all the product dimensions: quality of the product per se, warranty, delivery...) and unique. A high quality product is important for both goods and services (Cooper and de Brentani, 1984). This is especially true in the chosen industry context (i.e., Fine Chemistry industry) where fulfilling the technical requirements is the primary condition to a selling agreement.

Hence, it may be less obvious that industrial good purchase managers will be influenced by the social aspect of the relationship than it could be for final consumers or industrial service purchase managers. Therefore, this study chose to focus on industrial physical products.

It seems quite obvious that because of important switching costs in industrial markets, the supplier selection will lead to a relationship development in order to avoid information dispersion and high indirect costs due to switching of a buyer (Pritchard, Havitz, Howard, 1999; Wathne, Biong, and Heide, 2001). Therefore, with respect to the assumption that economic advantages will be the first criterion of choice, this study will

only consider the final selection set where competitors are all expected to offer equal quality of products.

## **B. The selling firm arguments**

### **1) Independent variable influencing the dependent variable: The organizational impact**

#### ***a) The relational aspect***

Gassenheimer, Houston, and Davis (1998) define the relationship as a continuum between two extremes. The first one accentuates the economic value. Self-interests are predominant and little concern is provided about the long-term transaction opportunities. Although the authors recognize that economic self-interests are the primary motive to create relationship, they claim that such a view favors the long-term objective relationship failures. On the other extreme, individuals emphasize group benefits as the most important incentive. Organizations engaging in such a strategy base their behavior on the needs of the partners rather than individual costs and rewards. This theory of continuum is built upon previous studies that highlighted the opposed character of the TCA (Transactional Cost Analysis, Williamson, 1975) and the relational aspect. Spekman (1988) first stated that the traditionally product-oriented approaches (i.e., TCA, Just-in-time JIT) are beyond the nowadays markets requirements. The author states that the implementation of such strategies is in opposition the relationship marketing

philosophy (i.e., strategic partnership) that leads to mutual benefits and joint gains. Thus, the author calls for a transition between the two perspectives that are presented all along the article as two opposed ways-of-thinking. The JIT strategy is the least evolved approach and companies are encouraged to attend to a more relational-oriented policy. For Evans and Laskin (1994), "relationship marketing is a continuous process". The entire article is built upon the differences between a transactional and a relational approach. The authors encourage companies to move on a continuum between a pure economic perspective to the relationship marketing concepts. The benefits of such a step toward the relational principles are customers increased satisfaction leading to higher profits in the long-term. Relationship marketing is seen as a more advanced strategy than the traditional TCA perspective in a considerably competitive marketplace. Storbacka, Strandvick, and Grönroos (1994) suggest a model in which a better customer satisfaction comes along steps from transactional toward relational-oriented objectives. The relationship strength appears to be a function of an economic purchase and a total communication behavior. Nevertheless, the authors observe that the weaker the relationship strength (i.e., the more transactional-oriented) the lesser customer satisfaction (adapted from Storbacka, Strandvick, and Grönroos, 1994). This reaches Glynn and Barnes's (1995) viewpoint. Hence, the authors quoting Gummesson (1987) refer to a "paradigm shift" from a transactional to a relational marketing. These findings advocate the idea that relationship marketing (integrating efficient communication) drives profitability. Finally, Ferguson, Paulin, Pigeassou, and Gaduchon (1999) claim that profitable relationship development call for an evolution of the selling techniques from the tangible (called technical) to the functional (i.e., human interaction) dimensions.

Because selling firms have been found to be more oriented toward the transactional aspect and buyers to look more for a relational based interaction, the selling firms that carry a relational image are more positively related to trustworthiness and generate more positive attitude from buyers (Gassenheimer, Houston, and Davis 1998). Because industrial buyers are more and more looking toward long-term relationships (Yau et al., 2000), from the buyer's eyes, working to develop relational oriented interactions appears to be a business occurrence incentive.

Håkansson and Snehota (1995) advise that the selling company has to adopt the relational aspect as a whole strategy. Every employee that belongs to the company understands and acts in order to reach the firm's objectives. Therefore the buyer sees the selling firm and the salesperson as a single entity, and the selling firm strategy will determine the way the salesperson behaves in the business interview. This is also Harris (1996) viewpoint that the market-oriented culture should be dominant to make the overall organization perceived as customer-oriented.

To facilitate the implementation of the strategy, Gummesson (1999) proposes a whole firm processes restructuring. The author defines the notion of service paradigm: the selling company must focus on processes that create client-perceived value (Gummesson, 1999). Whereas manufacturing or bureaucratic paradigm only focus on the physical product features, service-oriented companies emphasize product quality, productivity and profitability. Gummesson argues that by adopting and correctly implementing a marketing-oriented management, companies will be able to influence the purchase decision as well as to develop a more profitable long-term relationship. Sheth, Sisodia

and Sharma (2000) adopted this theory to address the consumer centric marketing. This means the overall organization should be customer-oriented. The consumer centric marketing notion involves taking care of individual consumers' needs, wants, and resources instead of considering the mass market. Such a method is expected to induce positive attitudes toward the offer. The buyer knows that customer-oriented companies are seeking relationship development and are likely to make efforts to create trust.

Grönroos (1992) indicates that perceived value drives profitability either for products or services. A customer-oriented organization will be more flexible because it will focus on improving the relationship. For instance, the way products are delivered will have an effect on the acceptance of the good. Therefore, following the external efficiency objectives will lead to internal effectiveness (because the cooperation between the firm and its customer will permit to reduce the costs of both partners) as well as long-term profits.

This new market trend has been confirmed by Steinman, Deshpandé, and Farley (2000) who furthermore argued that the appropriate level of market orientation is the one that satisfies the customer. Then, they encourage both supplier and customer to reduce the actual market orientation gap. Nevertheless, the greatest part of the effort is directed to the supplier. For instance, the first step is to adopt a different way of thinking: instead of referring to the relationship members in opposition terms like "them" versus "us," they suggest that a "we" would be more adequate in order to induce a synergy and trust appeal favorable to a long-term relationship. According to the authors, such a synergic view of the relationship will lead to a more dynamic link within the dyad. The authors also say that working on a verbal integration is emotionally significant. For instance, Morgan and

Hunt (1994) as well as Wilson (1995) argue that discovering both parties share mutual goals will influence performance satisfaction, which in turn will influence the level of commitment on both sides. Although the present study chose to focus on the first stage of the relationship creation where commitment is not expected to take place yet, the buyer perception of how the relationship could evolve will determine the decision of engaging or not in the business association.

A last competitive advantage has to be taken into account if the buyer believes the supplier is likely to customize (Ford, 1980). Doney and Cannon (1997) as well as Gummeson (1999) address the importance of willingness to customize in the development of trust. The amount of investments planned or actualized to adapt a mass production to the buyer's specific needs is a warranty for the customer to avoid opportunistic behavior.

In conclusion, as stated by Wahtne, Biong, and Hiede (2001), the relational aspect of the relationship is expected to eventually be perceived as the value-added of the business association.

Thus,

**H1: The more the supplier is perceived to respect the client-orientation principles, the better the buyer's first impression.**

*b) The TCA aspect*

The Transaction Cost Analysis (TCA) developed by Williamson (1975) suggests that buyers and sellers, while evaluating the economic value of the relationship, will

compare its costs and its benefits. If the costs exceed the potential benefits for one of the participants, this partner will end the relationship. As it has been shown in the previous section, the industrial context the current research chose to investigate clearly emphasizes the product aspect. Focusing on this product aspect is one of the dimensions of the TCA theory (Williamson, 1975). This leads companies to underweight the relational benefits at the profits of the purely economic attributes.

Ford (1980) found that the earlier in the relationship development, the more inertia with regards to a relational (versus transactional) development. First interview for a partner selection is expected to show enough similarities with short-term relationships to find costs related arguments (Wong and Sohal, 2002). Wathne, Biong, and Heide (2001) also suggest that the product aspect is still the dominant argument in industrial markets.

Lamb, Spekman and Hunt (2000) establish the notion of “coopetition” and time pressure in developing buyer/seller associations. “Coopetition” can be defined by the possibility for both parties to cooperate one day and become competitors shortly after. Actually, at this stage of the relationship, neither the buyer nor the seller does know the actual intentions of their interlocutor. A sure way to deal with this uncertainty is to evaluate the quality and the amount of information exchanged. The authors argue that, at this stage in the relation development process, trust cannot be formed. Only substitutes of trust are present to provide any valuable information on the partner's intentions. These substitutes involve prior experience, reputation for fair dealing and consistency of the promises. This refers to the variables studied by Doney and Connan (1997) and Dick and Basu (1994). The researchers found that while assessing the value of a potential relationship, buyers rely on the perceived salesperson expertise and his message

argument constancy. The salesperson will be judged on what he is perceived to be able to do and his place in his organization. The level of his technical solutions in problem solving situations as well as the feasibility of his promises will provide information on his real expertise. Furthermore, Wong and Sohal (2002) add on Gummesson's (1987) definition of "professional relation" the notion of expertise as warranty of demonstration of competence. This professional relation constitutes, together with the social relation what the author claims to be a high quality relationship (Gummesson, 1987). As a consequence, in the current study design, the *expertise characteristics* will be associated to the buyer's evaluation of the *TCA aspect* in the same hypothesis.

Thus,

**H2: The earlier the business process, the more the buyer will be likely to focus on the TCA perspective.**

2) Independent variable influencing the dependent variable: Personal aspect of the relationship

Because the character of the actor (i.e., individual attributes) is different from the identity of the actors (i.e., role with respect to other), the opportunity for a relationship development has to be examined from the personal side as well (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995; Ojasalo, 2001). Even if the salesperson's responsibility is to convey his firm's image during the negotiation, psychological and social similarities will lead or not to a personal chemistry between the vendor and the buyer, and this personal chemistry will determine the relationship creation. Wong and Sohal's (2002) findings even argue that the salesperson's behavior has the most significant impact on the trust and commitment variables later on in the relationship development. Gassenheimer, Houston and Davis



(1998) reported that individuals are either socialized-oriented or economic-oriented. Although the organizational culture will have an effect on the vendor's performance, his intrinsic characteristics will play an important role too. Recently, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Rich's (2001) results indicated that a "transformational" salesperson's behavior (in opposition to transactional oriented sellers) is positively related to sales performance. In the same vein, Williams (1998) as well as Weitz and Bradford (1999) assert that partnering-oriented salespeople are value creators. According to the authors, partnering-oriented people focus on interpersonal communication. They attempt to manage the conflicts instead of just trying to influence the immediate purchase decision. They have long-term objectives to develop a relationship instead of just achieving short-term sales. The individual vendor is supposed to represent the sales team as well as the overall organization, thus the buyer can be positive toward the company's objectives and intentions. This refers to the impact of the selling organization on the relationship creation (the selling firm is expected to have formed its salespersons to be partner-oriented), but this organizational related variable is only carried by the vendor. Williamson (1998) even suggests that the quality of the relationship is to be completely directed to the salesperson, not the organization. Especially because this research investigates the really beginning of relationship development, the impact of the salesperson will be of crucial importance.

*a) Social bonds*

Ford (1980) defines the first interview between a potential customer and the salesperson as a pre-relationship stage. High uncertainty seems to define this phase. In a

short period of time, the buyer will have to assess if his interlocutor is worth his organizational confidence. Psychological and social links are non-rational variables that can help reduce this uncertainty. Therefore, the buyer will concentrate on the individual salesperson's performance during the interview. Social bonds have been recognized to facilitate the development of trust and commitment (Wilson, 1995). Wilson found that buyers and sellers who have strong personal relationships are more committed to maintain the association than less socially bonded partners. Yau et al. (2000) agree with such a view and automatically associate bonding to long-term relationships. They suggest that social bonds can facilitate the development of precursors of trust.

*b) Personal identification*

Doney and Cannon's (1997) findings suggest that if the buyer perceives similarities between himself and the salesperson (i.e., if identification is possible), trust is likely to occur leading to a positive reaction to the relationship development.

Once the buyer considers his partner to be worthy of the relationship efforts, trust and commitment can take place. Pritchard, Havitz and Howard (1999) have developed a theory on the antecedent processes of commitment. A primary form of trust, i.e., confidence, can occur if the information provided fits with the buyer expectations. Then, the identification process that refers to the symbolic value of the purchase will take place. The authors argue that while making the purchase decision, the buyer will be driven by a need for social (symbolic) representation. Thus, the degree to which the buyer identifies himself with the salesperson plays a significant role in relationship creation. This confirms Doney and Cannon (1997) findings, which state that perceived similar vendors

are more likely to generate trust. In the advertising field, the identification process appears to be due to non-verbal cues and to be unconsciously processed (Chebat, Laroche, Badura, Filiatrault, 1995).

*c) The contractual norms*

Macneil (1980) states that parties tend to develop relationships based on their past experiences. Partners define tacit contracts as guidelines to better judge the other party's honesty. According to Macneil, relational contracts are characterized by whole person interactions and non-economic personal satisfaction. The author developed ten contractual norms to be used in order to create a satisfying personal relationship. Five of them are typically directed to relational oriented exchanges. They are role integrity, preservation of the relation, harmonization of relational conflict, propriety of means, and supra-contractual norms (justice, liberty, dignity, and equality). They basically describe the long-term behavior and obligations associated with it as well as the procedures to be applied when disagreement occurs. However, Lamb, Spekman and Hunt (2000) claim that social norms will be represented at a moderate level in this stage of the relationship due to poor information on how the association will actually work.

Thus,

**H3: The more the salesperson seems to share personal tastes with the buyer, the better the first impression.**

### 3) Independent variable influencing the dependent variable: Use of Power in the relationship

Previous research that focused on relationship marketing has investigated the role of power between the dyad members (Kim, 2000, Ojasalo, 2001).

These studies have found that the use of coercive power was one of the reasons for the premature failure of the relationship. However, because of situations of interdependence or of short-term negotiations, buyers and sellers have for years continuously tried to be in a dominant position (Kim, 2000). Many scholars have called for an equilibrium of the power balance in order to build more profitable long-term business associations (Ojasalo, 2001). Thus, whereas short-term interests will lead to greater pressures applied on price and product quality (from the buyer's perspective) or sales volumes and date of payment (from the seller's perspective), an agreement between the two parties in order to set long-term goals is expected to reduce the use of dominance from both dyad members.

Nevertheless, most researchers agree that long-term objectives, to be set, need trust to be developed between the buyer and the supplier (Williams, 1998; Yau, et al., 2000; Ojasalo, 2001; Wong and Sohal, 2002). As Lamb, Spekman, and Hunt (2000) and Wong and Sohal (2002) reported, the first steps of the business relationship are not favorable to the development of trust. Therefore, it may be possible that, considering the early stage of the association building, the buyers still keep this long-lasting habit to believe that managing short-term goals with power dominance can be positively related to long-term objectives. Moreover, because the current study investigated the industrial buying decision process (where buyers are educated on the product attributes and consequently

are less subject to fall into selling technique manipulation), it is expected that the use of coercive power, if it occurs, will not be from the salesperson's side.

Therefore,

**H4: The more the buyer wants to invest in long-term and profitable relationships, the lesser the use of asymmetric power within the dyad.**

***C. Moderator variables: buying firm intrinsic variable***

***Influence of the number of decision-makers***

The volitional process described by Pritchard, Havitz, and Howard (1999) as a loyalty antecedent refers to the degree of responsibility the buyer assumes in the partner selection. The higher the perceived freedom in the supplier choice, the higher the willingness to engage in a commitment process. This applies to the number of persons involved in the buying decision process (Weitz and Bradford, 1999).

Weitz and Bradford (1999) indicate that in industrial as well as in final user markets, the number of decision-makers can impact the purchase decision. For industrial products, this refers to the necessity to justify the partner selection to other managers or top management. In this case, only rational arguments will be sufficiently weighted. The number of decision-makers in the buyer's organization as well as the buyer's importance in the overall decision-making process will be assessed in order to strengthen a possible

moderator effect on the dependent variable but will not be hypothesized as is. Because the specially rational industrial context calls for a relatively large number of decision-makers for all the companies (making difficult to provide a large enough variability), the direct impact of this variable on the final outcome cannot be assessed and therefore will not be hypothesized.

#### **D. Moderator variables: cultural influence**

Previous research has shown that culture can be a factor of major importance in one's perception of the environment and so can impact his/her expectations (Money, Gilly, and Graham, 1998). The most recognized work on cultural differences is Hostede's (1980) characterization of the cultural dimensions. The author studied 53 nations or regions and found four typical traits. They are:

Individualism/Collectivism: individualist cultures tend to focus on the individual, with the personal achievement being of highest value whereas collectivists emphasize more the loyalty in-group networks. It appears that this dimension has been the most studied (Grimm, Church, Katigback, and Reyes, 1999). However, Canada and France scores on this index (respectively 80 and 70) do not differ enough to conclude of the influence of individualism on the tested variables.

Masculinity/Femininity: these trends in population behaviors are related to the procreativity activities where "women bear children and men beget them" (Hofstede, 1980, 177). Therefore masculine cultures are more oriented toward the advancement, earning, and freedom whereas feminine ones look after supervision and social aspect of

the job. In this case too, the scores of Canada (52) and France (43) on the masculinity index do not allow to conclude of a possible effect of this dimension on the studied variables.

Power Distance: extent to which individuals accept inequality in the power distribution in social and organizational aspects of the life. In France, where the power distance index is high (68), Hofstede observed a greater authority, less independence, and a greater conformity toward hierarchy. The author also realized that organizational structures are hierarchical even in people's mind. The respect of implicit rules dictated by the age or the functions is always present in business situations. In Canada, the score on this dimension is lower (39) and the personality of the interlocutor has more importance (Hofstede, 1980; 1991).

Uncertainty Avoidance: the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity and tend to look for conformity. Canada scores low on this dimension (48) whereas France scores high (86). Therefore, in France it is expected to observe higher job stress leading to more emotional resistance to change, more structuring of activities, and more extreme rules implying a bureaucracy organization where rituals are perceived to enhance the social cohesion.

After providing the definition of the several dimensions and their typical characteristics, the author used Maslow's hierarchy of needs to portray each country. The result is that, given the score of Canada in each cultural factor, the most important features an individual has to develop is achievement and self -esteem. On the other hand, the aspects to be emphasized in France are security and belongingness (Hofstede, 1991).

Then, the author plotted each country according to their score in Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance and Motivation (achievement, affiliation or power, Hofstede, 1991). In his findings, Canada shows a preference for the coordination mechanisms where the outputs are standardized. Conversely, in France, people are comfortable with a bureaucracy configuration and they prefer the standardization of the work process (Hofstede, 1991).

1) Influence of the salesperson's personality

The literature review on cross-cultural differences suggests to insert culture as moderator variable in the current study model. In Canada, purchasing managers are expected to rely more on the results than any other output of the relationship. They emphasize efficiency and performance. On the other hand, in France, because of a high fear of uncertainty, purchase managers are expected to look at social aspects more heavily.

Thus:

**H5a: The different aspects of the personality of the vendor will be of higher importance in France than in Canada.**

2) Impact of both organizational cultures

In order to achieve profits on a more and more competitive marketplace, companies have to differentiate their images vis-à-vis the pool of potential customers. One way to achieve this differentiation is to develop the company's own corporate



culture. This will allow the firm to assess a different strategy and different objectives than its competitors and, if successful, to gain market shares and to present a larger global growth. Wathne, Biong and Heide's (2001) research has brought evidence of lower rates of customer switching behavior when the buyer is satisfied with the supplier's organizational attributes. Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster (1993) argue that depending on the goals to be emphasized, the results on growth will be diverse. The authors define four corporate cultures characterized by a Market, a Adhocracy, a Clan, or a Hierarchical orientation. An organization is called *Market-driven* when it mainly focuses on external objectives like competitiveness and product superiority. Such companies will be found to be even more product-oriented than their competitors. Their main aim is to produce a better product and to sell it as much as possible to gain short-term market shares. At the opposite end of this continuum (as presented by Deshpandé et al, 1993), are located the *Adhocracy-oriented* firms. Characterized by more flexibility in their work processes, they emphasize their internal strengths. According to these companies, the innovativeness and the entrepreneurial values are the most valuable variables to be invested on in order to achieve long-term profits. In *Clan-oriented* organization, the focus is put on the company's individuals: the work force. By encouraging an internal cohesiveness, these organizations bet on their human resources as valuable competitive advantage. Finally, the *Hierarchical-oriented* businesses are governed by formal rules and policies leading to a rigid structure that does not let people take initiatives. Therefore, these companies develop a more risk-averse way of thinking due to bureaucratic barriers (Deshpandé et al., 1993).

Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster (1993) conclude that while market-driven organizations appear to be the best business performers, their hierarchical-oriented counterparts score as the poorest ones. They also suggest that the supplier's client-orientation (as perceived by the buyer) is positively associated to business performance. Therefore, the organizational aspect is as important in the perception of client-orientation as the salesperson's personal inclination to be customer-focused. As predicted by Håkansson and Snehota (1995), the supplier and its salesperson refer to the same overall unit for the buyer.

The current study does not involve any measure of performance. Therefore, Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster (1993) scale will be used in order to assess the parallel of fit between the two organizational cultures (buyer and seller). The fit between the two organizations can appear as a crucial issue in these early steps of relationship creation. Hence, Wong and Sohal (2002) claim that the two parties' perception of mutual goals between the two organizations can enhance the development of trust, which, in turn, will assess the quality of the business association to be built. According to Hofstede (1991), achievement, affiliation, or power permits to predict a higher focus on the organizational structure in the Canadian sample.

Therefore,

**H5b: The organizational impact will be more important for Canadian managers than for their French counterparts.**

### 3) The word-of-mouth process

At the first step of a partner selection, word-of-mouth (WOM) is perhaps the only one indicator the parties can rely on (Zeithaml, 2000). The author reports that many researchers claim positive WOM to have greater effects than advertising in a relationship development.

In industrial markets, the buyer will seek information on the selling firm and its employee prior to the first face-to-face interview. According to Wilson (1995), word-of-mouth diffusion is the primary way for a purchase manager to learn about both the salesperson and the firm competencies. Doney and Cannon (1997) also mention a third-person-past experience as a sure medium to learn about an individual trustworthiness. WOM is especially important to provide technical information with regards to the salesperson performance (Wilson, 1995). The author sees it as a risk reduction strategy when the potential partner is an "untested commodity." A trusted third person who already experienced a satisfying relationship with the same person and who is able to provide arguments to complement the salesperson's attitudes constitutes a valuable source of information.

In their article, Lamb, Spekman and Hunt (2000) study the "relationship" development for an interimistic (or short) exchange. They call attention to the time pressure effects on the two parties' willingness to engage in a relational association. They state that the threats facing the relationship must be recognized immediately in short-term relationships. These conditions can be applied to a supplier selection because relationships beginning conditions are really similar to short-term associations. For example, time pressure play a fundamental role: the buyer must rapidly evaluate the

supplier organization offer and see if it matches its own strategy. In order to do so, the authors argue that supplier organizational performance, size and market share have an effect on the supplier selection. The more the supplier firm shows satisfying past performance, the more it appears to be likely to be trusted (Lamb, Spekman, Hunt, 2000). Here, WOM acts like a substitute of trust. According to Doney and Cannon, (1997), the supplier firm's reputation as well as its size are good indicators of trustworthiness. They found that the larger the firm, the more positive feelings it induces. They explain that large firms with a good reputation are expected not to jeopardize their costly image by adopting an opportunistic behavior.

According to this literature review, the word-of-mouth process is viewed either as a facilitator or a substitute of trust during the information seeking process. As WOM dimension is only expected to count for getting an interview, the cultural dimension that could have an impact is the Collectivism. Both countries score high in the Individualist facet; therefore no cultural influence is expected.

Thus,

**H5c: Regarding the word-of-mouth process, participants from the two countries will present similar and positive scores on the importance of WOM.**

#### 4) Direct impact of Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance variables

Hofstede's (1980, 1991) work on Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance clearly shows the two different categories Canada and France belong to.

Thus, France, with its high score on Power Distance (68) and very high score on Uncertainty Avoidance (86) is expected to favor the development of hierarchical structures where security-seeking individuals are found in top-management positions.

Based on these observations,

**H5d: The French participants will score higher on the hierarchical structure scales.**

**H5e: The French participants will score higher on the security-seeking items.**

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **I. STUDYING THE INDIVIDUAL ACTORS OF THE RELATIONSHIP, THE DYADIC APPROACH**

Gummesson (1987) defines relationships marketing as an "interactive" process. This interaction is said multilateral because it involves a good communication among the business association actors as well as among the companies they represent. These personal contacts are said to be totally integrated in the firms' strategies of network creation and maintenance that define the relationships marketing theory (Gummesson, 1987). Moreover, practical observations of the business-to-business industry show that industrial behaviors (i.e., individuals adopting their organization's approach as personal strategies) are predominant. This implies more standardized responses to suppliers' offers (for the buyer) or to the customers' expectancies (for the salesperson). Therefore, it is easier for a young employee to adopt the overall company philosophy.

Johannisson (1987) claims that the typical unit to be studied in relationships marketing consists in the buyer-seller dyad. Based on this article, the actors of the business association reflect their respective corporate culture while dealing with business objectives. The two relationships (i.e., between the two organizations and between the two dyadic members) are highly linked. The outcomes of the two associations are such interrelated that the literature suggests the individual and the organizations can be confounded in "social networks" in business-to-business settings. Paulin, Ferguson, and Payaud (2000) as well find that the transactional versus the relational orientation of the company is perceived in the transactional or the relational orientation of the employee. As the entire social and organizational structures can hardly be investigated, this research

will focus on the individuals' perceptions of the organizations on one side and of the personal behavior on the other side. This reaches Palmer's (2000) conclusion that the central and strategic unit to be studied in relationships marketing is the buyer/seller dyad. The author acknowledges the critical importance of interpersonal contact in profitable relationship development. Thus, the dyad that encompasses all the communication between the two main actors of the business association remains the ideal unit of research.

## **II. OBSERVATION VERSUS SELF-REPORTING IN NATURAL SETTINGS**

Although observing natural behaviors in a natural setting would have been the most accurate method (especially to assess the effect of the mood on the dependent variable), it may have been difficult or impossible to implement. First, participants would (almost certainly) have refused to let a "stranger" (i.e., outside of business) be present in the meeting. Second, even if the observation would have been finally possible, the research would have been too much time consuming: the choice of a new supplier is considered as a very new purchase process and therefore does not occur so often, even in large companies. Therefore, the present research relied on individuals' perceptions of the impact of the different variables. The focus on this subjective aspect is advocated by Storbacka, Strandvick, and Grönroos (1994) that say studying personal chemistry in a purely objective way is practically unlikely to occur.



### **III. SAMPLE SPECIFICATION**

The population targeted for this study consisted of Canadian and French industrial buyers. More specifically, the targeted group in the chemistry industry was the Cosmetics and Pharmaceutical companies (SIC number of 5122; i.e., cosmetics wholesale and pharmaceutical wholesale).

Personal interviews were conducted. An equal number of buyers from both countries were contacted in order to answer a 7-pages-questionnaire. Forty-two questionnaires from each cultural sample were finally received but one of the French questionnaires could not be used because it contained too many missing values. Therefore, the final total sample is  $n = 83$  respondents,  $n = 42$  for the Canadian sample and  $n = 41$  for the French sample. Canadian respondents were found in the metropolitan Montreal area, that is the most important location for companies in the targeted industry. French interviews were conducted in Paris (where most of the head offices are located) as well as in the Marseille (south-east of France) area, which is also an industrial pole of the Chemical Industry in France.

### **IV. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

#### **1) Questionnaire description**

A structured, self-administered questionnaire consisting of four main sections was used to gather the data for this research project (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). The scales to be used to evaluate the different constructs have been chosen from several previous

studies that had strong Cronbach alphas for these items (Bearden and Netemeyer, 1999). Because there is not a widely developed literature on the current topic in the business field, these scales have then been adapted to fit with the industrial context actual behavior. The English version of the questionnaire was validated using a student pre-test sample. It was translated into French with a back translation to ensure equivalence. The French questionnaire was also pre-tested using a sample of francophone students. Cronbach alphas for both questionnaires were above the .70 required (Whitley, 1996) during the pre-tests. Minor modifications were made to the questionnaire following the pre-tests: it appeared that participants (to the pre-testing as well as to the research itself) might have some trouble understanding some questions in the way the researcher intended them. The way the questions and the situations are comprehended by the participants could lead the researcher to misinterpret the results.

The main parts of the questionnaire assess the buyer's perception of what is a competitive advantage in a business relationship. The actual behavior of the salesperson is also investigated in order to measure if there is a fit between both the ideal vendor, as it is expected by the buyer, and the actual performance of the finally chosen salesperson. The last part of the questionnaire is related to cultural differences, based on Hofstede's work (Hofstede, 1980, 1991).

The first section consists of the buyer's perception of the new supplier (i.e., the organization) on the marketplace. Several questions are asked on the word-of-mouth process, the client orientation of the supplier, and on the fit between the buyer's and the supplier's organizations (Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster, 1993). Most of the questions involve 10-point (1=disagree, 10=agree) scales and the comparison between the two

organizations was calculated based on Deshpandé et al. (1993). The participants were asked to allocate a total of 100 points among the four possibilities concerning the organizational cultures. For the scales that were not 10-points based, an equivalence has been computed using the following formula:  $((x-1)/4) * (x'-1) + 1$ , where “x” refers to the highest score on the actual scale and “x'” refers to the highest score on the transposed scale.

The second section deals with the personal contact the buyer had with the salesperson. Items were introduced to evaluate the performance of the salesperson at the first meeting (i.e., the buyer's first impression). As in Bearden and Netemeyer (1999), this study specifically concentrate on measuring measured this performance in term of expertise, respect of contractual norms, people skills, social norms, and identification process. In this part of the questionnaire, qualitative questions are proposed in which the respondent has either to give totally open-ended answers, or to fill in guided responses. The buyer's perception of the place of Power in the relationship is considered as well by asking a yes-no and an open-ended question.

The main aim of the third section is to determine what are the general expectations of the buyers regarding a business relationship. Questions refer to the decision making process within the buyer's organization, the weight of the respondent in this process, the expectation in a partner personality, as well as some need-for-cognition questions adapted from the final consumer literature to fit in the professional decision making situation.

Finally, the last section determines several cultural characteristics associated with Hofstede's dimensions of Uncertainty Avoidance and Power Distance (Hofstede, 1991). Questions refer to the ideal workplace, as respondents would imagine it. These questions

include cultural characteristics and permit to examine if the dominant cultural traits exist in the Fine Chemistry industry as Hofstede (1980, 1991) observed them.

## 2) Validity

According to Whitley (1996), using multi-item scales (for quantitative questionnaires) and frequent assessment of the dependent variable (for interviews) will improve the content validity and avoid any confounded effect. Asking participants to recall a specific behavior will also avoid maturity and history effects (Whitley, 1996).

## 3) Triangulation of the data sources

Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that linking qualitative and quantitative data enables confirmation of each other results. Specifically here, the quantitative study will help to generalize the specific information collected during the interviews. It will also give an insight on the representativeness of the qualitative research sample.

# V. DATA COLLECTION

## 1) Self-administered and interviewer-administered questionnaires versus other methods

Whitley (1996) proposes several ways to measure the different variables. For instance the author presents group-administered questionnaires as an economical (in both money and time) method. However, because the current research targets industrial buyers, it may not have been feasible to schedule all the participants at the same time (because of work

constraints, finding a common free time in everybody's agenda is certainly impractical). In addition, Whitley (1996) recognizes that in such group-research, participants may skip some questions leading to several unusable questionnaires. Secondly, Whitley (1996) suggests sending questionnaires by mail. However, in industrial markets, this method is known to lead to ultra-low response rates. Also, it would need to allocate more money on postage fees and less for the interview expenses, which was contrary to research priorities. Moreover, there is no way to ensure the validity of the data set: the questionnaire, if not thrown out, might be filled in by the secretary instead of the intended purchasing manager.

Phone interviews cannot be implemented either for much the same reasons as for the mailed questionnaires. The researcher cannot ensure the identity of his/her interlocutor, neither guarantee the participant's degree of involvement in answering the questions. In addition, as the phone is widely considered as a working tool in business contexts, the inquiry can be interrupted too often for the researcher to keep control over the interview. Finally, focus groups are irrelevant in this research given that even if the general situation (i.e., meeting a new salesperson for the first time) is common to all participants, the study emphasizes specific behaviors.

This is why it appeared that the best way to gather usable responses was to conduct personal interviews with the targeted buyers. Then, as the interviewer is going through the questionnaire with the respondent, the usable response rate is expected to be about 100%. This interview process has been advocated by Nevin in 1995. The author suggests that testing relationships concepts requires appropriate face-to-face contacts (Nevin, 1995). Paulin, Ferguson, and Payaud (2000) report that previous studies all agree that

relationship marketing research in business-to-business requires a different methodology than for the final consumer field. Such studies need personal interviews to provide acceptable results (Gummesson, 1987).

## 2) Agenda

In the Montreal area, the firms targeted were selected by searching for their addresses and websites on the Internet. A list of 72 firms was compiled. After some companies were removed either because their laboratories were located outside of Quebec or because they refused to participate in the survey, 21 firms were contacted by phone and 42 buyers were met. Some of the firms allowed the researcher to reach several of their qualified employees (7 of them participated in the study for one of the companies). As expected, 42 usable questionnaires were obtained.

A first data collection took place in July 2001 and, because of a summer interruption due to the French data collection, the rest of the sample was collected in October and November 2001. Data was mostly collected during office hours in the respondents' offices by previously making appointments on the phone.

In France, the firms were selected using a professional agenda where old classmates from a chemistry university were mentioned. Furthermore, snowball-recruiting technique was used (Whitley, 1996) when the participants introduced the researcher to other potential respondents. A list of more than 100 companies was available in this professional agenda, but as the two samples of the study had to be of quite the same size, not all of the potential participants were called. Hence, 42 respondents were met in interviews in this country as well. However, because of one questionnaire was containing

too many missing values that the interviewer was not able to clarify, the final sample size is 41 participants. After the 42 interviews were completed, it was too late for the interviewer to reach a new potential respondent and to make an appointment within the days allocated to the data collection in France.

This data collection took place in September and early October 2001. A week in Paris (in September) was used to complete all the interviews in this area and the rest of the interviews in the Marseille area was done partly in September and partly in October. Again, the interviews occurred during appointments in the buyer's offices except for one that took place in a restaurant during a "business 5 à 7."

In both countries, if the participants allowed it, the interviews were recorded. When company's policy did not permit to record the discussions, the buyer often let the researcher write down informal comments. With the previously described parts of the questionnaires together, these informal comments constitute the qualitative data collection.

A copy of the final results was proposed to the participants. As expected, some respondents found the topic to have a large interest for the industry as a whole and so requested a report of the aggregate results.

The demographics of the sample will be discussed later and a table summarizing the distribution of the sample is proposed in the results section. All the French participants and a large part of the Canadian sample used a French questionnaire. Therefore, the sample will not be divided between the French speaking and the English-speaking candidates (to avoid an asymmetry in the sample size and to avoid confusing the cultural

affiliation as well) but rather between the French versus the Canadian (i.e., Quebecer) buyers.

## **VI. CODING PROCESS**

As mentioned previously, the questionnaire contains two types of data. For the quantitative data, the researcher just numbered the questions following their succession in the questionnaire. The main parts were coded with Roman numbers (i.e., I, II, III etc...). Then, for the second section caps were used (i.e., A, B, C, etc..), followed by Arabic numbers (i.e., 1, 2, 3, etc...). Finally the last sub-sections were coded with lower-case letters (i.e., a, b, c, etc...).

Coding the qualitative data was actually a little more complex. In the guided questions, the answers already belonged to the several constructs existing in the literature review. The percentage of the answer for each construct was then computed to provide the table of aggregated results. For the open-ended questions, the answers were coded in the respondents' own words and tried to be organized to suit the selected concepts. Some of the guided-questions provided the researcher with spontaneous answers as well. In some sections further open comments were welcomed which involved the same coding as the answers to the completely open-ended questions.

Some of the information collected was contained in audio-tapes. Key words were retained from the informal talks and these were classified in the pre-identified constructs, as provided by the literature.

The section dealing with the Power Asymmetry attribute involved primarily a Yes-No question. However, some of the participants chose to nuance their answer, and provided a



"not necessarily" response. These respondents were grouped with the "Yes" sample because they completed the following section concerning the fields where the buyer could dominate the relationship.

## **VII. DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS**

Following the coding, responses were directly entered into a data file to be analyzed with the SPSS program.

The questionnaire used reversed scales for several questions. Before entering the data in the statistical software program, these scales were reversed to avoid problems during the data analysis (like the reliability test as an example).

Factor analyses were run, firstly to group the several items under harmonized factors and secondly to ensure the homogeneity of the literature-based constructs. The factor analyses were performed using principal component extraction and oblimin rotation.

When the items defining the scale had been widely used in other studies, the same items or most of them, were retained for the particular scales. *Word-of-mouth*, *expertise*, *need-for-cognition*, and *decision makers* constructs were formulated based on scales in the existent literature and factor analyses were run on these items in order to confirm the existence of homogeneous factors. The items describing *word-of-mouth*, *need-for-cognition*, and *decision-makers* were clearly found to belong each to a single factor.

Following are described the several constructs the current research will focus on.

**A. The dependent variable: importance of the “customer-first” philosophy**

The main objective of this research was to identify the personal and situational characteristics influencing the buyer's decision to do business with a supplier. Previous studies have already shown that to be perceived as a longer term oriented business partner, suppliers and their salespersons should share the philosophy that “our customer's interest will always come first” (Gummesson, 1999, Grönroos, 1992, Seth, Sisodia, and, Sharma 2000). Therefore, since we only want to focus on the relational aspect of the business link, the score the supplier will get on this variable (i.e., the supplier's emphasis on the “customer-first” philosophy)\* will determine the level of trust the customer gives to this specific supplier regardless to its performance on the product aspect. The choice of this dependent variable is consistent with recent research (Wong and Sohal, 2002).

\* This dependent variable is defined by the question Ib1f of the questionnaire: “you chose this organization because it seems to believe this business exists primarily to serve customers” (appendices 1 and 2).

**B. Independent variables**

The several scales used for the entire questionnaire were labeled from 1 to 10. The lower numbers would indicate a low level of approbation or importance of the described item while a higher number a higher agreement of the buyer to the statement (or a higher importance of the item in the buyer's perception). Here after are described

the different independent variables: word-of-mouth, client orientation, expertise, people skills, contractual norms, identification and social norms, need-for-cognition, decision-makers, and finally personal characteristics.

1) Word-of-mouth

According to previous definition (Wilson, 1995), the word-of-mouth process describes the diffusion of information concerning the salesperson or the organization prior to the first meeting. It allows to measure the reputation of the supplier.

2) Client orientation

Four dimensions define the level of client orientation of the supplier (including the organization and its salesperson): *follow-up*, *one-customer-focused*, *market knowledge*, and *TCA aspect*. A high score on the fourth sub-factor (i.e., TCA: Transactional Cost Analysis based on Williamson's definition, 1975) implies that the supplier is not relational-oriented.

3) Expertise

Expertise has been widely studied in past research (Bearden and Netemeyer, 1999). Several aspects of expertise can be considered. Most of the questions included in the current questionnaire (see table 3, page 62) are dealing with the sales techniques and the background influence on the actual performance. Nevertheless, it is the global effect of expertise that is of interest in this study. Therefore, the only focus will be on the weight of expertise (as one global variable) on the dependent variable.

#### 4) People skills

“People skills” refers to the ability of the salesperson to interact friendly with other persons, for instance the buyer. Leadership skills, relational-oriented personality, as well as the ability to stand on issues are the main characteristics that are considered in the questionnaire.

#### 5) Contractual norms

Based on Macneil (1980), contractual norms relate to the buyers’ perception of the salespersons’ long-term vision orientation: how they manage conflict situations as well as if the supplier and the customer organizations seem to share mutual goals. The first dimension deals with the way the salesperson is perceived with respect to these tacit contractual norms. The second sub-factor (i.e., applying pressure) relates to salespersons’ irrespective behavior, for example if the sales representative tries to apply pressure to get an order.

