

Clustering the Mediators Between the Sales Control Systems and the Sales Performance Using the AMO Model: a Narrative Systematic Literature Review

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1. Abstract

Objective: To identify all types of sales force control systems in the academic literature, and to cluster the mediators between these controls and the performances, according to the AMO model (abilities, motivations, and opportunities), analysing how each of these three groups of mediators are influenced by control systems, and how they impact on the sales performance, using a systematic literature review.

Study Selection: Business, Management, and Social Sciences were taken as selection fields. False positives identification, exclusions after reading the abstracts, and after reading the whole article, was performed by the authors by consensus.

Contributions: As academic result, the review highlights that all three groups from the AMO model evidence positive impacts on sales performance when a behavioral control system (mostly from the capability part) is in use, by enhancing salesperson's skills, motivation, and organizational conditions and support, fostering as a result, a salesperson relational approach and a customer orientation, which generate the best outcomes in the long term. These findings suggest as a managerial contribution, that coaching and leading -rather than commanding- to be a more appropriate control attitude, especially when the salesperson is younger or unexperienced.

Keywords: sales control systems, sales management, AMO model, behavior control, output control

2. Introduction

Sales control systems are tools used by managers to ensure efficiency by preventing opportunistic behavior, and are the organization's procedures for monitoring, directing, evaluating and compensating its employees (Anderson and Oliver, 1987; Cravens et al., 1991), oriented to the attainment of the organizational objectives (Auh and Menguc, 2007; Challagalla and Shervani, 1996; Grant and Cravens, 1996; Jaworski et al. 1993). Salesforce represents the largest part of marketing personnel and budget in many firms (Cravens et al., 1993; Piercy, 2006), especially in the industrial sector (Krafft, 1999; Robertson and Anderson, 1993), justifying the importance of control on sales activities as a means to improve organizational effectiveness and customer satisfaction. Salesperson performance has been related to the sales organization effectiveness, so understanding what drives sales performance is becoming an essential sales management assignment (Grant and Cravens, 1996). Baldauf et al.'s (2005) examination of the state of knowledge concerning sales management control strategies updated the main findings, as well as the antecedents and consequences of control systems to date, and placed a research agenda with three main issues: (1) conceptualization of sales management control, (2) antecedents of sales management control strategy, and (3) effect of control systems on salesperson (characteristics and performance) and organizational effectiveness.

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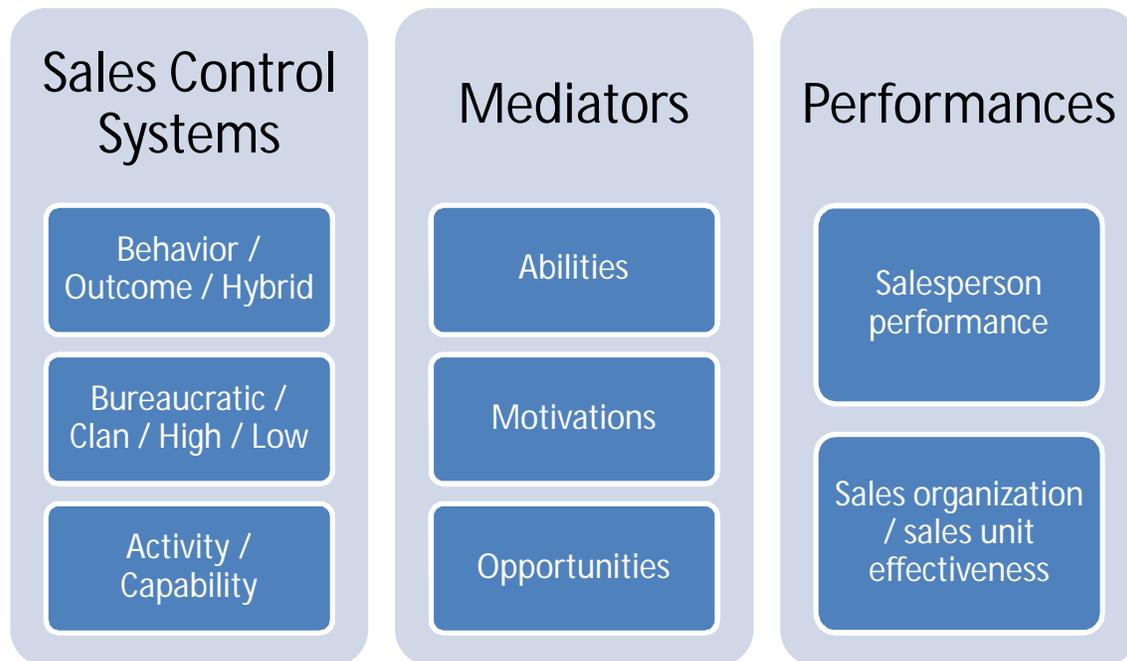
Previous research on sales management identified inconsistent results trying to demonstrate linear relationships between system controls and performances: Cravens et al., (2004) highlighted better performances using high-control systems, while Jaworski et al., (1993) found no differences under different control patterns, which suggests a complex multidimensional linkage, resulting from a large amount of mediators between the control systems and the performances (individual, group and organizational), which have been identified and studied by scholars during the last three decades.