#### 6) Identification and social norms

Identification and social norms refer to Doney and Cannon's (1997) and Ford (1980). Identification process occurs when the buyer notices similarities between himself/herself and the salesperson. The questionnaire treated the topic by asking if the buyer perceived the salesperson’s image to reflect his/her image. Social life dimension describes the opportunities for the partners to discuss other interests than business during the working meeting. Finally, social norms sub-factor represents the interest for the two parties to

meet outside the workplace and to do social activities where business is not the main concern (i.e., social or sporting events, family involved celebrations, etc...).

#### 7) Need-for-cognition

Based on previous research (Bearden and Netemeyer, 1999), the need-for-cognition scales determine the amount of information individuals search for before making a decision. This construct will be used to investigate cultural differences between the two sets of respondents.

#### 8) Number of decision makers

The number of decision makers will also show differences between the two countries on how organizations manage the decision-making process, leading to a smaller or larger opportunity to develop relational bounds within the business association.

#### 9) Personal characteristics

Including four dimensions (*unreceptive behavior*, *self-confidence*, *security seeking*, and respect of *hierarchical structure*), “personal characteristics” groups the main differences that could be found between French and Canadian participants according to Hofstede’s definition of the two cultures (1991). Hofstede (1980, 1991) describes the cultures with four major characteristics: Individualism/Collectivism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity/Femininity. France and Canada only differ on two of these cultural characteristics: Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance.

Therefore, questions tapping these two characteristics were subjected to a factor analysis. After item purification, a factor structure comprising four sub-factors and fourteen items was obtained.

A respondent who exhibits an *unreceptive behavior* tends to avoid all social and emotional involvement in the business relationship. A *self-confident* buyer will be willing to argue to defend his/her opinions. Displaying a *security-seeking* personality trait will imply that the most important attribute of a job is quietude: these persons expect to feel comfortable at work and not to have to deal with too many risks. Finally, for the respondents who need a strong *hierarchical structure* in their work environment, the respect of rules and internal laws is of major importance.

## VIII. CORRELATIONS

All the constructs used in the current research (except for the *personal characteristics*) attempted to define the dependent variable (i.e., salesperson's relational orientation). Thus, it is not surprising that strong correlations are found among the several variables. The table of correlations (Appendix 3) displays the values of these coefficients. The important correlations among the independent variables explain the large general model as provided in Regression (1). This phenomenon of autocorrelation of the variables also justifies the exclusion of several items (i.e., *follow-up*, *people skills*, and *identification*) from the general model regression as it will be pictured in the following section.

## **IX. ETHICAL CONCERNS**

### **1) Deception**

This study did not involve any type of deception.

### **2) Consent form**

A cover letter, explaining that the study was voluntary and that the participants were free to discontinue at any time, was presented to each subject. Participants were promised confidentiality. They were informed what is expected in terms of effort and time.

### **3) Assessment of risks to subjects physical well being, psychological welfare or reputation**

The only one risk involved in this study dealt with the business reputation of the participants. Thus, the interviewer told participants that the origin of the data would not to be reported on the transcripts to be analyzed.

### **4) Post-Research explanation or debriefing**

A quick debriefing took place after each interview and questionnaire administration. A feedback report will be sent via regular mail if the participant so requested. The report will be in the form of a summary of statistical results and conclusions.

## **IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**



## **I. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

A sample of  $n = 83$  respondents, including  $n = 41$  French and  $n = 42$  Canadians, was contacted to meet the researcher in a personal interview in order to answer a 7-page questionnaire.

### ***A. Profile of the typical respondent***

The typical Canadian respondent is predominantly male, between 25 and 35 years old, and owns a bachelor degree. He has been working for his company for 3 to 6 years and plans to stay at the most 5 years in his current job.

His French counterpart is also predominantly male, between 25 and 35 years old, and owns a master degree. He has been working for his company for 3 to 6 years as well but plans to keep the same job until he retires.

The table presented in Appendix 4 displays the demographic characteristics of the sample, whole, as well as for French and Canadian respondents separately. The experience of the respondents (i.e., number of years within their company) allows to define them as closely involved in their firms outputs (i.e., profitability and growth). Thus, they will not be willing to adopt an opportunist behavior that would penalize their own organization. Following are presented the several characteristics investigated in the demographics section of the questionnaire.

## ***B. Detailed demographic characteristics***

### **1) Gender:**

In such industrial context, it would have been expected that a greater majority of male respondents. Surprisingly, more than 40% of participants were women for both countries. However, the proportion of men in the sample is large enough to allow a generalization of the results to the entire targeted population of industrial buyers in the Fine Chemistry industry.

### **2) Age:**

In terms of the age of the sample of buyers, for both countries, the typical respondent is relatively young (less than 45 years old for the greatest part). This characteristic of the sample is quite interesting given that being an industrial buyer involves belonging to the top management of the company and therefore common sense would expect buyers to be relatively older (especially in the French sample, Hofstede, 1991).

### **3) Years in the firm:**

Canada and France show different results. According to the principles of cultural differences that have been discussed in the literature review, in France, a buyer position is generally not offered to persons that are new in the company (less than 3 years for example), whereas Canadian firms appear to be less respectful of hierarchy seeking given

that relatively new employees have access to top management positions. This first impression of the Canadian society (and its lack of hierarchical structure) is not clearly confirmed by the Canadian answers to the questionnaire as explained in the results and discussion sections.

#### 4) Future expected in the company:

As expected, Canadian respondents are more jobs volatile than are their French counterparts (Hofstede, 1980; 1991). Whereas 59% of French respondents plan to stay in the same company for more than 5 years, 50% of Canadian participants only intend to stay 5 years at the maximum.

#### 5) Education:

For both countries, the typical buyer is fairly educated (university level for 80.5% of them). It appears that Canadian buyers are more likely to own a Bachelor degree (41%) whereas 55% of their French counterparts possess a master degree. It is to be noted that some of the participants refused to give information on their educational level.

#### 6) Nationality:

In both countries, all respondents had their respective nationality identity. Yet, the ethnic affiliation was only asked in order to be able to discuss potential differences within the same group in the way business relationships are managed (Hofstede, 1980). The major ethnic groups present in the Montreal area (excluding Greek people) were represented in the sample. However, the Canadian sample was homogeneous enough to

avoid a discussion on the influence of the ethnic affiliation on the results. French people were not found to present any ethnic affiliation.

One of the key issues of the current study was to determine if a potential similarity between the buyer and the salesperson was a business advantage in the new relationship context. An analysis of the salesperson demographic characteristics, as the buyer has perceived them can provide a first insight of the existence of similar traits. Thus, the buyer was asked to complete a section dealing with the salesperson's demographics. The salesperson demographic characteristics as they have been perceived by the buyer is presented in Appendix 4).

***C. The buyers' perception of the new salesperson based on the first interview.***

Regarding the gender of the salespersons, the proportion of men is highly dominant. This can be explained by the essence of the job itself, which involves being on the road a large part of the time and dealing with non-regular working hours.

The targeted salespersons were basically of the same age (less than 45 years of age for 77.5%) as the buyers they dealt with. This result is less surprising given that most of the companies expect their business people to start with a sales representative job. Therefore, the salespersons are usually relatively young employees. This is also highlighted by the work experience in question: for most of them, the salespersons only have a few years of experience with their company.

However, the origin of the salesperson is less homogenous. Some of them were from different countries (mostly American or Asian) indicating that several of the interviewed firms are doing international business.

## II. DATA REDUCTION, FACTOR ANALYSIS, AND RELIABILITY

Some of the items (*word-of-mouth*, *expertise*, *need-for-cognition*, and *decision-makers*) used in the current study were taken from previous studies. Thus, regarding these items, the scales of the current questionnaire have been formulated based on the existing literature. Nevertheless, factor analyses were also run to confirm the existence of homogeneous factors. It is to be noted that items describing *expertise* were found to belong to several dimensions. This can be explained the in-depth analysis of *expertise* in the literature. However, in the current study, only a global effect of the *expertise* is to be considered. Thus, the several items have been regrouped into a single construct.

Regarding the remaining variables, the literature review did not provide homogeneous constructs to be applied to research in the business field. Hence, factor analyses were run to reduce the number of items in the questionnaire to a smaller more manageable set of factors. These factor analyses suggested the existence of five constructs (*client-orientation*, *people skills*, *contractual norms*, *social norms-identification*, and *personal characteristics*), some of them grouping several dimensions (Appendix 5).

### **Cronbach alpha**

It is widely accepted that the Cronbach alpha should be of value equal or higher than 0.70 (Whitley, 1996). However, according to Nunnally (1978), for exploratory studies, such as the current research, the value of a Cronbach alpha is allowed to be 0.50. The computed alphas for all the proposed factors show that their reliability is quite high

for both the general and the separate countries models. Moreover, most of the constructs (*word-of-mouth, client orientation, social norms-identification, etc...*) have very good reliability coefficient for the total sample (above .80). Thus, for all factors except the *TCA approach*, the coefficient of reliability reveals that respondents from the total sample evaluated and answered the questions in a similar manner.

Regarding the reliability coefficient for each country, if the *personal characteristics* variables are excluded, the only one factor for which the value of the coefficient is under .50 ( $\alpha = .45$ ) is level of *production orientation* (TCA approach, Williamson, 1975) for the Canadian sample. This apparently low reliability is not actually so damageable since, as we will discuss further, the difference on the two countries is not statistically significant and the general reliability for this factor is acceptable ( $\alpha = .56$ ).

Regarding the *personal characteristics*, there is a major difference between the reliability coefficients for the French and the Canadian respondents for all the items. While for the global sample, the coefficients are acceptable, when divided for each country, the factors seem to lose their internal consistency. This may suggest that the respondents did not understand the several questions as a homogeneous item. For instance, Canadian respondents appeared not to have rated the item of the *unreceptive* variable as belonging to the same dimension. This is reciprocally what the French participants assumed for the *self-confidence* item. Therefore these dimensions were not included in the regression stepwise.

Enclosed all reliability coefficients for the different constructs for the total sample and broken down by country (Table1).

*Table 1: reliability coefficients for the different constructs*

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Total sample</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Canada</i>
<u>Word-of-mouth</u> (5 items)	.94	.92	.96
<u>Social norms-Identification</u>			
– Social life (4 items)	.89	.93	.63
– Identification (2 items)	.78	.80	.74
– Social norms (3 items)	.75	.80	.75
<u>Client orientation</u>			
– Follow-up (5 items)	.90	.94	.83
– One-customer-focused (4 items)	.85	.87	.83
– Market knowledge (4 items)	.82	.85	.82
– Product orientation (TCA) (2 items)	.56	.64	.45
<u>People skills</u> (5 items)	.76	.78	.75
<u>Contractual norms</u>			
– Respect of contractual norms (3 items)	.74	.73	.76
– Applying pressure (2 items)	.62	.72	.51
<u>Decision-makers</u> (3 items)	.74	.62	.80
<u>Expertise</u> (10 items)	.61	.61	.52
<u>Need-for-cognition</u> (4 items)	.54	.47	.57
<u>Personal characteristics</u>			
– Unreceptive (4 items)	.82	.88	.32
– Self-confident (2 items)	.58	.41	.60
– Security seeking (5 items)	.68	.34	.79
– Hierarchical structure (2 items)	.54	.37	.18

*For further information with regards to the items included in the constructs, please see Appendix 5.*

For the remaining variables, factor analyses were run to reduce the number of items to a smaller more manageable set of factors. Appendix 5 displays the factors obtained, after item purification, using principal component extraction and oblimin rotation, as well as their respective Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

### III. CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON THE BUYERS' PERCEPTION OF THE DIFFERENT CONSTRUCTS

The following table presents the results of significant the t-test performed ( $p < .05$ ) to bring evidence of differences in the way French and Canadian buyers manage their business relationships.

It appears that for *WOM*, *TCA approach*, *People skills*, *Applying pressure*, and *Unreceptive behavior* variables, there is no significant difference between the respondents of the two countries (Table 2). The buyers from France and Canada seem to impart the same importance to these characteristics in beginning a new relationship. Therefore, according to **H5c** (regarding the word-of-mouth process, participants from the two countries will present similar but positive scores), **H1** (the more the salesperson is perceived to respect the client-orientation principles, the better the buyer's first impression), and **H2** (the earlier the business process, the more the buyer will be likely to focus on the TCA perspective) a salesperson possessing a favorable reputation (diffused by *word-of-mouth*), displaying a satisfying level of *people skills*, and being sufficiently aware of the product characteristics (*TCA approach*) will convince buyers from both countries. At the same time, this salesperson should not present a too *unreceptive behavior* and should avoid to *apply pressure* on the buyer to buy during the business meeting.



*Table 2: Comparison between French and Canadian buyers' perceptions of the strength of the different factors using paired t-tests*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Respondents means</b>	
	<b>France</b>	<b>Canada</b>
<b>Word-of-mouth</b> (n = 82) France (n = 40), Canada (n = 42)	7.82 (1.52)	7.67 (2.01)
<b>Client orientation</b>		
<u>Follow-up</u> (n = 68) France (n = 40), Canada (n = 28)	7.70 (1.87)	7.09 (1.27) *
<u>One-customer-focused</u> (n = 68) France (n = 40), Canada (n = 28)	6.34 (1.92)	<b>7.23</b> (1.50) **
<u>Market knowledge</u> (n = 61) France (n = 39), Canada (n = 22)	<b>7.94</b> (.97)	7.24 (1.61) **
<u>Product orientation</u> (n = 76) France (n = 38), Canada (n = 38)	<b>8.03</b> (1.32)	7.74 (1.10)
<b>People skills</b> (n = 78) France (n = 40), Canada (n = 38)	7.21 (1.23)	7.56 (1.21)
<b>Contractual norms</b>		
<u>Respect of contractual norms</u> (n = 76) France (n = 40), Canada (n = 36)	<b>8.90</b> (1.00)	7.78 (1.90) ***
<u>Applying pressure</u> (n = 81) France (n = 41), Canada n = 40	7.84 (2.05)	7.78 (1.81)
<b>Social norms-identification</b>		
<u>Social life</u> (n = 79) France (n = 41), Canada (n = 38)	<b>6.36</b> (2.47)	2.87 (1.46) ***
<u>Identification</u> (n = 79) France (n = 41), Canada (n = 38)	3.01(1.91)	<b>4.18</b> (1.97) **
<u>Social norms</u> (n = 79) France (n = 41), Canada (n = 38)	<b>7.88</b> (1.27)	4.74 (1.82) **
<b>Need-for-cognition</b> (n = 81) France (n = 41), Canada (n = 40)	7.13 (1.18)	7.64 (1.41) **
<b>Decision makers</b> (n = 76) France (n = 40), Canada (n = 36)	7.78 (1.31)	6.91 (1.81) **
<b>Expertise</b> (n = 64) France (n = 34), Canada (n = 30)	<b>7.97</b> (.74)	6.99 (.91) ***
<b>Personal characteristics</b>		
<u>Unreceptive</u> (n = 81) France (n = 41), Canada (n = 40)	6.01 (2.42)	6.14 (2.92)
<u>Self-confident</u> (n = 78) France (n = 40), Canada (n = 38)	<b>5.35</b> (1.96)	3.25 (1.69) ***
<u>Security-seeking</u> (n = 83) France (n = 41), Canada (n = 42)	<b>8.23</b> (.83)	7.83 (1.29) *
<u>Hierarchical structure</u> (n = 81) France (n = 41), Canada n = 40	3.95 (1.65)	<b>6.57</b> (1.95) ***

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Note: Because of the one-way nature of the hypotheses, the p-value has been divided by 2.

As indicated in Table 2, the t-tests allow to differentiate the most important items in each culture with regards to the relationship beginning. For example, there is a significant difference between the two countries with regards to *client orientation* and, in particular to the notion of *follow-up*, *one-customer-focused*, and *market knowledge*. Although the difference for the *follow-up* dimension is only marginally significant, its sign is still confirming the assumption that the relationship aspect is not perceived in the same way for both cultures. Basically, the t-tests show that while for French buyers a good *market knowledge* can make a more favorable difference, the *one-customer-focused* principle seems to be more important to Canadian buyers.

Another interesting result relates to the different impact of Macneil's contractual norms in the two countries (Macneil, 1980). Surprisingly, if in both countries respondents agree that *applying pressure* in order to get a contract does not constitute a good strategy, *respecting the contractual norms* does not necessarily appear as a competitive advantage for both cultures. In particular, Canadian respondents do not give the impression that showing an interest for managing long-term relationships is as important and required quality during the first contact as it is for French buyers. On one end, in the Canadian sample, the two characteristics (i.e., applying pressure and respecting contractual norms) are more linked. On the other end, the French participants seem to understand the two attributes are belonging to a same homogeneous construct. *Expertise* also seems to be of more importance to obtain the customer account in France than it is in Canada.

Regarding all the socialization process items, the most significant variation is identified in how French buyers perceive the importance of *social life* in comparison to their counterparts in Canada (6.36 and 2.87 respectively), partially supporting **H3**. Thus,

**the more the salesperson seems to share personal tastes with the buyer, the better the buyer's first impression (H3)** seems to only be supported for the French sample. This strongly indicates that while French buyers are looking for a socialization of the relationships, Canadian buyers prefer to focus on business objectives only. Generally, Canadian participants reported that they were far more interested in the business aspect of the relation (*social norms*) than any other interaction whereas for French the socialization of the relation is almost as important as the business objectives themselves. On the other hand, the *identification process* reveals that Canadian respondents are more willing to work with salespersons who present psychological similarities than are their French counterparts, even if globally the means are not that high (3.58 for the general model). This result is in total opposition to the hypothesis **H5a** stating: **the different aspects of the personality will be of higher importance in France than in Canada.**

The last variables (*unreceptive behavior, self-confidence, security-seeking, and hierarchical structure*) illustrate the cultural particularities as defined by Hofstede (1980, 1991). Surprisingly Canadian participants scored higher on the items defining *hierarchical respect* of the organization to be of major importance in the business partner attitude than did their French counterparts. This would mean that Canadian respondents are highly favorable to the respect of the hierarchy in the decision making process, rejecting the hypothesis that **the French participants will score higher on the hierarchical structure scales (H5d)**. To summarize the previous results, Table 3 presents the buyers' priorities with regards to the country of origin.

*Table 3: buyer's priorities with regards to the country of origin: differences of perception Canada and France*

<i>Canada scores higher on:</i>	<i>France scores higher on:</i>
One-customer-focused	Market knowledge
Identification	Expertise
Need-for-cognition	Respect of contractual norms
Hierarchical structure	Social life
	Social norms
	Decision makers
	Self-confident
	Security seeking

#### IV. IMPACT OF EACH CONSTRUCT ON THE BUYER'S PERCEPTION OF THE SALESPERSON'S CLIENT ORIENTATION

##### A. Correlations

Several significant correlations have been found (to consult the correlation matrix, see Appendix 3). However, following are presented the correlations that had a major impact in running the regression (Table 4).

*Table 4: correlation between the dependent (i.e., "customer first" philosophy) and some of the independent variables.*

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Correlation with the dependent</i>
One-customer-focused	.710***
People skills	.477***
Applying pressure	.448***
Follow-up	.346**
TCA aspect	-.307**
WOM	.305**
Market knowledge	.281**
Need-for-cognition	-.275**
Contractual norms	-.244*

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

These high correlations with the described independent variables were expected given that almost all these items are defining the client orientation concept that is the center of relationship marketing theory (Grönroos, 1992). The signs of the correlations are pertinently related to with the definition of the factors. As an example, the *TCA aspect* ( $r = -.307$ ) has a negative correlation with the dependent variable whereas such variables as *follow-up* ( $r = .354$ ) or *one-customer-focused* ( $r = .710$ ) have a positive correlation.

Some factors are relatively highly correlated among each other (e.g., *wom* and *people skills*:  $r = .519$ , or *wom* and *expertise*:  $r = .539$ ). *WOM* correlates strongly with two factors that are: *people skills* and *expertise*. This could mean that people skills and expertise are the two most important characteristics that are diffused when a customer uses WOM process. Also interesting, *social life* shows the strongest correlations with *follow-up*, *respect of contractual norms* and *expertise* meaning that social bonds are more frequently developed when the buyer is satisfied with the salesperson's score on these previously mentioned variables (all the correlations are presented in Appendix 3). Sub-factors belonging to the same bigger factor are, as expected, showing obvious correlations (as they are underlying dimensions of a construct). This is the case for *follow-up*, *one-customer-focused*, *market knowledge*, and *TCA aspect* together, *respect of contractual norms* and *applying pressure* together ( $r = .295$ ) as well as *social life* and *social norms* ( $r = .567$ ) together (refer to Table 5 for the client orientation construct and appendix 3 for the other constructs).

*Table 5: correlations among the independent variables defining the client orientation*

	<i>Follow-up</i>	<i>One-customer-focused</i>	<i>Market knowledge</i>	<i>TCA aspect</i>
Follow-up	1.000	.530**	.497**	.164
One-customer focused		1.000	.683**	-.061
Market knowledge			1.000	.036

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

**B. Global impact and weight of the studied constructs on the salesperson's perceived client orientation**

All the variables were first placed in the model and regression 1 displays this overall model.

REGRESSION 1:

$$\text{REL PERCEPTION} = 3.455 - 1.69 \text{ DUMMY} + .713 \text{ PRESS} + .708 \text{ WOM} + .500 \text{ CONTR\_NORM} - .370 \text{ EXP} + .263 \text{ MKT\_KN} + .251 \text{ SOC\_LIFE} - .249 \text{ PEOP\_SK} - .185 \text{ TCA} - .166 \text{ NFC} + .158 \text{ FOLL\_UP} - .104 \text{ DEC\_MAK} + 8.73 \cdot 10^{-2} \text{ I-CUST-FOC} + 2.351 \cdot 10^{-2} \text{ SOC\_NORM} - 3.49 \cdot 10^{-3} \text{ IDENT}$$

The R square of the global model (i.e.,  $R^2 = .971$ ) meaning that 97% of the total variation in the dependent variable is explained by the previously mentioned factors. This value is relatively high indicating that high correlations are to be found between the dependent variable and some of the independent. It could be that H1 variables and H3 variables (i.e., *one-customer-focused*, *market knowledge*, *follow-up*, *identification*, *social norms*, *contractual norms*, and *applying pressure*) reflect the dependent variable itself, explaining the high value of the  $R^2$ . Therefore, the following regression will be run without these variables.

#### REGRESSION 2:

$$\text{REL PERCEPTION} = 6.374 + .872 \text{ WOM} - .536 \text{ NFC} - .513 \text{ TCA} + .502 \text{ PEOP\_SK} - .258 \text{ EXP} - .167 \text{ DUMMY} - 4.61 \cdot 10^{-2} \text{ DEC\_MAK}$$

Without the previously identified variables, the value of the R square for Regression 2 is:  $R^2 = .511$ , meaning that 51% of the total variation in the dependent variable is explained by these factors.

Secondly, a multiple linear regression using a stepwise method was run. This model's main goal was to identify what factors are the most important in the industry as a general target. Following is presented the model encompassing the overall industry.

#### REGRESSION 3:

$$\text{REL PERCEPTION} = 3.627 + .800 \text{ PRESS} - .480 \text{ CONTR\_NORM} + .468 \text{ WOM} + .435 \text{ SOC\_LIFE} - .403 \text{ DUMMY} - .287 \text{ EXP} + .204 \text{ I-CUST-FOC} + .181 \text{ MKT\_KN} - .158 \text{ DEC\_MAK} - .143 \text{ TCA} - .122 \text{ NFC} + .088 \text{ SOC\_NORM}$$

According to the literature review presented above, the different constructs investigated in the current study are highly correlated among themselves. Thus, it is not surprising to find strong correlations among the variables. A dummy variable separating the French and Canadian answers was introduced in order to see if culture had an impact in the dependent variable. The influence of the French culture was determined using the value of the dummy = 1, while for the impact of the Canadian culture the value of the dummy was 0. The coefficient of the dummy variable was strong enough (i.e.,

coefficient= .403, see Regression1) to lead to the run of two separate regressions, one for each of the countries in Regression 4 and Regression 5 respectively.

The adjusted R-square for this general model is .971 again meaning that more than 90% of the total variation in the dependent variable is explained by the previously mentioned factors. The explanation for this high R-square is also found in the high correlations of the variables.

Regression 3 presents the *reject of applying pressure* as the most weighted variable with regards to the buyer's perception of the supplier's client orientation. The  $\beta$  coefficient of this variable is so high that applying pressure to buy appears to not only be in contradiction with an image of customer-oriented supplier, but also to implicate a extremely negative reaction from the buyer.

Regression 3 also suggests that while the *TCA* beta coefficient clearly supports the assumption that being transactional-oriented is in opposition to the relational aspect of the dependent variable (Gassenheimer, Houston, and Davis, 1998), surprisingly, some other signs in the beta coefficients primarily appear to weigh down common sense assumptions. As an example, *expertise* presents a negative correlation with the dependent variable. This is also the case for *need-for-cognition* variable. However, these two variables seem to refer to highly rational buyer's behavior: every time a decision making situation occurs the participants scoring high on the *expertise* and *need-for-cognition* items seem to mentally execute an in-depth rational analysis of the different possibilities. This decision-making process based on a careful evaluation of the different offers with the technical characteristics as main selling argument is therefore in opposition to the



more emotional aspect involved in the relational-oriented management of a new relationship.

Regression 3, as the data analysis software provided it, only excluded three variables (i.e., *follow-up*, *people skills*, and *identification*). The strong correlation of follow-up with the other dimensions belonging to the client orientation construct explains its absence from the set of variables in the regression model. The similarity of *people skills* and *word-of-mouth* (strong correlation, see appendix 3) also justifies the exclusion of the *people skills* variable from Regression 3. The ultra-low score of identification process certainly provides insight on the eviction of this variable to the final set of important items (see Table 2). This indicates that buyers generally do not perceive a similar salesperson to be more client-oriented than his/her competitors.

Regression 4 and Regression 5 provide the impact of the different constructs on the dependent variable with regards to the French and the Canadian samples respectively. Major differences are found between the two sets of respondents. Whereas Regression 4 suggests that French buyers emphasize more on the *one-customer-focused*, *wom*, *social life*, and *social norms* variables, Regression 5 indicates that the Canadian buyers are more aware of the *follow-up*, *need-for-cognition*, *decision-makers*, and *applying pressure* items. The reason for which the *one-customer-focused* variable does not appear in Regression 5 may be found in the high correlation of *one-customer-focused* with *follow-up* (see Correlation table in Appendix 3). For Regression 4, the R square is .91 meaning that 91 % in the total variance for the French sample is explained by the model. For Regression 5, the R square is .460 meaning that 46% in the total variance for the Canadian sample is explained by the model.

REGRESSION 4:

$$\text{REL PERCEPTION} = -7.683 + 1.091 \text{ WOM} + 1.016 \text{ I-CUST-FOC} + .407 \text{ SOC\_NORM} - .357 \text{ SOC\_LIFE}$$

REGRESSION 5:

$$\text{REL PERCEPTION} = 1.386 + .840 \text{ FOLL} + .364 \text{ NFC} + .230 \text{ DECI\_MAK} + .154 \text{ PRESS}$$

*Table 6: definition of the abbreviations in the regression equation*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Definition</i>
REL PERCEPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Buyer's perception of the salesperson's relational orientation.</li> <li>- Dependent variable.</li> <li>- Indicates the extent to which the buyers perceive the supplier and its salesperson to be relational oriented.</li> </ul>
PRESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Applying pressure.</li> </ul>
CONTR_NORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sub-factor of the Contractual Norms construct.</li> <li>- Salesperson respect of the contractual norms.</li> </ul>
WOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sub-factor of the Contractual Norm construct.</li> </ul>
SOC_LIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Word-of-mouth diffusion of the information process.</li> <li>- Social activities the members of the dyad are involved together.</li> </ul>
DUMMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sub-factor of Social norms – Identification construct.</li> <li>- Variable separating French and Canadian data sets.</li> <li>- Canada answers are coded with 0.</li> <li>- France answers are coded with 1.</li> </ul>
EXP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expertise.</li> </ul>
I-CUST-FOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One-customer-focused.</li> <li>- Sub-factor of the Client orientation construct.</li> </ul>
MKT_KN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Level of market knowledge the salesperson displays.</li> </ul>
DECI_MAK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sub-factor of the Client orientation construct</li> <li>- Impact of the number of decision makers involved in the business relationship.</li> </ul>
TCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transactional cost analysis based on Williamson study (1975).</li> <li>- Sub-factor of the Client orientation construct.</li> </ul>
NFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need-for-cognition All variables dealing with social norms.</li> <li>- Sub-factor of Social norms – Identification construct.</li> </ul>
SOC_NORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All variable dealing with social norms.</li> <li>- Sub-factor of Social norms – Identification construct.</li> </ul>
FOLL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow-up.</li> <li>- Sub-factor of the Client orientation construct.</li> </ul>
IDENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification process.</li> <li>- Sub-factor of Social norms – Identification construct</li> </ul>
PEOP_SK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People skills.</li> </ul>

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

Note: Because of the one-way nature of the hypotheses, the p-value has been divided by 2.

## **V. THE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT: CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON BETWEEN THE BUYER'S AND THE SALESPERSON'S CORPORATE CULTURES**

The corporate culture describes the goals orientation of a company. As it has been presented in the literature review, four major trends are found among the firms worldwide: *Market* (focusing on product-oriented objectives), *Adhocracy* (with a more entrepreneurship global vision), *Clan* (that emphasizes the internal cohesiveness within the company), and *Hierarchy* (when the firm's objectives are driven by formal rules and policies) (Deshpande, Farley, and Webster, 1993).

The current study's results indicate that the Fine Chemistry industry is fairly homogeneous with regards to the companies' corporate cultures. Between the buyers' firms from the two countries, almost not significant cultural difference has been found in the way companies manage their resources and select their business objectives. Only the t-test on the *Adhocracy* tendency is marginally significant, indicating that French companies seem to underline flexibility and entrepreneurship as a competitive advantage a little more than do their Canadian counterparts (Table 7). With regards to the buyer's perception of the salesperson's corporate culture, the most significant difference is provided by the *Adhocracy* trait (Table 8). Thus, French buyers also perceive the supplier organization as to focus on entrepreneurship values.

There is a potential fit between the buying and the selling organizations as the buyer sees them. T-tests were performed in order to indicate organizational cultural similarities linking the two companies (Table 9). The results suggest that, for most of the items, the buyer perceived the selling organization to display a roughly identical culture as the buyer's own company. Most of the t-tests are not statistically significant, leading to the

conclusion that **the two firms present parallel structures and possess relatively the same ways of doing business and seem to focus on quite the same priorities. The only marginally significant differences are given by the French buyers that perceive their suppliers to be more hierarchical oriented and more entrepreneurs than themselves.**

*Table 7: Comparison of the buyer's corporate culture types between France and Canada samples.*

<i>Culture types</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>N</i>
<b>Market</b>	26.1	29.2	23.5	40
<b>Adhocracy</b>	29.43	32.5	26.5 *	40
<b>Clan</b>	20.3	17.3	23.3	40
<b>Hierarchy</b>	22.7	20.7	24.6	40

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

*Table 8: Comparison of the salesperson's corporate culture types between France and Canada samples as perceived by the buyer.*

<i>Culture types</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>N</i>
<b>Market</b>	27.1	28.1	26.2	31
<b>Adhocracy</b>	30.6	35.8	26.4 **	31
<b>Clan</b>	19.0	15.5	22.1 *	31
<b>Hierarchy</b>	23.7	21.6	26.1	31

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

*Table 9: Fit between the organizational culture types of the buyer's and the salesperson's companies corporate cultures*

<i>The two organizations' corporate cultures focus on values of:</i>		<i>France</i>		<i>Canada</i>	
		T-value	df	T-value	df
-	Market	-.101	33	-1.912	39
-	Adhocracy	-2.216 *	33	.017	39
-	Clan	.747	33	-.470	39
-	Hierarchy	-3.408 *	33	-.816	39

\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

## **VI. IMPORTANCE OF THE LITERATURE-BASED RELATIONAL ORIENTED**

### **CONSTRUCTS AND PLACE OF POWER IN THE RELATIONSHIP BEGINNING.**

Open-ended questions in the questionnaire and informal talks during the interviews with the respondents were used to collect interesting qualitative data. The first questions dealt with the buyer's perception of the different constructs as they have been developed in the literature. The following section concerned the use of asymmetric power in a new business relationship as perceived by the buyers.

#### **A. *Relative importance of the relational aspect in the new business relationship.***

The first question was an entirely open question. The respondent was invited to freely state the characteristics that first came to his/her mind. Then, the answers were grouped into predefined constructs (Table 10).

It is interesting to note that for most of the respondents from both countries, the *TCA aspect* was in 50 to 100% of the answers. Thus, this reversed-dimension of the client orientation aspect is ranked first in importance by both French and Canadian buyers. The participants recognize being product-oriented, which is associated to the transactional aspect (Williamson, 1975). This strongly shows that the product aspect is still the most important feature of the relationship beginning decision process despite the efforts companies have made toward the relationship marketing principles. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the interviewees were explicitly told to exclude from their mind the product aspect in filling in the questionnaire. Most of respondents told the interviewer that the product aspect was indivisible from the global impression for these

highly technical products. Thus, the relational aspect only concedes a minor place in the decision making process.

The scores in the pure relational variables (i.e., *Social Bonds*, Ford 1980, and *Personal Identification*, Doney and Cannon, 1997) confirm the previous observation. Thus, no participant spontaneously mentioned one of the elements referring to these variables as valued characteristic to be found in a salesperson's personality. This means that the pure interpersonal arguments are not really the principal points for beginning a new business association. Nevertheless, a growing interest for relational oriented relationship is emerging as indicated in Table 10.

*Table 10: Reasons to begin the business relationship as presented by the buyers*

	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Canada (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>France (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>
TCA aspect	Williamson (1975)	64.3	1	54.7	1
Contractual norms	Macneil (1980)	45.2	2	46.3	2
Consumer Centric	Sheth, Sisodia, Sharma (2000)	40.5	3	12.2	5
Customer oriented	Grönroos (1992)	26.2	4	29.3	4
Service Paradigm	Gummesson (1999)	9.5	5	36.6	3
Personal identification	Doney and Cannon (1997)	0		0	
Social bonds	Ford (1980)	0		0	

*Note: the exact answers and the classification by concept are available in appendix 7*

For instance, the *contractual norms* variable obtains the consensus: both countries value its contribution as essential in the relational context. For both sample sets, respect of contractual norms arrives in first position of the relational oriented items (Table 10). The observation is fairly the same for the consumer-oriented organization developed by Grönroos (1992). Participants from both France and Canada agree to rank its importance at the third place of the relational-oriented dimensions. Then, for both cultures, the focus is put on flexibility and on the efforts to make to improve the relationship.

However, a major difference has been found in the way the participants of the two countries were considering the two other *client orientation* theories (i.e., *Service Paradigm*, Gummesson, 1999 and *Consumer Centric Marketing*, Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000). French buyers are more favorable to the *Service Paradigm* principle (Gummesson, 1999) that underlines the weight of product quality, productivity, and profitability. They expect the salesperson to be dynamic, reactive, and to like the product enough to sell it in the best way. On the other hand, Canadian respondents appeared to allow more importance to the Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma's (2000), the *Consumer Centric Marketing* principles. Thus, many elements were cited that refer to clearness and simplicity in the presentation, to "fight for the customer's needs", to be helpful for the company's projects, etc.... (for more examples of open-ended questions and their answers, see Appendix 7).

## **VII. IS THE IDEAL SALESPERSON SIMILAR TO THE ONE ACTUALLY HIRED?**

The respondents were then asked to choose from a list of personal characteristics the ones he/she would appreciate in a salesperson personality and subsequently the qualities the hired salesperson actually possessed. The possible items the participant had to choose from, for the two questions, and the scores for each country (aggregate values) are displayed in tables 11 and 12.

In both countries, the major factor seems to be the technical aspect in the relationship. The most weighted attributes are the ones involving practical skills (i.e., to be an *expert*, to be *flexible in the selling approach*, and to *keep the interest of the customer in mind*). This underlines once more the persisting impact of the traditional

product-orientation buyers show while attempting a new business relationship. This phenomenon is common to participants from France and Canada, indicating that instead of being a cultural trait, it might be more an industry-related attribute.

However, some differences are found between the two cultures. For instance, French buyers are more willing to deeply trust a salesperson perceived as an expert whereas, for their Canadian counterparts the expertise attribute is not the prevailing quality. The latter participants prefer to deal with someone who needs to refer to a more qualified person to answer some technical questions but who is able to share the knowledge he/she possesses. It is also interesting to note that despite the major importance of these qualities in the buyer's mind, the salespersons they chose to deal with rarely exhibited the ideal interpersonal characteristics. This is probably due to the large amount of technical requirements the product needs to fit within such an industry. This therefore limits the choice of the supplier on the interpersonal qualities of its salesperson.

*Table 11: Personal characteristics that are perceived to matter in a business relationship by French buyers*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Quality(ies) the salesperson should display</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Quality(ies) the salesperson actually possessed</i>
Sensitive to my needs of customer	100	1	41.5
Expert	<b>95.1</b>	2	<b>65.8</b>
Flexible in the selling approaches	82.9	3	29.3
Willing to share knowledge	75.6	4	24.4
Willing to take a stand in issues	36.6	5	12.2
Self-oriented	0		0
Gentle	17	6	17
Doted of humor skills (spontaneous answer)	17	6	17
Willing to take control over the conversation	2.4	8	0
Forceful	0		0
Aggressive	0		0



*Table 12: personal characteristics that are perceived to matter in a business relationship by Canadian buyers*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Quality(ies) the salesperson should display</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Quality(ies) the salesperson actually possessed</i>
Willing to share knowledge	<b>95.2</b>	1	54.7
Sensitive to my needs of customer	88.1	2	<b>64.3</b>
Expert	85.8	3	54.4
Flexible in the selling approaches	73.8	4	50
Gentle	64.3	5	40.4
Willing to take a stand in issues	14.3	6	14.3
Willing to take control over the conversation	2.4	7	0
Aggressive	2.4	7	2.4
Self-oriented	0		0
Forceful	0		0

### **VIII. ROLE OF POWER IN THE RELATIONSHIP**

The last two questions of the qualitative part were dealing with the notion of Power Asymmetry in the business relationship. Interestingly, a large proportion of respondents from both cultures do not seem to really be in favor of the buyer being in control of the negotiating process. The majority of the participants rated the equilibrium as the best way to proceed in order to develop profitable business association (Table 14). Most of the buyers agreed that implementing a power asymmetry notion is not the best way to start a new business relationship. They generally told the interviewer that in order to be profitable, the relationship should not involve too much pressure and that an impartial environment is always the most dynamic and entrepreneurial atmosphere. It is to be noted that, despite the Yes-No answer, some of the Canadian respondents preferred to nuance their opinion.

*Table 13: Answers to the question: "Does the buyer need to dominate the relationship?"*

	<i>Canada (%)</i>	<i>France (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>
Yes	28.5	34.1	31.3
No	47.6	65.9	56.7
Not necessarily	23.8	N/A	N/A

For the buyers who prefer to be treated as the most important decision-maker in the dyad, there is a difference between the two countries on the items the salesperson has to make concessions on. For instance, French people will be applying more pressure in order to improve the quality of the product or to have specific adjustments, whereas Canadian participants insisted more on the price attribute trying to obtain better deals (Table 14).

*Table 14: Aspects in which the participants that answered yes to the previous question would like to dominate within the relationship.*

	<i>Canada (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>France (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Price	76.2	1	50	2	63.8	2
Product	66.6	2	85.7	1	73.0	1
Size of the organization	19.0	3	35.7	3	27.2	3
Industrial Network	19.0	3	14.3	4	16.7	4
Delivery (*)	28.6	5	/		Na	
Logistics (*)	14.3	6	/		Na	
Politics	9.5	7	0		4.8	5
Company Policy (*)	4.8	8	/		Na	
Communication structure (*)	4.8	8	/		Na	
Development process (*)	4.8	8	/		Na	

*(\*) These items have been spontaneously proposed by the participants*

The reason for that observation may be the fact that Canadian buyers are already doing business with the supplier only if the product was excellent. As most of them have explained, this is due to the large technical constraints this industry faces (the product is therefore the first aspect to apply pressure on for the total sample, Table 14). Therefore, the next effort the salesperson can make to satisfy his/her client is on the price attribute.