The authors' review of sales management control systems found general agreement on scholars, that behavior-based controls align the salesperson with the long-term interests of the company, while outcome-based controls may be more effective in the short term, but may lose customer orientation and customer satisfaction, which are key factors for a company to continue maintaining its market shares and profits. Another widespread evidence is that a high behavioral performance results in a high individual outcome performance, which implies that salespeople with highest outcome standards are those with the best technical knowledge, provide the customer with the better and earliest information, and make the best sales presentations, so that managers expect salespeople to perform well on both dimensions of performance (Babakus et al., 1996).

The large amount of suppliers in most industrial products has made strategic marketing managers be aware of the importance of relationship marketing. Customer orientation has become the kingpin to increase long-term value, and the expansion of the customer base and transactional relationships are ceasing to be practice in use for dominant firms (Bradford et al., 2010). Behavior control emphasizes long-term orientation (Madhani, 2015) and results in higher behavioral performance and consequently relationship marketing, while output (outcome) control focuses on short-term results and transactional relationships, and is not widely accepted as an antecedent of outcome performance, especially in the long run. According to this new paradigm, scholars pursued to identify variables that may have a positive effect on customer satisfaction, taking as a starting point sales control systems, and its direct results identified in each of the performances (behavioral, outcome, unit sales, organizational).

Sales activity research presents added challenges regarding studies of any other business area: on the one hand we have the complexity related to the human factor and its variability in terms of motivations and behaviors, but additionally the multidimensionality of the sales activity (tasks in the office and as boundary spanner, knowledge and suitability of the product and the relationship with the customer, etc.) leads to a wide analysis of elements mediating the control system and the results. A deeper knowledge of the mediators between the control systems and the performances will describe the underlying basis that determines the suitability of each control system in each particular situation (Lusch and Jaworski, 1991).

The AMO framework has been in use for the past 15 years to explain to what extent each of the HRM practices can affect performance, by considering three basic categories: (1) human attributes relevant to perform the sales activity (abilities), (2) factors affecting the will to engage in positive behaviors and attitudes (motivations), and (3) all sets of circumstances that make it possible to participate successfully (opportunities). Figure 1 illustrates the extended framework proposed, that integrates the AMO grouping as a mediator variable, with its antecedent (sales control system) and the sales performances. This proposal is based on the assertion that the impact of each sales managerial system on the variables included in each of the three categories, will be homogeneous, so that instead of assessing each variable's impact on performance, it may be used the mediator category (abilities, motivations or capabilities) as a reference in studies about sales management. Although we found just one side call to the AMO system in our review on sales control systems (Wang et al., 2012), studies from other organizational areas analysing entailments between human resources practices and employee performance, covering different industry sectors, and management styles (Boselie, 2010; Choi, 2014; Marin-Garcia, 2013), have taken this framework as a basis for understanding the "black-box", that is, the mechanisms of how control systems impact on the reaching of objectives.

Figure 1 Sales Control Systems / Sales Performances Framework

Most studies on mediators between control systems and performances have been developed in isolation from one another, not paying much attention to the interactive effects between one mediator and the others (Miao and Evans, 2014). A deeper understanding of how these mediators are influenced by control systems, and how they affect to each other, should be a major issue for sales management research in the coming years. Accordingly, this literature review intends to deepen the knowledge related to sales force management and its consequences, by clustering the mediators between the sales control systems and the sales unit/salesperson performance (outcome and behavioral), using the AMO framework as a grouping approach. This will be an attempt to describe patterns for each of the three groups, and to try to reach a better understanding of the linkages between the sales control system and the performance. In this sense, the paper attempts to clarify inconsistencies found when specific single control systems have resulted in different results in previous empirical research. The conceptual development and the description of the methodology in the literature selection follow this introduction. Subsequently, the results will be discussed, concluding with the managerial implications and future research directions.