## **V. DISCUSSION**

## I. COMMON HYPOTHESES TO BOTH COUNTRIES

### A. H1: the client orientation aspect

The *client orientation* is the major concern of the relationship marketing theory (Gronroos, 1992; Gummeson, 1999, Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000). These authors all agree that in today's new market trends, companies have to invest in closer and more personal relationships with their customers. The globalization of competition has made firms from all fields consider the relationship management in a more relational way. The results of this study show not a large but still significant tendency to being concerned about relational-oriented behaviors in a high technical products industry like the Fine Chemistry industry.

For instance, a common result to France and Canada is the allocated score to the respect of *contractual norms*. According to the t-test, the regression, and the qualitative results, it appears that, for a salesperson, respecting the tacit norms developed by Macneil (1980) is highly appreciated by the industrial buyers from the two sample sets. There is no cultural difference between the two countries with regards to this item. The *contractual norms*, as stated by Macneil (1980), allow the buyer to avoid an unpleasant and opportunistic salesperson's behavior. These tacit agreements between the two parties are supposed to guarantee the dyad against potential false manipulations. Therefore, it appears to be an essential economic argument the supplier has to develop in order to increase the buyer's early feeling of trust in the new business relationship. This approach

implies that the relational attitude is compatible with the *transactional aspect* (Williamson, 1975) traditionally well established in the chemical industry.

Also, the qualitative results on the ideal versus the actual hired salesperson show that the most important quality to be found in a salesperson for both countries respondents is the “*willingness to be sensitive to the needs of the customer*” (Table 2). Again, participants highlight the beneficial consequences for the supplier to invest on its customers' satisfaction. However, the *follow-up* dimension has been rated as potentially obstructing the buyer's own schedule, indicating that the supplier does not necessarily have to show an exaggerated client-orientation, but it has to stay close to its clients enough to perfectly suit their needs.

Some other findings of this study nevertheless agree more significantly with the final consumer literature on cross-cultural differences conclusion: French and Canadian buyers did not display the same results on several dimensions. For example, there is a noticeable difference in what the buyers from the two countries expect from the ideal versus the actual salesperson behavior. If participants of both cultures agree to say that the “*willingness to be sensitive to the needs of the customer*” is indispensable, in the real workplace, only the Canadian buyers recognize their salespersons to display this personality trait. For the French sample of hired salespersons, not even 50% of the salespersons were perceived to keep the client's best interest in mind, whereas 100% of the buyers would have like it. This again probably refers to the lack of choice in the final candidates to be selected on relational characteristics once all of the many product requirements have been fulfilled (refer to Table 2, page 59).

Also, French and Canadian buyers do not appreciate the same relational characteristics in a business relationship. For instance, Canadian participants put more emphasis on the *consumer centric* principles (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000) than on the other client-orientation sub-factors. On the other hand, the French buyers are more attached to the *service paradigm* principles (Gummesson, 1999) where the product quality, the productivity, and the profitability are the key issues to be assessed (Table 11). Even if the two items (i.e., *consumer centric* and *service paradigm*) are present in the regression model with similar coefficients, the t-test shows several differences between the two countries, which are confirmed in qualitative questions (Tables 2, 3 and 10, pages 59, 62, and). In opposition to Canadian buyers who chose a more evolved approach (i.e., *consumer centric theory*, Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000), the French industry is still looking forward the basic principles to be implemented. This can be explained by the variance in the degree of customer service the participants from both countries are expecting from a supplier. For instance, it might appear that despite that the relationship-marketing theories first came from Europe, French buyers are less advanced in this field than their Canadian counterparts and thus expect a lower level of *client orientation* than do buyers in Canada.

Whereas for Canadian buyers the principles Gummesson early developed are sine qua non qualities to be in business, in France the relationship marketing is at its first steps of implementation. This relative delay in implementing the relationship-marketing models in France can be justified by the long tradition of hierarchical culture in this country. The traditional French way-of-thinking has for a long time limited the weight of the customer and assumed that the available product was the best offer for the client. The

competition has forced suppliers to come closer to their customers, leading to the implementation of slightly more client-oriented strategies. However, this competition step arrived in France later than in Canada, leading to a delay in the expectations of the clients in the supplier's customer service contract. Then, what is understood as a basic requirement by Canadian buyers may not be totally integrated in the French suppliers product offer.

As efficiency and productivity are the most valuable objectives of the relationship building, a too close *follow-up* or a too personal relationship with the salesperson is not always perceived as a competitive advantage. They can even be felt as "useless" and "bulky" (appendix 7c). This also explains why the *follow-up* variable has been excluded from the regression model. *Follow-up* seems to be quasi-undesirable in the business association. As the relational aspect is not the main objective when the buyer starts a relationship, a too-present salesperson can be more seen as a handicap than as an help in meeting the buyer's organization goals.

Thus, the hypothesis 1: **“the more the salesperson is perceived to respect the client-orientation principles, the better the buyer's first impression”** is supported. To be perceived as sensitive to the customer's needs is a sure competitive advantage for the salesperson.

## **B. H2: The importance of the TCA aspect**

### **Role of expertise**

It is critical to note the importance of the *TCA aspect* in the decision-making process. All results agree to point out the overwhelming place of the *product orientation* in the meeting between the buyer and the salesperson in this industry nowadays, and despite the increasing acknowledgement of industrial people toward the relationship marketing theory (Williams, 1998; Yau et al., 2000; Wathne, Biong, and Heide, 2001). As the open-ended questions indicate, for most of the respondents the *TCA aspect* (Williamson, 1975) counts for from 50% to 100% of the spontaneous answers to the question on what is important to be taken in account to build a profitable relationship. The *TCA aspect* is present in the buyer's mind even if the respondent has been told to only refer to the relational part of the relationship in completing the questionnaire. Of course, the correlation of the *TCA variable* with the dependent variable is negative in the regression model, but its beta coefficient is relatively strong, highlighting the main impact of the *product orientation* on the business relationship development. The t-test (see Table 2, page 59) shows that there is no significant difference on the way the two countries rated this item, and for respectively France and Canada, the *TCA aspect* arrives in third and fourth rank in the most important relationship features in the early development steps. This rank of the TCA could be seen as not an overwhelming score, nevertheless, as mentioned above, the participants have been told to concentrate on relational traits only.



Therefore, although participants were supposed to concentrate on the relational aspect of the business relationship only, it is embedded in their thinking process to first concentrate on a *product-oriented approach*. The main explanation to this phenomenon comes from the nature of the industry itself. As it has been previously shown, in the Fine Chemistry industry, the nature of the product is often technically complex. Thus, because it is a dynamic industry, the Research and Development department is a prevailing sector to be continually improved. Final products must be more and more technically innovative and efficient and so must be the raw materials to be purchased. Most of the large companies have complex laboratory, manufacturing, and purchasing procedures, implying purchased products to suit strict technical norms. Then, it is not surprising that the transactional aspect is still taking the predominant place in a negotiating meeting priorities. However, the myth of the totally relational industrial buyers is no longer valid due to the relative high score of the marketing relationship principles in the overall results. This result brings evidence of a new trend in the marketplace that will increase the place of the relational attributes in the business partnerships. Although relationship management seems to only benefit from a somewhat minor importance in the business process, it is to be recalled that the long tradition of simply product-oriented strategies in the Fine Chemistry industry still has an impact in the buyers' way of thinking. These buyers may not have totally integrated the relationship marketing principles but they become aware of the power of these principles on the long-term benefits.

Conversely some cultural differences appear in the way the buyers define the attributes related to the *TCA aspect*. For example, because French people are looking for security in the job definition, they tend to trust *expertise* as a determinant quality to know

if the salesperson is reliable. French buyers require their salespersons to possess the needed technical knowledge to face all potential questions regarding the product abilities. They look for a good *market knowledge* and a high level of *expertise* as a grant of profitable relationship (Table 3, page 62) and they seek *self-confident business partner*. Nevertheless, there seems to be a distinction between self-confident and over-confident or arrogant attitudes, (Appendix 7). It is interesting to note that there is a thin tacit frontier between an appreciated dynamic personality (even if it sometimes involves borderline reactions like “standing in the way of people who are too sure of themselves) and a crippling arrogant behavior. Thus, the first impression seems to cover a large importance in the French culture. French buyers were favorable to the efforts made on the *salesperson presentation* (Appendix 7). The buyers appear to look for non-verbal cues revealing a potential *expertise*. A salesperson displaying good *market knowledge* will be assimilated to an expert. Although being relatively self-confident during the meeting or the interview is a sign that the salesperson masters of his/her own field, respecting the *contractual norms* is a cue sent to the interlocutor that the supplier can be a trustable partner as well (Tables 2 and 3, page 59 and 62 respectively). However, it is to be noted that the real performance (i.e., score on *expertise dimension*) is still the most important characteristic to be perceived as worthy of the relationship creation efforts.

For Canadian participants however, the *expertise* attribute is not an absolute warranty of a profitable relationship even from a transactional perspective (Tables 11 and 12, page 73 and 74 respectively). The product-orientation in the Canadian buyers is more located at the level of the negotiations that will focus on the price and the product quality (Table 14, page 75). Canadians score higher in the *need-for-cognition* variable. They would go

more deeply in the “technical information” search than the French participants. Efficiency is a key issue in the Canadian workplace, probably due to the similarity of work conditions with the United States versus the more personal orientation that European people can display (Hofstede, 1991). Therefore, it is more important for Canadian buyers to get themselves the appropriate information and to learn about the product as much as they can than to simply rely on someone else expertise. Hence, for Canadian buyers, the salesperson's *willingness to share knowledge* is seen as a preponderant quality (Table 11, page 73).

A last explanation comes from the *number of decision-makers* variable. The effect of the *number of decision-makers* seems more important in France than it appears to be in Canada. This may be linked to the fact that the *transactional part* of the business is so important in Canada that the number of decisions is automatically high. The *number of decision-makers* seems to fluctuate more for the French companies, leading to a larger impact of the number of persons involved on the final decision outcome.

It is nevertheless interesting to note that, not only for the French respondents but also for their Canadian counterparts, in the regression model, the coefficient of *expertise* is negative. Looking after expert people as a sure way to make profits may involve switching salesperson when a more expert is found or also weighting down the other relational aspects of the relationship (like social life, social norms for example). Therefore, if buyers from both countries are willing to sacrifice the agreeable and more personal aspects of the relationship in order to deal with a more expert salesperson, the correlation of *expertise* with the dependent variable (i.e., *relational aspect*) must be negative.

Therefore, H2: "the earlier in the business association process, the more the buyer will focus on the TCA perspective" is supported for the two countries, and in a larger proportion for the French sample.

**C. H3: sharing personal tastes with the salesperson**

Pritchard, Havitz and Howard (1999) as well as Doney and Cannon (1997) have established that the buyer's willingness to be committed to the other party in an economic exchange occurred when the seller was presenting psychological or social similarities with the buyer. Thus the buyer engaged in a trust development process, leading to the finalization of the negotiation in order to close the deal. For the purpose of this study the *identification process* (psychological similarities), the *social life* parallel between the buyer and the salesperson as well as the salesperson's respect of *social norms* have been chosen to represent the same construct (i.e., sharing personal tastes).

Firstly, the current research findings indicate that *social life* and *social norms* are not viewed in the same manner by buyers from both countries. Whereas these two items score very low for the Canadian respondents, the French buyers seem to appreciate them more (Table 2, page 59). This cultural reference evokes the less productivity-seeking culture aspect in France than in Canada. This is common knowledge that because of a tradition of hierarchical obstacles and rules in France (Hofstede, 1980, 1991) and in spite of the current study results showing a Canadian trend to look for *hierarchical structure*, French economy is not usually known to emphasize the productivity and the work efficiency values. This provides an additional explanation to the score of the French sample in Gummeson's principles (1999) that are the basic principles to be implemented

in order to achieve a customer-centered relationship. It has been shown previously that Canadian buyers seem to look after principles of relationship marketing that are more advanced than French buyers do. However, these results on the more personal dimensions suggest that French participants are closer to achieve a higher level of relational involvement within the business association than their Canadian counterparts. Regarding the psychological predispositions of the two cultures, the relational aspect of the relationship as the scholars want to develop it will be easier to implement in such European countries as France than in North American countries as Canada. It appears to be more natural for French buyers to be relational-oriented than it is for their Canadian counterparts.

The qualitative data brings evidence of the large importance of non verbal-cues on the primary evaluation outcome. French buyers are looking at their interlocutors' general knowledge in order to determinate the global value of a potential business exchange. It seems like French participants need more deeply and more authentic interpersonal exchanges with their business contacts than do their Canadian counterparts. This is highlighted by the spontaneous answer of French buyers (see Table 11 page 73). The French respondents indicated that they appreciate a *good sense of humor* in the salesperson's personality. Hence, French buyers expect the business relationship to be more enjoyable while Canadian buyers on the other hand, tend to look more toward a purely capitalist way of thinking, excluding most of the non-essential-to-profit traits of the business association. As a result, a salesperson, that is able to reflect honesty and good general knowledge, has a better chance to do business with the buyer in France. This is for French buyers a medium to build higher relational bonds and to avoid

interrupting too abruptly the relationship (Pritchard, Havitz and Howard, 1999). On the other hand, Canadian buyers appear to be more relationship independent. For instance, they favor a *consumer centric* approach that involves more efforts from the supplier organization than from the salesperson himself/herself.

Interestingly, the *people skill* variable is not involved in the regression model. However, the exclusion of the people skills variable can be due to its similarity with other variables that have been included in the model. For instance, the correlations table (see Appendix 3) shows a correlation between *people skills* and *social norms*. As *social norms* entered the regression (Regression 3) and is correlated with *people skills*, only the most significant of the two constructs took place in the regression model.

Therefore, H3: "**the more the salesperson seems to share personal tastes with the buyer, the better the buyer's first impression**" is partially supported. This hypothesis is only confirmed for the French sample of the current study.

#### **D. H4: asymmetric power**

Because doing profitable business implies long-term association expectation, the use of *coercive power* is usually not perceived as a competitive advantage, especially when it is the salesperson that tries to apply pressures to sell his/her product (Kim, 2000). Hence, the *applying pressure variable* (for which the scale has been reversed) is the most weighted variable in the general regression model with a beta coefficient of .800 (Regression 3). This very important coefficient indicates that in both countries the use of *coercive power* by the salesperson can be a cause for discontent and therefore can lead to

the premature end of the business relationship. Such a behavior is perceived as tactless and leads to an extremely bad impression from the buyer's perspective.

On the other hand, some buyers (especially in the Canadian sample) still believe that an *asymmetric power* relationship based can be profitable. These results contradict the study of Weitz and Bradford (1999) that would recommend the first meeting to already incorporate long-term views in order to achieve profitability. Because less than 50% of them answered with a frank “no” to the question: “does the buyer need to dominate the relationship?” Canadian participants responded that they still believe long-term relationships can be managed when the buyer uses *coercive power*. Another alternative to this first explanation would be that these buyers prefer to deal with short-term relationships in order to keep pressure on the supplier to always get the best possible product. In such an industry where competition is exacerbated, this result is actually not that surprising. A last explanation comes from the type of supplier the buyer recalled (see methodology section). The main point of the study was to make the buyer remembering the newest supplier of raw material he/she had to hire. Nevertheless, degrees of importance occur in this supply categories: from the small laboratory equipment for which the product is quite standard, to the specific chemical required for the ongoing R&D reaction for which there is a need for long-term commitment.

Therefore, **H4**: “the more the buyer wants to invest in long-term and profitable relationships, the lesser the use of asymmetric power” is partially supported. The hypothesis 4 is only partially rejected due to the French sample score that in a large majority chose the equilibrium between the dyad members as the best way to create value-added in a new business relationship.

## II. CROSS-CULTURAL HYPOTHESES

### A. Influence of culture

As it has been explained above, this study took place in a specific context: the authors chose to investigate a particular industry (i.e., Fine Chemistry industry). This business-to-business environment would have been expected to involve a common and rational buyer's behavior worldwide within the industry. As industrial buyers are known to adopt rational decision making processes and as the mutual goal of each company is to improve the benefits, a similar way of thinking and of doing business would have been universally expected. Therefore, the interest of this study is to examine if these assumptions are actually valid in the marketplace. As the results showed, most of this common sense is not always in adequacy with the workplace reality.

### B. H5a: personality

As it has been observed in the final consumer research field (Chebat et al, 1995), cultural differences make people reacting differently. Hofstede (1980, 1991) has developed and illustrated this theory in the work perception environment. However, similar performance has never been achieved in a more rational context as the business-to-business milieu is.

One of the items (i.e., *identification*, Doney and Cannon, 1997) in the literature found to be important in managing business relationships was not confirmed by the



current study results. Hence, the *identification process* is gathering a very low score from participants from both countries. Moreover, the *identification variable* is excluded from the regression set of dimensions (Regression1). According to Doney and Cannon (1997) the interviewee should have been looking toward working with someone similar to him/her, the answers to the *identification* scales bring evidence of a total disinterest to the issue. A possible explanation to this is given by the rational decision-making behavior the industrial buyers have to rely on, as opposed to the more impulsive purchase decision-making the final consumer is allowed to. As it has been shown before, no room is left to the impulsive purchase in this industrial context and the buyers seem to have developed rational dispositions. Therefore, even if some of the personal aspects can have an impact on the final decision, the *identification process* is not part of them.

This is apparently even more applicable for French participants. French buyers may not want similar salespersons to work with in spite that they are willing to develop more relational-oriented relationships (by going out with the salespersons for no work purpose meetings) because of the *security-seeking* attribute. Dealing with a younger or less experimented salesperson can induce a natural *asymmetric power* in the business association. Therefore, even if the buyer is not willing by himself/herself to induce *coercive power environment*, the natural domination will help him/her in the negotiation.

However, the relatively high score of Canadian buyers on *identification* reveals that once all the other requirements have been met (regarding product and organization features), Canadian buyers like to deal with salesperson with similar personalities. Although the *relational aspect* is really not the most important criterion of choice (Canadian participants have largely claimed that the product aspect was coming first far

away before the relational characteristics), when this choice is available the *identification* process could potentially be the one likely to make a difference among the final candidates. When asked to give a favorite relational dimension, Canadian respondents have chosen the *identification process* as the most probable event to occur.

These results rule out the common sense hypothesis that would have predicted French people to score higher on the *identification process* and thus reject the hypothesis H5a: **"the different aspects of the personality will be of higher importance in France than in Canada."**

### **C. H5b: organizational impact**

Both organizational cultures (the supplier's and the client's) have to be taken in consideration in order to investigate a potential influence on the relationship building. Hence, the exclusion of the *identification process* variable from the regression set of variable (Regression 3) confirms the results that the relational aspect of the business association, if it is developed, will involve more the organization than the two members of the dyad themselves. Thus, it is interesting to examine the role of the corporate cultures of both the buyer and the salesperson in the development of the business relationship (Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster, 1993).

The current study findings suggest that within the investigated industry (i.e., Fine Chemistry), exists a quasi-universal organizational culture. No major difference was found between how the French and the Canadian participants perceive their own companies corporate culture. The only one difference is no more than statistically marginal and relates to the adhocracy-orientation. Whereas the Canadian organizational

culture seems to be an equilibrium among the four dimensions (Market, Adhocracy, Clan, and Hierarchy, Deshpandé et al., 1993), the French buyers give the impression that their firms emphasize more the entrepreneurship values (dynamism, innovation, and development) than do the Canadians (see Table 7 page 69). It cannot be easily conceived that in such a competitive industry the companies from North-America appear to be less growth-oriented than their European counterparts. Therefore, the main explanation to this result again refers to the nature of the industry. With these results, Canadian participants admit that the internal rules due to the technical complexity of the product (as developed above) create a brake to implement advanced entrepreneurship strategies. On the other hand, French firms seem to be governed by less formal internal rules allowing the decision-makers to engage in more risk-seeking strategies.

With regards to the buyer's perception of the supplier organizational culture, once again Canadian buyers consider their suppliers to apply roughly equilibrate strategies whereas French buyers believe their suppliers to focus on the Adhocracy dimension at the expense of the internal cohesiveness (Clan). This finding is strengthened by the results shown in Table 9 (page 69) that highlights the existence of a match between the buyers' and the salespersons' organizations. The fit is ideal for the Canadian companies for which no significant difference between the two organizations is observed. Their French counterparts however perceive their suppliers to overcome the buyers' organizations on the Adhocracy and the Hierarchy dimensions (Table 9, page 69). This cohabitation of the two former characteristics is unexpected. Deshpandé, Farley, and Webster (1993) classify Adhocracy and Hierarchy as antagonist dimensions. Thus, it can be wondered why French buyers perceive the suppliers, they choose to make business with, to present two

opposed facets as competitive strategies. Probably the main reason is located in the perception of hierarchy whether it involves the buyer's own organization or the supplier. While the French participants realize the hierarchical procedures in their own structure may be a necessity to ensure a satisfying purchase decision, they might be reluctant to encounter hierarchical barriers in the salesperson's own company. Thus, this is a paradox due to the nature itself of the industry that combines a willingness to growth and to be dynamic in order to outclass competitors and formal rules that seem to obstruct all the efforts made for the growth.

Therefore, because the fit between the two organizations (i.e., supplier and customer) is more important in the Canadian sample, Canadian respondents appear to focus more on the parallel of the two firms' objectives when working with the supplier. Thus, H5b: **"the organizational impact will be more important for Canadian than for French buyers"** is supported.

#### ***D. H5c: WOM***

Regarding the relational-oriented items of the questionnaire, the *word-of-mouth* process appears to be a central point for both cultures. It allows the buyer to have a general overview of the supplier and its salesperson capabilities prior to the first meeting. As time constraints are fundamental variables to be integrated in the buyer's decision-making process, the *word-of-mouth* diffusion of the information is a sure way to eliminate unfavorably perceived salespersons (Lamb, Spekman, and Hunt, 2000). The current research results (see Table 2, page 59) show non-significant differences in the way the buyers from the two countries consider the *word-of-mouth* diffusion of

information process. The high mean of this item for the respondents of both samples illustrates the importance of the reputation of the supplier prior to the first meeting. As the product can be chosen from a catalogue and the salesperson only met for price negotiating purposes (as explained by a buyer in the qualitative data collection, see Appendix 7), the reputation of the seller on the marketplace is its first selling argument.

The strong correlation among *word-of-mouth*, *people skills*, and *expertise* indicate what information constitutes the worthy reputation. The salesperson's *people skills* and *expertise* are the main concerns that are communicated through the *word-of-mouth* process.

Hofstede (1980, 1991) classified both Canada and France in the Collectivist cultures it is not surprising that the *word-of-mouth* obtains the same level of confidence in both countries. Therefore, H5c: "**regarding the word-of-mouth process, participants from the two countries will present similar positive scores**" is totally supported.

#### **E. H5d: hierarchical structure**

Hofstede's work (1980) had predicted the French respondents to score higher on the several items that refer to the *hierarchical structure* dimension. Surprisingly, the current study results describe another reality among the participants. It is in the Canadian sample that is found the higher level of *hierarchy-respect-seeking* (see Table 2, page 59).

In addition to the pharmaceutical and cosmetic laboratory laws (as Pharmacopoeia and BLP/GLP) that are universally applied, Canadian firms seem to possess internal rules to apply. Therefore, the importance of *hierarchical structure* for Canadian participants appears to be crucial. The tendency for Canadian buyers to look after a quite rigid

*hierarchical structure* in their company may be due to the higher technical restrictions in the Fine Chemistry industry in Canada than in France. The interviewed buyers in Canada insisted on the fact that the product aspect of the transaction was so important that many rules have been created in order to insure the "perfect" product choice process. Many respondents answered that breaking one of these rules could be dangerous for all the organization. They mostly agree to follow the entire set of rules and policies even when the short-term interest of the company itself would ask for an exception. To create a disorder would be a long-term prejudice more important than to miss a short-term opportunity. As a consequence, the hypothesis H5d: **"the French participants will score higher on the hierarchical structure scales"** is totally rejected by the results of this research.

***F. He: security-seeking***

The French buyers scored higher on the *security-seeking* items of the questionnaire (see Table 2, page 59) as it was expected based on Hofstede's (1991) work. French participants are therefore more willing to emphasize on security and property in the workplace. They are expected to also act in a similar way in their job decision-making. This explains for instance the importance of *self-confidence* in the ideal French business partner. The self-confidence is a non-verbal cue perceived by French people as a sign of *expertise* and therefore appeals to the *security-seeking* trait because it ensures that the buyer's business partner will master his/her subject enough to prevent business failure. Then He: **"the French participants will score higher on the security-seeking items than their Canadian counterparts"** is totally supported.

## **VI. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

## **I. CONCLUSION**

The current research's main aim was to investigate the industrial buyer's behavior while engaging in a new business relationship. Yau et al., (2000) claim that the key difference between the final consumer and the industrial buyer consists in the buyer-seller interdependence in industrial markets. Because of this imbricated relation, the authors argue that more relational-oriented associations will be developed in business-to-business contexts. This paper was designed to examine the weight of the previously studied relational items in the situation of a first buyer-seller business meeting, in two different cultures.

As this field (i.e., relationship beginning in industrial markets) has not been extensively covered by previous research in relationship marketing, several theoretical contributions of this paper should be highlighted.

Firstly, the present study brings evidence of a new trend in the today's highly competitive business-to-business markets. These findings highlight an opening of relationship marketing in the industrial buyers' way of thinking. Participants have been found to be receptive to salespersons' efforts to bring the business association on a more relational stage. This agrees with the past years studies on these new market-oriented strategies (i.e., relationship marketing theory). Nevertheless, the current results show a still too dominant importance of the TCA aspect (more specifically concentrated on the product features) to totally match Wong and Sohal's (2002) conclusions that the personal relationship do overcome the buyer-to-supplier's organization relation. In the current study context, the most relevant trait of the business association is the link between the



two organizations, personified by the product itself. Therefore, it can be concluded that, due to technical and innovation requirements, whereas the transactional aspect remains the highest priority the supplier has to meet in order to be present in the final set of candidates, the salesperson's relational efforts are highly appreciated by the buyer. Non-verbal cues indicating the salesperson's willingness to engage in a long-term objectives relationship can positively impact the buyer's decision-making process.

Secondly, the cross-cultural section suggests that French buyers are more relational-oriented than their Canadians counterparts. However by having a closer look at the results, it appears that a salesperson displaying a relational behavior will have a better chance to get a customer account in France than in Canada. While the relational aspect is completely new in France and thus constitutes a competitive advantage, this concept is entirely assimilated for Canadian buyers. The latter even perceive the relational component as a *sine qua non* condition for the business relationship to occur.

Therefore, a key managerial input arises from this paper. In spite of the globalization of the Fine Chemistry industry, companies should not try to standardize their buyer-seller relationships. Neither the North America nor the European models should be worldwide imposed. At contrary, these findings constitute a call for flexibility in the management of global strategies. French and Canadian buyers were not perceived to positively react to the same relational stimuli. Thus, marketers should focus on the popular relationship marketing principles in the targeted industry at the moment of the first meeting. Because, by definition, there is rarely a second chance to make a favorable first impression, a great concern is to be given to this critical instant.

## II. LIMITATIONS

The theoretical and managerial implications of this research are however restricted by several limitations. For instance, respondents generally found the questionnaire too long. The questionnaire was designed to take about half an hour for the respondent to complete it. However, because the interviewer had to clarify some points with the participants, the time allocated to the survey actually went from 45 minutes to an hour. For industrial buyers, to devote a so long working-time to take part in a non-professional research appeared inefficient. They probably lost part of their concentration at the end of the questionnaire, and therefore, the consistency of the answers all along the survey could be discussed. Further research should reduce the number of the variables to be examined in a single survey.

Wathne, Biong, and Heide's (2001) article rises a question that could weaken the overall weight of the product aspect in the business relationship as perceived in the current study. The authors target the relationships to be investigated as key business associations for the supplier. Therefore, in the salesperson's perspective, the success of the relationship is of critical importance and it is expected that a greater emphasis is drawn to the relational features of the association. The current research did not specify the type of supplier the buyers had to recall. Instead, the focus was on the recentness of the supplier selection (in order to decrease the memory bias at its lowest level, Whitley, 1996). Thus, it could be possible that as the proposed contract was only of minor importance for both parties, the business meeting only concentrate on the basic price and product negotiation items.

Whitley (1996) addresses a major concern to research in natural settings. He suggests that three problems can arise that could weaken the validity of the study. The first one, related to construct validity has been addressed by conducting a pilot study. This pre-testing ensured the validity of the items to be investigated. Secondly, a lack of control of the extraneous variables might lead to a difference in the results for buyers who deal with few salespersons and those who from larger companies who interact with several sellers everyday. It would be expected that buyers that meet many salespersons consider the relational aspect differently than buyers that deal with fewer suppliers or more directly with the organization (by fax as an example). Hence, the discrepancy in the size as well as in the purchasing process of the company constitutes a limitation to this study. This concern could have been addressed with a larger sample that would allow the researcher to separate the firms by size. However, because the targeted industry does not count as many competitors as needed to provide an extremely larger sample, this limitation is barely unavoidable. Lastly, none interview was interrupted by an external event (like a phone call) or an intervening person allowing the interviewee to totally focus on the questionnaire and reducing at the minimum level what Whitley (1996) calls the "vulnerability to outside interference."

To finish, due to the small size of the current research sample, the problem of subgroup differences (Whitley, 1996) emerges. According to Berry, Poottinga, and Pandey (1997), the cultural influence in this study is acting as a moderator variable. Thus, it can be defined as a set of norms, beliefs, or values common to a group of people; all the members of the culture are expected to behave in the same way. However, the samples might not be as homogeneous as it would be necessary to consider the cultural dimension

as shared by all the participants. This could threaten the generalization of this study's findings.

### **III. AVENUE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

As it has been seen in previous sections, the targeted industry for the current research definitively presents many formal rules and internal laws that constitute hierarchical barriers to spontaneous and more emotional initiatives. Thus, further research should concentrate on an industrial context that lets more room for individual-to-individual bonds. Although it is not expected that the relational aspect in business-to-business reaches the same level of importance than in the final consumer field, results on the weight of the relational attributes might be slightly more significant.

The current paper attempted to examine how buyers could perceive the first steps of a business relationship as integrated in the same culture. The results were aggregated following the country of origin of the respondent but did not take in account the participant's own personal characteristics. Buyers display various personalities while doing business according to basic selling techniques books (Seltz, 1982, Roth and Alexander, 1995), three typical behaviors can be observed. Firstly, for some buyers, the affiliation element is the central element to be developed in the relationship. The purchased product itself only takes the second place behind the relational aspect. These people feel the need to be surrounded, cherished. They understand the business relationship more to meet new people and enjoy worklife than the sole money objective. They are at the opposite point from the transactional side in Macneil's (1980) scale. They

should have been scoring high on the relational items in the current study questionnaire. A second category of buyers is the one for whom competition and achievement are the two main leitmotifs. These people are driven by a leadership need and they definitely care for a better product than their competitors can have access to. They are looking to be at the top of technology advances and are most of the time leaders in the marketplace regarding new products and new processes. They look for expert and prestigious salespersons. They want to build a relationship in the only one aim to be aware of the newest equipment and products. Therefore, they would have scored high on the following items: word-of-mouth, market knowledge, product orientation, and need-for-cognition as the key relational aspects.

The third category of classic buyer personalities, the power seeking, these types of persons are looking for power-orientated relationships. These buyers probably belong to the sample that rated the asymmetric power as a needed reality within the relationship dyad. They are expected to score high on respect of hierarchical structure (with the assumption that the buyer position is more valuable than the seller's one within the dyad) and the self-confident variable (because the question was dealing with a business partner characteristics and these power-seeking buyers do not consider a salesperson as a potential business partner). However, they are expected to score the lowest on the identification and applying pressures variables. Therefore, as the industrial and the cultural contexts can have an influence on the buyer's behavior, the participant's own personality could also have a certain impact on the way the relationship is developed. As stated by Wong and Sohal (2002), the supplier selection only constitutes the first of numerous steps in the relationship development. Further studies should consider the

weight of the investigated items in the following stages of the relation development, maturation, and end. This could take the form of a longitudinal study that could highlight the actual evolution of the importance of these relational characteristics in the industry context.

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## **VIII. APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1 and Appendix 2: questionnaires**

**Note:** *the following questionnaire has been designed using the legal size format. In order to cope with the standard of the current thesis, the questionnaire has been transformed to fit with the regular size paper format. Therefore, the author apologizes for the non-esthetic features that could appear on appendices 1 and 2.*

## Appendix 1: English questionnaire

### WHAT IS COMMUNICATED DURING THE FIRST MEETING? CHOOSING A NEW SUPPLIER ... DEALING WITH A NEW SALESPERSON ...

#### PART 1: THE NEW SUPPLIER

New supplier: for the purpose of the study, we define the new supplier as the **latest organisation** you and/or your organisation decided to deal with.

*Please answer the following questions in respect to what you have heard about the organisation prior to the first meeting.*

Circle the appropriate number: on the scale from 1 to 10, "1" would indicate you strongly *disagree* with the statement, "10" would indicate you strongly *agree* with it. If the item described is not applicable to your business (N/A), please put an "X" in the circle at the extreme right of the scale.

#### A. YOUR EVALUATION OF THE REPUTATION OF THE NEWEST SUPPLIER YOU CHOSE

	Strongly disagree			Agree						Strongly agree	N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1. In your market, this new supplier: has a reputation of being honest.											<input type="radio"/>
is known to be concerned about its customers.											<input type="radio"/>
has a reputation of being trustworthy in the market.											<input type="radio"/>
has a good credibility in the marketplace.											<input type="radio"/>
has a good image.											<input type="radio"/>

#### B. ABOUT THE FIT BETWEEN YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE NEW ORGANIZATION.

1. You chose this organization because it seems to:											
have routine or regular measures of customer service.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
know its competitors well.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
have a good sense of how customers value its products and services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
be more customer-focused than its competitors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
compete primarily on product and service differentiation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
If I believe this business exists primarily to serve customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
constantly monitor its level of commitment and orientation to serving customer needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
measure customer satisfaction systematically and frequently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
promise to survey clients at least once a year to assess the quality of its products and services.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

**2. You chose this organization because:**

its product and service development seems to be based on good market and customer information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
it considers that the customer interest should always come first.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
its products and services are considered the best in the marketplace.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
its business objectives seem to be driven primarily by customer satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
its strategy for competitive advantage seems to be based on understanding of customers' needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

**3. You chose this organization because *just for you, it is willing to:***

customize its products to your specific needs.	Strongly disagree			Agree				Strongly agree			<input type="radio"/>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
change its product processes to your requirements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
make logistic changes to adapt to your needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
customize its delivery procedures to better meet your needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
share costs in tools and equipment in order to deliver your required products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

**Please answer the following questions in respect to your organization.**

**Please allocate 100 points among a, b, c, and d (see example below).**

The color of my organization:

My organization is <b>red</b> .	20 points	My organization is <b>blue</b> .	30 points
My organization is <b>white</b> .	35 points	My organization is <b>green</b> .	<u>15</u> points

**1. My organization is:**

A <b>very personal place</b> : it is extended family, people seem to share a lot of themselves.	— points	<b>very production-oriented</b> : a major concern is with getting the job done without much personal involvement.	— points
a <b>very formalized and structural place</b> : established procedures generally govern what people do.	— points	a <b>very dynamic and entrepreneurial place</b> : people are willing to stick their neck out and take risks.	— points



2. The glue that holds *my organization* together is:

**the emphasis on task and goal accomplishment:** a production-orientation is commonly shared.

—  
points

**innovation and development:** there is an emphasis on being first.

—  
points

**formal rules and policies:** maintaining a smooth running institution is important here.

—  
points

**loyalty and tradition:** commitment to this firm runs high.

—  
points

**human resources:** high cohesion and moral in the firm are important.

—  
points

**growth and acquiring new resources:** readiness to meet new challenges is important.

points  
—

**permanence and stability:** efficient, smooth operations are important.

—  
points

**competitive action and achievement:** measurable goals are important.

—  
points

4. The *salesperson's organization* seems to be

**a very personal place:** it is extended family, people seem to share a lot of themselves.

—  
points

**a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place:** people are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.

—  
points

**a very formalized and structural place:** established procedures generally govern what people do.

—  
points

**very production-oriented:** a major concern is with getting the job done without much personal involvement.

—  
points

5. The glue that holds the *salesperson's organization* together seems to be:

**loyalty and tradition:** commitment to this firm runs high.

—  
points

**innovation and development:** there is an emphasis on being first.

—  
points

**formal rules and policies:** maintaining a smooth running institution is important here.

—  
points

**the emphasis on task and goal accomplishment:** a production-orientation is commonly shared.

—  
points

6. The *salesperson's organization* seems to emphasize:

**human resources:** high cohesion and moral in the firm are important.

—  
points

**growth and acquiring new resources:** readiness to meet new challenges is important.

—  
points

**permanence and stability:** efficient, smooth operations are important

—  
points

**competitive action and achievement:** measurable goals are important.

—  
points

## PART 2: THE NEW SALESPERSON

**New salesperson:** for the purpose of the study, we define the new salesperson as the **latest salesperson** you, and/or your organisation, decided to deal with. For example, the salesperson you used to deal with retired and his organisation sent you a new sales representative.

For readability purposes, we will define the salesperson as "his".

Please answer the following questions with respect to *what you perceived from the salesperson during the first interview*

Circle the appropriate number: on the scale from 1 to 10, "1" would indicate you strongly *disagree* with the statement, "10" would indicate you strongly *agree* with it. If the item described is not applicable to your business (N/A), please put an X in the circle at the extreme right of the scale.

### A. THE SALESPERSON'S APPROACH.

	Strongly disagree			Agree				Strongly agree			N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>1. I perceived this salesperson considers that:</b>											
each customer requires a unique approach											<input type="radio"/>
a good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind.											<input type="radio"/>
<b>2. At the first interview, I found that the salesperson:</b>											
tried to achieve his goals by satisfying customers.											<input type="radio"/>
modified his sales approach when needed.											<input type="radio"/>
used a standardized selling technique to deal with me.											<input type="radio"/>
had the expertise to make the best decision.											<input type="radio"/>
listened to my company queries to understand how I differ from another customer.											<input type="radio"/>
pretended to agree with my ideas only to please me (as a potential customer).											<input type="radio"/>
spent more time trying to persuade me to buy than he did trying to discover my organization needs.											<input type="radio"/>
made me discuss my company needs.											<input type="radio"/>
helped me to achieve my organization goals.											<input type="radio"/>
looked for weaknesses in my personality in order to put pressure on me to buy.											<input type="radio"/>
began the sales talk for a product before exploring my organization needs.											<input type="radio"/>
tried to influence my judgment with precise information.											<input type="radio"/>
offered me the product that best suited the specific problem(s) of my company.											<input type="radio"/>
painted too rosy a picture of his products to make them sound as good as possible.											<input type="radio"/>
answered my questions about products as correctly as he could.											<input type="radio"/>
tried to sell as much as he could rather than satisfy the needs of my company.											<input type="radio"/>
decided what products to offer on the basis of what he could convince me to buy, not on the basis of what would satisfy my organization in the long run.											<input type="radio"/>

had the appropriate academic background to his function.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
tried to give me an accurate expectation of what the product could do for my organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
was very knowledgeable about his products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
pretended that something was beyond his control.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
treated me as a rival.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
<b>3. I found this salesperson</b>											
defends his own beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
has a strong personality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
has leadership ability.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
likes people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

**4. In general, salespersons should be:**

What are the qualities you appreciate in a salesperson? Please give some examples.

---

From the following items, please check the ones you would appreciate in a salesperson (the ones you did not indicate above).