3. Conceptual development

3.1. Sales control systems.

Salespeople Control frameworks are based on three management approaches:

(1) Organizational Theory suggests that control can be accomplished through two strategies, depending on how the outcomes can be measurable and the tasks are well known and programmable: performance evaluation (behavior or control based), and social control, where members understand and have internalized the organizational goals.

(2) Agency focuses on contracts between a principal (sales manager in this context) and one agent (salesperson) to whom decision-making is delegated, and considers exchanges based on either agent's performance outcomes or behavior, determining variable or fixed compensation respectively (Anderson and Oliver, 1987; Eisenhardt, 1985; Gencturk and Aulakh, 1995; Krafft, 1999; Lapierre and Skelling, 2005; Mallin and DeVecchio, 2008; Ouchi, 1979; Stathakopoulos, 1966).

(3) Transaction Cost Theory proposes the question “make versus buy” for the management, seeking the most efficient solution to implement governance mechanisms to reduce salesperson opportunistic behavior (Mallin et al., 2010b; Stathakopoulos, 1996; Tremblay et al., 2003). All three frameworks are complementary and can be found simultaneously in the different salesforce control systems. Building upon these paradigms, scholars have suggested several typologies about sales control systems. This literature review focuses on the following:

a) Behavior-based, outcome-based and hybrid systems.

Behavior-based control emphasizes the monitoring, directing, evaluating and rewarding the behaviors of salespeople (the firm assumes risk to gain control), with an orientation to fixed-salary compensation, to direct and control salesperson job inputs, such as personal qualities, activities, or sales strategies. Performance evaluation is more subjective because the manager must decide if and to what degree, inputs generate outputs (Anderson and Oliver, 1987; Cravens et al., 1993; Oliver and Anderson, 1994). Common tools used under this system include frequent group meeting, feedback and coaching from managers, training programs, incentive programs, scheduling and territory management, in an effort to guide salespeople in carrying out their tasks (Bingham and Quigley, 1994; Panagopoulos and Avlonitis, 2008). The effective implementation of behavior-based control requires selecting salespeople who commit to the sales organization, the willingness to cooperate with managers and peers, and to function as team members, as well as devoting attention to salesperson and sales manager training on behavior areas such as product knowledge, selling skills, sales planning and sales support (Piercy et al., 1998). Although behavior-based systems result in a higher behavioral performance (Babakus et al., 1996; Cravens et al., 1993), two main weaknesses have been suggested under such controls: (1) a high level of management surveillance implies high monitoring costs, that eventually might exceed the control system’s marginal gain; and (2) the monitorization may lead to standardization of tasks and as a result, reduce the level of sales force discretion (Menguc and Barker, 2004).

Outcome-based controls focus on end results and outcomes achieved (Anderson and Oliver, 1987). Salespeople are essentially left alone with minimal monitoring and the supervisory style is “hands off”, being compensated in proportion to their measurable results, so that the evaluation system tends to be linked to a few objectively measurable indicators and has a lower salary component and avoiding costs of close personal supervision (Challagalla and Shervani, 1997; Robertson and Anderson, 1993). This system emphasizes participative decision-making and increases the discretion of salespeople in achieving the desired outcomes (Menguc and Barker, 2004). Unlike the paternalistic approach of behavior control system, outcome control is administered with an incentivized remuneration plan, where risk is shifted from the firm to the salesperson (Oliver and Anderson, 1994). This system is considered as “the path of least resistance”, but seems to force salespeople to pursue immediate returns, which might harm a long-term organizational strategic orientation (Anderson and Oliver, 1987; Baldauf et al., 2002). Accordingly, the design of outcome systems represents the challenge of assuring the alignment of salespeople and organizational goals.