Aggressive	_____	Sharing knowledge	_____
Willing to take a stand on issues	_____	Taking control over the conversation	_____
Gentle	_____	Sensitive to my needs of customers	_____
Expertise	_____	Flexible in the selling approaches	_____
Self-oriented	_____	Forceful	_____

**5. Which of these characteristics the new salesperson displayed?**

---

**6. Are there other important characteristics (positive or negative) you noticed in this new salesperson?**

---

**7. Role of Power in the relationship**

*Please answer the following question with respect to what you think as a general rule about the place of Power in business relationships.*

**Does the buyer need to dominate in the relationship?** \_\_\_\_\_

**If yes, in which aspects of the relationship (price, product, size of the organization, politics, industrial network...)?**

---

### PART 3: YOUR VIEWPOINT ON BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

#### A. ABOUT THE NUMBER OF DECISION-MAKERS

**1. How many persons are involved in the decision to select a new supplier?**

persons

departments

Circle the appropriate number: on the scale from 1 to 10, "1" would indicate you strongly *disagree* with the statement, "10" would indicate you strongly *agree* with it. If the item described is not applicable to your business (N/A), please put an X in the circle at the extreme right of the scale.

**2. What generally happens during the supplier selection?**

	Strongly disagree							Agree			Strongly agree			N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
Your decision to do business with a salesperson is freely chosen from several alternatives.														<input type="radio"/>
You have the final decision in choosing the salesperson.														<input type="radio"/>
You are the person in charge of selecting the final salesperson candidates.														<input type="radio"/>

**3. Within your own organization, what happened during the supplier selection?**

	Not important at all				Important				Very Important			N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
The weight the committee members gave to your opinion is:												<input type="radio"/>
When evaluating the diverse candidates, the members of the committee rated your opinion as:												<input type="radio"/>
Your influence on the criteria used for making the final decision was:												<input type="radio"/>
The similarity between the final decision and your personal view was:												<input type="radio"/>

#### B. ABOUT YOUR OWN PERCEPTION OF THE BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS.

**1. In business decision-making:**

	Strongly disagree							Agree			Strongly agree			N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
you ask other people for advice when you consider making a <i>very</i> new purchase.														<input type="radio"/>
you don't like to talk to others before you make a choice (in general).														<input type="radio"/>
you rarely ask other people's opinion when you have to make a decision.														<input type="radio"/>
you feel more comfortable making a choice when you have people giving you their opinion on the subject.														<input type="radio"/>
you consider yourselves to be an educated buyer regarding the different firms from which you have to choose a new supplier.														<input type="radio"/>
you are knowledgeable about the different competitors for this product category.														<input type="radio"/>

you prefer to work with this salesperson because his image comes closest to reflecting your company's image.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
you prefer to work with this salesperson because his image comes closest to reflecting your lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
when you work with this salesperson, he reflects the kind of person you are.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

<b>2. In your relationship with this salesperson</b>	N/A	Strongly disagree	Agree	Strongly agree							
you meet outside from the workplace.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
you talk about family, sports, and other personal interests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
you attend entertainment events (sports, theater, etc..).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
you have a meal together (breakfast, lunch, or dinner).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
you get together primarily to have fun.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
you talk about common interest besides work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
you get together with other family members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

From the statements above, please indicate what you think to be the most important behavior in business relationships.

**3. For you, what should be an appropriate behavior for a business partner?**  
Please distribute points from "1" to "5" for each characteristics. "1" would indicate that you do not appreciate such a trait and "5" would indicate that you look for such behavior in business meetings.

Refusing to give in to others	<input type="text"/>	Being free of social obligations	<input type="text"/>
Using any means to get ahead	<input type="text"/>	Standing in the way of people who are too sure of themselves.	<input type="text"/>
Being free of emotional ties with others	<input type="text"/>	Sharing personal feelings with others	<input type="text"/>
Paying little attention to what others think.	<input type="text"/>	Working independently without others.	<input type="text"/>

## PART 4: THE IDEAL WORKPLACE

People differ in what is important to them in a job.

In this section we have listed a number of factors which people might want in their work. We are asking you to indicate which elements are important to you. In completing the following section, *try to think of those factors which would be important to you in an ideal job*; disregard the extent to which they are contained in your present job.

1. In workplace, how the following situations are important to you?	Not important at all				Important				Very Important		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Working with people who cooperate well with one other.											<input type="radio"/>
Having the security that you will be able to work for your company as long as you want to.											<input type="radio"/>
Having a good working relationship with your manager.											<input type="radio"/>
Having little tension and stress on the job.											<input type="radio"/>
Being consulted by your direct superior in his decisions.											<input type="radio"/>
Working in a well-defined job situation where the requirements are clear.											<input type="radio"/>

2. Do you agree with the following statement?	Strongly disagree			Agree				Strongly agree			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Company rules should not be broken even when the employee thinks it is a company's best interest.											<input type="radio"/>

## DEMOGRAPHICS

**You are:**

\_\_\_\_\_ male

— female

**Your age:**

less than 25

between 45 and 55

between 25 and 35

more than 55

\_\_\_\_\_ between 35 and 45

**How long have you been employed by this company?**

Less than 1 year

———— 1 year or longer (but less than 3 years)

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 years or longer (but less than 7 years)

—— 7 years or longer (but less than 15 years)

— 15 years or longer

**How long do you think you will continue working for your company?**

\_\_\_\_\_ 2 years at the most

— From 2 to 5 years

—— More than 5 years (but I will probably leave before I retire)

Until I retire

**What is your nationality?**

**Is there any particular cultural group you are close to?**

**The salesperson was:**

— male

— female

**The salesperson's age:**

less than 25

between 45 and 55

between 25 and 35

more than 55

\_\_\_\_\_ between 35 and 45

**How long do you think the salesperson has been employed by his/her company?**

Less than 1 year

—— 1 year or longer (but less than 3 years)

\_\_\_\_\_ 3 years or longer (but less than 7 years)

\_\_\_\_\_ 7 years or longer (but less than 15 years)

15 years or longer

**What was his/her nationality?**

**All the information collected in this study is totally confidential and anonymous. The name of your organisation will not appear in the data processing.**

# Thank you for your collaboration

## **Appendix 2 : French questionnaire**

### **QU'EST-CE QUI EST COMMUNIQUE LORS DU PREMIER ENTRETIEN? CHOISIR UN NOUVEAU FOURNISSEUR... RENCONTRER UN NOUVEAU VENDEUR ...**

#### **PARTIE 1: LE NOUVEAU FOURNISSEUR**

**Nouveau Fournisseur:** pour le principe de l'étude, nous définissons le nouveau fournisseur comme la **dernière organisation** avec laquelle vous ou votre organisation avez décidé de travailler.

*Les questions suivantes concernent ce que vous avez entendu sur le fournisseur avant la première rencontre*

*.Veuillez encercler le numéro qui reflète le mieux votre point de vue: sur une échelle de 1 à 10, "1" indique que vous êtes entièrement en désaccord avec la phrase, "10" indique que vous êtes entièrement d'accord. Une croix dans le dernier cercle (N/A) indique que cette caractéristique n'est pas applicable pour votre organisation.*

	Entièrement en désaccord				D'accord				Entièrement d'accord				N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
<b>1. Sur le marché, ce nouveau fournisseur:</b>													
a la réputation d'être honnête.											<input type="radio"/>		
est connu pour être concerné par les besoins de ses clients.											<input type="radio"/>		
a la réputation d'être digne de confiance.											<input type="radio"/>		
possède de la crédibilité.											<input type="radio"/>		
possède une bonne image.											<input type="radio"/>		
 <b>B. Votre évaluation du dernier fournisseur que vous avez choisi</b>													
<b>C. A PROPOS DU PARALLELE ENTRE VOTRE ORGANISATION ET CELLE DU FOURNISSEUR.</b>													
<b>1. Vous avez choisi cette organisation parce qu'elle semble:</b>													
avoir des mesures de routine pour évaluer la performance de son service à la clientèle.											<input type="radio"/>		
bien connaître ses compétiteurs.											<input type="radio"/>		
bien savoir comment ses clients évaluent ses produits et services.											<input type="radio"/>		
être plus client-orienté que ses compétiteurs.											<input type="radio"/>		
baser ses avantages compétitifs sur la différenciation des produits et services.											<input type="radio"/>		
<b>Ib1f re persuadé d'exister premièrement pour servir ses clients.</b>											<input type="radio"/>		
vérifier constamment son engagement et son orientation à servir les besoins de ses clients.											<input type="radio"/>		
mesurer de façon systématique le niveau de satisfaction de ses clients.											<input type="radio"/>		
promettre de questionner ses clients au moins une fois par an pour déterminer la qualité de ses produits et services.											<input type="radio"/>		



3. Vous avez choisi cette organisation parce que:

le développement de ses produits et services semble être basé sur une bonne information du marché et des clients.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
pour elle, l'intérêt du client devrait toujours venir en premier.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
ses produits et services sont considérés comme les meilleurs sur le marché.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
ses objectifs en affaires semblent être gouvernés par la satisfaction du client.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
la stratégie de son organisation pour développer un avantage compétitif semble être basé sur la compréhension des besoins du client.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

4. Vous avez choisi ce fournisseur parce qu'il est disposé à:

personnaliser ses produits.	Entièrement en désaccord	D'accord	Entièrement d'accord	<input type="radio"/>
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10			
changer ses processus de fabrication.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10			<input type="radio"/>
faire des changements dans sa logistique pour s'adapter à vos besoins	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10			<input type="radio"/>
personnaliser ses processus de livraison pour mieux répondre à vos besoins.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10			<input type="radio"/>
partager les coûts en outils et équipement pour vous livrer les produits requis.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10			<input type="radio"/>

Les questions suivantes concernent votre organisation.

Veuillez allouer 100 points entre a, b, c, et d (voir exemple dessous).

La couleur de mon organisation:

Mon organisation est <b>rouge</b> .	20 points	Mon organisation est <b>bleue</b> .	30 points
Mon organisation est <b>blanche</b> .	35 points	Mon organisation est <b>verte</b> .	15 points

7. Mon organisation est:

un endroit très personnel: c'est comme de la famille éloignée, les gens sont très proches.	— points	très orientée vers la production: le travail doit être fait avec le moins d'implication personnelle possible.	— point
un endroit très formel et structuré: en général des procédures établies gouvernent ce que les gens font.	— points	un endroit très dynamique et entrepreneurial: les gens ont tendance à sortir des sentiers battus et à prendre des risques.	— point

8. Ce qui tient *mon organisation soudée* c'est:

**l'importance de l'accomplissement des tâches et des objectifs:** être orienté vers la production est une vision communément partagée.

—  
points

**l'innovation et le développement:** il est important d'être le premier.

poir

**les règles et les politiques formelles:** éviter les problèmes au sein de l'institution est important ici

—  
points

**la loyauté et la tradition:** l'engagement des employés envers l'entreprise est élevé.

—  
poir

**les ressources humaines:** il est important de maintenir de la cohésion et de la morale à l'intérieur de l'entreprise.

points

**la croissance et l'acquisition de nouvelles ressources:** être prêt à affronter de nouveaux défis est important.

—  
poir

**la permanence et la stabilité:** l'efficacité et la régularité dans les opérations sont importantes.

points

**la compétition et l'accomplissement:** des objectifs mesurables sont importants.

—  
poir

10. *L'organisation du vendeur* semble être:

**un endroit très personnel:** c'est comme de la famille éloignée, les gens sont très proches.

—  
points

**un endroit très dynamique et entrepreneurial:** les gens ont tendance à sortir des sentiers battus et à prendre des risques.

point:

**un endroit très formel et structuré:** en général des procédures établies gouvernent ce que les gens font.

—  
points

**très orientée vers la production:** le travail doit être fait avec le moins d'implication personnelle possible.

—  
poir

11. Ce qui tient *l'organisation du vendeur soudée* c'est:

**les règles et les politiques formelles:** éviter les problèmes au sein de l'institution est important ici

points

**l'innovation et le développement:** il est important d'être le premier.

—  
poir

**l'importance de l'accomplissement des tâches et des objectifs:** être orienté vers la production est une vision communément partagée.

—  
points

**la loyauté et la tradition:** l'engagement des employés envers l'entreprise est élevé.

—  
poir

12. *L'organisation du vendeur* semble mettre l'emphasis sur:

**les ressources humaines:** il est important de maintenir de la cohésion et de la morale à l'intérieur de l'entreprise.

—  
points

**la croissance et l'acquisition de nouvelles ressources:** être prêt à affronter de nouveaux défis est important.

—  
poir

**la permanence et la stabilité:** l'efficacité et la régularité dans les opérations sont importantes.

—  
points

**la compétition et l'accomplissement:** des objectifs mesurables sont importants.

poin

## PARTIE 2: LE NOUVEAU VENDEUR

**Nouveau Vendeur:** pour le principe de l'étude, nous définissons le nouveau vendeur comme le **dernier représentant** avec lequel vous ou votre organisation a décidé de faire affaires. Par exemple, le représentant avec lequel vous faisiez affaires est parti à la retraite et son entreprise vous envoie un nouveau vendeur. Essayez de vous remémorer quelle a été votre première impression.

Pour simplifier la lecture, nous utiliserons la forme masculine "il".

*Les questions suivantes concernent ce que vous avez pensé du vendeur lors du premier entretien.*

*Veuillez encrer le numéro qui reflète le mieux votre point de vue: sur une échelle de 1 à 10, "1" indique que vous êtes entièrement en désaccord avec la phrase, "10" indique que vous êtes entièrement d'accord. Une croix dans le dernier cercle (N/A) indique que cette caractéristique n'est pas applicable pour votre organisation.*

### L'APPROCHE DU VENDEUR.

	Entièrement en désaccord				D'accord			Entièrement d'accord			N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>6. Il m'a semblé que ce vendeur considérait que:</b>											
chaque client nécessite une approche différente.											<input type="radio"/>
un bon vendeur doit toujours avoir l'intérêt de l'acheteur à l'esprit.											<input type="radio"/>
<b>7. Lors du premier entretien, j'ai trouvé que ce vendeur:</b>											
essayait d'accomplir ses objectifs en satisfaisant ses clients.											<input type="radio"/>
a modifié sa technique de vente quand la situation l'a demandé.											<input type="radio"/>
a utilisé une approche relativement standard avec moi.											<input type="radio"/>
avait l'expertise nécessaire pour prendre la meilleure décision.											<input type="radio"/>
a écouté les requêtes de ma compagnie et a essayé de comprendre en quoi je diffère d'un autre client.											<input type="radio"/>
a prétendu être d'accord avec moi uniquement pour me faire plaisir (en tant que client potentiel)											<input type="radio"/>
a passé plus de temps à essayer de me persuader d'acheter qu'à découvrir les besoins de ma compagnie.											<input type="radio"/>
a essayé de me faire discuter des besoins de ma compagnie.											<input type="radio"/>
m'a aidé à accomplir les objectifs de ma compagnie.											<input type="radio"/>
a recherché des faiblesses dans ma personnalité de façon à me faire pression pour que j'achète.											<input type="radio"/>
a commencé l'entretien par discuter d'un produit avant d'explorer les besoins de ma compagnie.											<input type="radio"/>
a essayé d'influencer mon jugement par une information précise.											<input type="radio"/>
m'a offert le produit qui convenait le mieux au(x) problème(s) de ma compagnie.											<input type="radio"/>
m'a décrit ses produits de façon trop optimiste de sorte qu'ils paraissent les meilleurs.											<input type="radio"/>
a répondu à mes questions aussi correctement qu'il pouvait.											<input type="radio"/>
a essayé de me vendre le plus possible au lieu de satisfaire les besoins de ma compagnie.											<input type="radio"/>
a décidé quels produits me vendre sur la base de ce qu'il voulait me convaincre d'acheter, et non sur la base de ce qui satisferait mon organisation sur le long terme.											<input type="radio"/>

avait la formation académique appropriée à sa fonction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
a essayé de me faire une idée aussi précise que possible de ce que le produit pouvait faire pour mon organisation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
connaissait bien ses produits.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
a prétendu que quelque chose n'était pas de son ressort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
m'a traité comme son rival.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
<b>8. J'ai trouvé que ce vendeur:</b>											
défendait ses opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
avait une forte personnalité.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
démontrait des capacités de leadership.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
aimait interagir avec les gens.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

**9. En général, les vendeurs devraient être**

Quelles sont les qualités que vous appréciez chez un représentant? Veuillez donner des exemples.

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Parmi les caractéristiques suivantes, indiquez celles que vous appréciez chez un représentant (et que vous n'avez pas indiquées plus haut).

Agressif	_____	Sait partager ses connaissances	_____
Prêt à prendre position	_____	Prend contrôle sur la conversation	_____
Gentil	_____	Sensible aux besoins des clients	_____
Expert	_____	Flexible dans sa technique de vente	_____
Egoïste	_____	Dominateur	_____

**10. Lesquelles de ces caractéristiques le nouveau vendeur possédait-il?**

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**7. Existe-t-il d'autres caractéristiques (positive ou négatives) que vous avez remarquées chez le nouveau vendeur?**

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**8. Rôle du Pouvoir dans la relation d'affaires**

Les questions suivantes concernent ce que vous pensez en règle générale de la place du pouvoir dans les relations d'affaires.

L'acheteur doit-il dominer dans la relation? \_\_\_\_\_

Si oui, dans quels domaines (prix, produits, taille de l'entreprise, politique, réseau de relations...)? \_\_\_\_\_

### PARTIE 3: VOTRE POINT DE VUE SUR LES RELATIONS D'AFFAIRES

#### C. A PROPOS DU NOMBRE DE PRENEURS DE DECISIONS

##### 3. Combien de personnes sont impliquées dans la prise de décision?

personnes

département

*Veillez encercler le numéro qui reflète le mieux votre point de vue: sur une échelle de 1 à 10, "1" indique que vous êtes entièrement en désaccord avec la phrase, "10" indique que vous êtes entièrement d'accord. Une croix dans le dernier cercle (N/A) indique que cette caractéristique n'est pas applicable pour votre organisation.*

##### 4. Qu'arrive-t-il généralement lors du choix d'un nouveau représentant?

	Entièrement en désaccord				D'accord			Entièrement d'accord			N/A
Votre décision de faire affaires avec un vendeur est librement choisie parmi plusieurs alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
C'est à vous que revient la dernière décision de choisir le vendeur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
Vous êtes la personne responsable de choisir les derniers candidats.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

##### 4. A l'intérieur de votre organisation, qu'est-il arrivé durant la sélection du nouveau fournisseur?

	Pas du tout Important(e)				Important(e)			Très important(e)			N/A
Le poids que les membres du comité de sélection ont donné à votre opinion est:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
Pour l'évaluation des candidats, les membres du comité de sélection ont estimé que votre opinion était:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
L'influence que vous avez eue sur les critères de sélection des candidats est:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
De quelle façon la décision finale reflète-t-elle votre opinion?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

#### D. A PROPOS DE VOTRE OPINION PERSONNELLE DES RELATIONS D'AFFAIRES.

*Veillez encercler le numéro qui reflète le mieux votre point de vue: sur une échelle de 1 à 10, "1" indique que vous êtes entièrement en désaccord avec la phrase, "10" indique que vous êtes entièrement d'accord. Une croix dans le dernier cercle (N/A) indique que cette caractéristique n'est pas applicable pour vous.*

##### 2. Quand vous devez prendre une décision en affaires:

	Entièrement en désaccord				D'accord			Entièrement d'accord			N/A
vous demandez des conseils à d'autres personnes lorsqu'il s'agit d'un nouvel achat.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
vous n'aimez pas parler à d'autres personnes avant de faire un choix (en règle générale)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

vous demandez rarement conseil quand vous devez prendre une décision.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
vous vous sentez plus à l'aise de prendre une décision quand d'autres personnes vous donnent leur opinion sur le sujet.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
vous vous considérez comme un acheteur averti vis-à-vis des différents fournisseurs en compétition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
vous êtes au courant des différents compétiteurs pour cette catégorie de produits.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
vous préférez travailler avec ce vendeur parce que son image correspond à l'image de votre compagnie.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
vous préférez travailler avec ce vendeur parce que son image correspond à votre style de vie.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>
quand vous travaillez avec ce vendeur, il reflète le style de personne que vous êtes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>

### 3. Dans votre relation d'affaires avec ce vendeur:

	Entièrement en désaccord				D'accord				Entièrement d'accord				N/A
vous vous rencontrez à l'extérieur du lieu de travail.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			<input type="radio"/>
vous parlez de la famille, de sport, et d'autres intérêts personnels.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			<input type="radio"/>
vous sortez (événements sportifs, théâtre...).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			<input type="radio"/>
vous mangez ensemble (midi ou soir).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			<input type="radio"/>
vous vous rencontrez premièrement pour le plaisir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			<input type="radio"/>
vous parlez de vos intérêts communs en dehors du travail.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			<input type="radio"/>
vous sortez ensemble avec d'autres membres de vos familles.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			<input type="radio"/>

Parmi les caractéristiques ci-dessus, indiquez ce qui vous semble être le plus important comportement dans une relation d'affaires.

### 5. Pour vous, quel devrait être un comportement approprié pour un partenaire d'affaires?

Veuillez distribuer des points de "1" à "5" pour chaque caractéristique "1" indique que vous n'appréciez pas un tel comportement, et "5" indique que vous recherchez une telle attitude dans les rencontres d'affaire.

Refuser de s'investir dans les autres.	<input type="text"/>	Se sentir libre de toute obligation sociale.	<input type="text"/>
Tous les moyens sont bons pour parvenir à ses fins.	<input type="text"/>	Se mettre sur le chemin des gens trop sûrs d'eux.	<input type="text"/>

Se sentir libre de tout lien émotionnel avec les autres.	<input type="text"/>	Partager des sentiments ou des impressions personnelles avec les autres.	<input type="text"/>
Ne prêter que peu d'attention à ce que les autres pensent.	<input type="text"/>	Ne pas dépendre des autres.	<input type="text"/>

#### PARTIE 4: L'ENVIRONNEMENT DE TRAVAIL IDEAL

Les opinions des gens sur l'environnement de travail idéal diffèrent. Dans cette section nous avons énuméré certaines conditions que les gens pourraient désirer dans leurs emplois. Nous vous demandons d'indiquer quelle est l'importance de chacune de ces caractéristiques pour vous. Essayez de penser à des conditions de travail idéales même si ce n'est pas représentatif de ce que vous vivez en ce moment.

3. Sur un lieu de travail, quelle est l'importance des caractéristiques suivantes?	Pas du tout important										Important										Très important										N/A										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10											
Travailler avec des gens qui coopèrent bien les uns avec les autres.																															<input type="radio"/>										
Avoir la sécurité de pouvoir travailler avec cette compagnie aussi longtemps que vous le voudrez.																															<input type="radio"/>										
Avoir une bonne relation de travail avec votre supérieur.																															<input type="radio"/>										
Ne pas avoir de tension ou avoir peu de stress dans le travail.																															<input type="radio"/>										
Etre consulté par votre supérieur direct quand il prend ses décisions.																															<input type="radio"/>										
Avoir un emploi bien défini où les attentes et les objectifs sont clairs.																															<input type="radio"/>										
4. Etes-vous d'accord avec la phrase suivante?											Entièrement en désaccord										D'accord										Entièrement d'accord										
Les règlements de l'entreprise ne devraient pas être contournés même si l'employé pense que c'est dans l'intérêt même de l'entreprise.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<input type="radio"/>										

## DONNEES DEMOGRAPHIQUES

**Vous êtes:**

- ☐ un homme  
☐ une femme

**Votre âge:**

- ☐ moins de 25 ans ☐ entre 45 et 55 ans  
☐ entre 25 et 35 ans ☐ plus de 55 ans  
☐ entre 35 et 45 ans

**Depuis combien de temps travaillez-vous pour cette entreprise?**

- ☐ Moins d'un an  
☐ Un an ou plus (mais moins de trois ans)  
☐ Trois ans ou plus (mais moins de sept ans)  
☐ Sept ans ou plus (mais moins de quinze ans)  
☐ Quinze ans ou plus

**Combien de temps pensez-vous continuer à travailler pour cette compagnie?**

- ☐ Deux ans au maximum  
☐ Entre deux et cinq ans  
☐ Plus de cinq ans (mais je partirai probablement avant la retraite)  
☐ Jusqu'à la retraite

**Quelle est votre nationalité?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Existe-t-il un groupe culturel duquel vous vous sentez proche?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Le vendeur était:**

- ☐ un homme  
☐ une femme

**L'âge du vendeur:**

- ☐ moins de 25 ans ☐ entre 45 et 55 ans  
☐ entre 25 et 35 ans ☐ plus de 55 ans  
☐ entre 35 et 45 ans

**Depuis combien de temps pensez-vous que le vendeur travaillait pour son entreprise?**

- ☐ Moins d'un an  
☐ Un an ou plus (mais moins de trois ans)  
☐ Trois ans ou plus (mais moins de sept ans)  
☐ Sept ans ou plus (mais moins de quinze ans)  
☐ Quinze ans ou plus

**Quelle était sa nationalité?** \_\_\_\_\_

Toutes les informations que vous nous avez communiquées sont confidentielles et il ne sera aucunement fait référence à votre organisation tout au long du processus de traitement des données.

# Merci de votre collaboration



***Appendix 3: Correlation Table***

	Dep	WOM	Follow-up	Market Knowledge	TCA	People Skills	Social life	1 customer foc	Ident	Social norms	NFC	Decision makers	Contr. norms	Press.	Expert.
Dep	1.000														
WOM	.305*	1.000													
Follow-up	.346**	.087	1.000												
Market Knowledge	.281*	-.151	.497**	1.000											
TCA	-.307*	.186	.164	.036	1.000										
People Skills	.477*	.544**	.504**	.099	.052	1.000									
Social life	-.039	.141	.479**	.394**	.040	.001	1.000								
1 customer focused	.710*	.040	.530**	.683**	-.061	.363**	.034	1.000							
Identification	-.092	-.095	.152	.188	-.027	.004	-.041	.276*	1.000						
Social norms	-.132	-.057	.277*	.355**	-.042	-.196	.607*	-.077	-.170	1.000					
NFC	-.275*	-.270*	-.019	-.004	-.009	-.148	-.205	-.055	.409**	-.193	1.000				
Decision makers	.178	.059	.055	-.065	.100	.296*	.254*	-.181	-.374**	-.002	-.298**	1.000			
Contractual norms	-.244*	-.200	-.004	.192	.296*	-.235	.046	-.094	-.122	-.161	-.048	-.047	1.000		
Pressure	.448*	.017	.260*	.096	-.068	.427**	-.138	.194	.187	-.316**	-.391**	.392**	.294*	1.000	

### Appendix 4: Demographics

#### Appendix 4a: buyers sample demographic characteristics

<i>Both (%)</i>	<i>France (%)</i>	<b>BUYER</b>		
				<i>Canada (%)</i>
<u><b>GENDER</b></u>	Male	57	59	55
	Female	43	41	45
<b>Age</b>	Less than 25	2.25	0	4.5
	25-35	41	41	41
	35-45	28	29	27
	45-55	26	29	23
	More than 55	0	0	0
<b>Years in the firm</b>	Less than 1	11.5	0	23
	1-3	23.5	24	23
	4-6	40	53	27
	7-15	19	24	14
	More than 15	4.5	0	9
<b>Plan to stay in the company</b>	2 or more	14.5	6	23
	3-5	31	35	27
	More than 5 but less than retiring	29.5	41	18
	Until retiring	20.5	18	23
<b>Nationality</b>	French	50	100	
	Canadian	50		100
<b>Ethnic affiliation</b>	Italian			23
	French			14
	Chinese			9
	Indian			4.5
	Others			7.5
<b>Education</b>	High school	7.5	6	9
	Bachelor	29.5	18	41
	Master	32	55	9
	Ph.D	19	24	14

Appendix 4b: Buyers' perception of the salespersons they met

1		SALESPERSON (PERCEPTION OF THE BUYER)		
		Both (%)	France (%)	Canada (%)
<u>GENDER</u>	MALE	71	65	77
	Female	29	35	23
Age	Less than 25	0	0	0
	25-35	41	41	41
	35-45	36.5	41	32
	45-55	20.5	18	23
	More than 55	0	0	0
Years in the firm	Less than 1	4.5	0	9
	1-2	29	35	23
	3-6	29.5	18	41
	7-14	7.5	6	9
	15 and over	10	6	14
Nationality	French	32.5	65	
	Canadian	29.5		59
	American	18	18	18
	Chinese	8	12	4.5
	Others	1	2	

**Appendix 5: Factor analysis results**

Factor structure	Factor loading	Cr.'s $\alpha$	Cr.'s $\alpha$ France	Cr.'s $\alpha$ Canada
<i>Client orientation</i>				
1. <u>Follow up</u>		.90	.94	.83
– this supplier seems to measure customer satisfaction systematically and frequently.	.938			
– this supplier seems to constantly monitor its level of commitment and orientation to serving customer needs.	.936			
– this suppliers seems to promise to survey clients at least once a year to assess the quality of its products and services.	.897			
– this supplier seems to have routine regular measures of customer service.	.616			
– this supplier seems to have a good sense of how customers value its products and services.	.508			
2. <u>One customer focused</u>		.85	.87	.83
– this supplier is willing to change its product processes to your requirements.	-.876			
– this supplier is willing to make logistic changes to adapt to your needs.	-.677			
– this supplier is more customer-focused than its competitors.	-.667			
– this supplier is willing to customize its product to your specific needs.	-.556			
3. <u>Market knowledge</u>		.82	.85	.82
– its strategy for competitive advantage seems to be based on understanding of customers' needs.	-.791			
– this supplier is willing to share costs in tools and equipment in order to deliver your required products.	-.782			
– its business objectives seem to be driven primarily by customer satisfaction.	-.600			
– this supplier seems to consider that the customer interest should always come first.	-.595			
4. <u>Product-oriented (TCA)</u>		.56	.64	.45
– its product and services are considered the best in the marketplace.	.741			
– this supplier seems to compete primarily on product and service differentiation.	.485			

<b>People Skills</b>		.76	.78	.75
- this salesperson seems to have leadership abilities.	.767			
- this salesperson seems to have a strong personality.	.756			
- this salesperson seems to defend his/her beliefs.	.754			
- this salesperson made me discuss my company needs.	.743			
- this salesperson seems to like people.	.623			
<b>Contractual Norms</b>				
1. <u>Respect of contractual norms</u>		.74	.73	.76
- this salesperson decided what products to offer on the basis of what could convince me to buy, not on the basis of what would satisfy my organization in the long run (reverse scale).	.933			
- this salesperson looked for weaknesses in my personality in order to put pressure on me to buy (reverse scale).	.794			
- this salesperson spent more time trying to persuade me to buy than he/she did trying to discover my organization needs (reverse scale).	.673			
2. <u>Applying pressures</u>		.62	.73	.51
- this salesperson pretended that something was beyond his/her control (reverse scale).	.937			
- this salesperson began the sales talking for a product before exploring my organization needs (reverse scale).	.844			
<b>Social norms-Identification</b>				
1. <u>Social life</u>		.89	.93	.63
- you and the salesperson meet outside from the workplace.	.919			
- you have a meal together (breakfast, lunch or dinner).	.893			
- you talk about common interest besides work.	.858			
- you talk about family, sports, and other personal interests.	.600			
2. <u>Identification</u>		.78	.80	.74
- when you work with this salesperson, he/she reflects the kind of person you are.	.863			
- you prefer to work with this salesperson because his/her image comes closest to reflecting your lifestyle.	.842			
3. <u>Social norms</u>		.75	.80	.75
- you and the salesperson get together with other family members.	-.811			
- you and the salesperson get together primarily to have fun.	-.688			
- you and the salesperson attend entertainment events (sports, theater, etc...).	-.647			

<i>Personal characteristics</i>				
1. <u>Unreceptive</u>		.82	.88	.32
– a business partner should be free of emotional ties with others.	.879			
– a business partner should feel free of social obligations.	.829			
– a business partner should work independently.	.743			
– a business partner should refuse to give into others.	.708			
2. <u>Self-confident</u>		.58	.41	.60
– a business partner should pay little attention to what other think.	.850			
– a business partner should stand in the way of people who are too sure of themselves.	-.798			
3. <u>Security seeking</u>		.68	.34	.79
– in the ideal workplace, you will have the security that you will be able to work for your company as long as you want to.	.863			
– in the ideal workplace, you will have a good working relationship with your manager.	.807			
– in the ideal workplace, you will be consulted by your direct superior in his/her decisions.	.731			
– in the ideal workplace, you will work in a well-defined job situation where the requirements are clear.	.487			
– a business partner should share personal feelings with others.	.404			
4. <u>Hierarchical structure</u>		.54	.37	.18
– company rules should not be broken even when the employee thinks it is the company's best interest.	.790			
– in the ideal workplace, you will have little tension or stress on the job.	.356			

**Appendix 6: Definition and reliability of the wom, expertise, need-for-cognition, and decision-makers variables**

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Cronbach <math>\alpha</math></i>	<i>Cronbach <math>\alpha</math> France</i>	<i>Cronbach <math>\alpha</math> Canada</i>
<b>Word-of-mouth</b>	.94	.92	.96
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- this supplier has the reputation of being honest.</li> <li>- this supplier is known to be concerned about its customers.</li> <li>- this supplier has the reputation of being trustworthy in the market.</li> <li>- this supplier has a good credibility in the marketplace.</li> <li>- this supplier has a good image.</li> </ul>			
<b>Expertise</b>	.61	.61	.52
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- for this salesperson, each customer requires a unique approach.</li> <li>- for this salesperson, a good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind.</li> <li>- this salesperson tried to give me an accurate expectation of what the product could do for my organization.</li> <li>- this salesperson used a standardized selling technique to deal with me (reverse scale).</li> <li>- this salesperson tried to influence my judgement with precise information.</li> <li>- this salesperson modified his/her sales approach when needed.</li> <li>- this salesperson had the appropriate academic background to his function.</li> <li>- this salesperson had the expertise to make the best decision.</li> <li>- this salesperson answered my questions about products as correctly as he/she could.</li> <li>- this salesperson pretended to agree with my ideas only to please me (as a potential customer) (reverse scale).</li> </ul>			
<b>Need-for-cognition</b>	.54	.47	.57
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- you ask other people for advice when you consider making a very new purchase.</li> <li>- you do not like to talk to others before you make a choice (in general)</li> <li>- you rarely ask other people's opinion when you have to make a decision.</li> <li>- you feel more comfortable making a choice when you have people giving their opinion on the subject.</li> </ul>			
<b>Decision makers</b>	.74	.62	.80
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- your decision to do business with this salesperson is freely chosen from several alternatives.</li> <li>- you have the final decision in choosing the salesperson.</li> <li>- you are in charge of selecting the final salesperson candidates.</li> </ul>			

### **Appendix 7: qualitative data**

To the question: “in general, what are the qualities you appreciate in a salesperson. Please, give some examples,” participants answered:

#### **Appendix 7a: the Canadian Sample**

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Construct the answer refers to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Efficient</li><li>- Fast</li><li>- Good knowledge of his/her products</li><li>- Knows his/her company products</li><li>- Expert</li><li>- Technical expertise</li><li>- Understand the products</li><li>- Able to answer questions</li></ul>	<b>TCA aspect (Williamson, 1975)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Knows his/her company, its equipments, its products, the steps of production, material composition, and possibilities of transformation.</li><li>- Knows the potential of his/her company and the potential of the buyer's company</li></ul>	<b>Service Paradigm (Gummesson, 1999)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Listener</li><li>- Supportive during projects</li><li>- Willing to accept the internal policy of the buyer's organization</li><li>- Fights for our needs</li><li>- Clear, simple to understand</li><li>- Long-term objectives (customer's satisfaction)</li></ul>	<b>Consumer Centric Marketing (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000).</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Persevering</li><li>- Available</li><li>- Flexible</li></ul>	<b>Customer-oriented organization (Grönroos, 1992)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Patient</li><li>- Keeps his/her word</li><li>- Integrity</li><li>- Convincing</li><li>- Respect of competitors</li><li>- Professional</li><li>- Reliable</li><li>- Honest</li><li>- Can establish a confidence climate</li><li>- Good communication skills</li><li>- Conflict resolution</li><li>- Non condescending</li></ul>	<b>Contractual norms (Macneil, 1980)</b>



Appendix 7b: the French sample

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Construct the answer refers to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Savoir</li><li>- Competences</li><li>- Technique</li><li>- Connaître son produit</li><li>- Connaissances</li><li>- Rapide</li></ul>	<b>TCA aspect (Williamson, 1975)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Aimant son produit</li><li>- Dynamisme</li><li>- Reactif</li></ul>	<b>Service Paradigm (Gummesson, 1999)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Capacité d'écoute</li><li>- Chaleureux</li><li>- Clair dans ses explications</li></ul>	<b>Consumer Centric Marketing (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000).</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Flexible</li><li>- Aimable</li></ul>	<b>Customer-oriented organization (Grönroos, 1992)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Présentation</li><li>- Feeling</li></ul>	<b>Contractual norms (Macneil, 1980)</b>

To the question: “Are there other important characteristics (positive or negative) you noticed in this new salesperson,” participants answered:

*Appendix 7c: Canadian sample*

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Appreciation</i>	<i>Construct the answer refers to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knew his/her product</li> <li>- Professionalism</li> <li>- Not an expert</li> </ul>	Positive Positive Negative	<b>TCA aspect (Williamson, 1975)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Took the time to follow-up</li> <li>- Calls too often to follow-up</li> <li>- Attentive to my needs</li> <li>- Motivated to meet my needs</li> <li>- Not available</li> </ul>	Positive Negative Positive Positive Negative	<b>Consumer Centric Marketing (Sheth, Sisodia, and Sharma, 2000).</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pretended to agree with the customer</li> <li>- Too eager to be friendly</li> </ul>	Negative Negative	<b>Contractual norms (Macneil, 1980)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shy</li> <li>- Reserved</li> <li>- Aggressive</li> </ul>	Negative Negative Negative	<b>Social bonds</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asked too personal questions</li> </ul>	Negative	<b>Identification</b>

*Appendix 7d: French sample*

<i>Answer</i>	<i>Appreciation</i>	<i>Construct the answer refers to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peu de contacts directs</li> </ul>	Negative	<b>Customer-oriented organization (Grönroos, 1992)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Présentation</li> <li>- Impressionable</li> <li>- Non convaincant</li> <li>- Imbus de lui-même</li> </ul>	Positive Negative Negative Negative	<b>Contractual norms (Macneil, 1980)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Humour</li> <li>- Côté relationnel</li> <li>- Chaleureux</li> <li>- Tendance à vouloir prendre le contrôle</li> </ul>	Positive Positive Positive Negative	<b>Social bonds</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asked too personal questions</li> </ul>	Negative	<b>Identification</b>

Appendix 8: Frequencies

	WOM	Follow-up	1-cust-foc	Market knowledge	TCA	People skills	Social life	Identification
Number of items	5	5	4	4	2	5	4	2
Number of estimations	82	68	56	61	76	78	79	79
Mean	7.74	7.45	6.78	7.69	7.88	7.38	4.68	3.58
Standard deviation	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.2	1.2	1.2	2.6	2.0

	Social norms	NFC	Decision makers	Contractual norms	Pressure	Expertise
Number of items	3	4	3	3	2	10
Number of estimations	7982	81	76	76	81	64
Mean	6.37	7.38	7.37	8.37	7.81	7.51
Standard deviation	4.9	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.9	.95

	Unreceptive	Self-confident	Security-seeking	Hierarchical
Number of items	4	2	5	2
Number of estimations	81	78	83	81
Mean	6.07	4.33	8.03	5.25
Standard deviation	2.6	2.1	1.1	2.2

Appendix 9: Regression coefficients table

Variable	Coefficients				
	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3	Regression 4	Regression 5
DUMMY	-1.69 *	-.167	-.403 ***		
PRESS	.713 ***		.800 ***		.154 *
WOM	.708 ***	.872 ***	.468 ***	1.091 ***	
CONTR_NORM	.500 **		-.480 ***		
EXP	-.370	.258	-.287 ***		
MKT_KN	.263 *		.181 **		
SOC_LIFE	.251 ***		.435 ***	-.357 ***	
PEOP_SK	-.249	.502			
TCA	-.185 **	-.513 ***	-.143 **		
NFC	-.166	-.536 **	-.122 *		.364 ***
FOLL_UP	.158				.840 ***
DEC_MAK	-.104	-4.31.10 <sup>-2</sup>	-.158 *		.230 **
1-CUST-FOC	8.73.10 <sup>-2</sup>		.204 *	1.016 ***	
SOC_NORM	2.351.10 <sup>-2</sup>		.088 *	.407 ***	
IDENT	-3.49.10 <sup>-3</sup>				

Note: \* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001.