Outcome and behavior control have been located as the extremes of a continuum with various hybrid levels where management may elect to position its strategy. The continuum idea implies that it exists a gradual increase of one control system component and simultaneously a gradual decrease of the other. The prevailing description of hybrid systems in sales organizations comprises the use of elements of both system types (Oliver and Anderson, 1994; Quigley and Bingham, 1999). In it, it may exist one particular point of the continuum with either combinations of high levels of outcome and behavior control systems, or low levels of both systems, representing the same place in the continuum. Darmon and Martin (2011) claim the inaccuracy of such description, becoming one limitation of existing conceptual frameworks: salesforce control systems fail to characterize the total size and content of the control tool kit over some extended period.

b) Bureaucratic system, clan system, high-control system, and low-control system:

This typology suggested by Jaworski et al. (1993) contents four control systems based on the extent of reliance on formal (high and low) and informal (high and low) controls. Consequently, bureaucratic systems, with high levels of formal control but low informal controls, contain management-initiated, written controls, with professional and cultural control mechanisms operating in a secondary role. A clan system represents the reverse situation with low formal control, relying exclusively on professional and cultural controls.

When both formal and informal controls apply largely, personnel are expected to follow company's procedures, as well as a collegial work environment and the norms and values of the organization. Lastly, in low control systems, organizations have not implemented either the formal or the informal systems.

c) Activity and capability control, as different behavior control types:

Challagalla and Shervani (1996) separate behavior control into two different parts: (1) activity control, which refers to the specification of the tasks a person is expected to perform on a regular basis, the monitoring of actual behavior, and the administering of rewards and punishments according to the performance of specified activities; and (2) capability control, which emphasizes the development of individual skills and abilities (e.g., presentation, negotiation, interpersonal communication, planning, and others), setting goals and monitoring the levels of these skills and abilities, providing guidance (coaching) for improvement. Further research evidenced that activity and capability control have differential and even opposite effects (Miao et al., 2007) and should be treated separately, not as a global construct (Miao and Evans, 2012).

3.2. Sales performance

An effective control based on a good information in order to facilitate decision making to improve organizational results, determine sales team performance as a central issue in sales management (Piercy et al., 1998). Salesperson performance and contextual factors including the market potential or the level of competition, and corporate factors as the capacitation of the management, are the main drivers of organizational effectiveness (Cravens et al., 1991). Sales control literature considers salesperson performance as a separate construct from sales unit/organization performance: the former comprises behavioral and outcome performances and is a set of individual outcomes, while the latter includes outcomes either from a sales unit or from a sales organization.

a) Salesperson performance.

Salesperson performance can be measured focusing on objective measures (outcomes), by sales managers' evaluations on various tasks and attitudes (behaviors), or using salesperson self-evaluations, taking as benchmark other salespeople at the unit (Holmes and Srivastava, 2002). Zallocco et al. (2009) proposed two new approaches to salesperson performance: the effectiveness/efficiency, and the internal/external orientation (Table 1). Effectiveness comprises measurable outcomes, and skill-based behaviors and capabilities, while efficiency is the ratio of selling output to selling inputs, emphasizing on selling activity behaviors. Alternatively, intra-organizational features used for measuring the performance represent the internal-orientation, whilst the external-orientation pays attention to market-based measurements.

Table 1

Table 1 Salesperson performance measures		
	Effectiveness (selling outcomes)	Efficiency (selling activities)
Internally oriented skill, (selling capabilities)	Competences:	Productivity
	- Technical knowledge	Profitability of sales
	- Presentation skills	Gross margin
	- Communication skills	Time management
	- Listening skills	Cash flow and account management
	- Supervisory skills	Number of calls
	- Teamwork	Number of presentations
	Quota attainment	Time spent in territory
	Sales volume	
	Sales behavior	
Externally oriented (marketplace metrics)	Mix change (upgrading)	
	Channel feedback/satisfaction	Closing ratio
	Customer feedback/satisfaction	- To number of calls
	Competitive understanding	- To number of presentations
	New accounts introduced to product	Sales penetration per account
	Number of customers	
	Level of interaction with customers	
	Performance relative to opportunities	
Customers' success/goal attainment		
Source: Zallocco et al. (2009)		

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The traditional performance evaluation based on sales results has been shifting, as sales strategies increasingly rely on team-oriented selling and building long-term relationships (Piercy et al., 1998). Salespeople performance is a major driver of sales organization performance (Cravens et al., 1991), and entails an assessment of salesperson behavior based on its contribution to organizational objectives (Babakus et al., 1996). Salesperson performance is conceptualized to include behavior and outcome components:

Behavioral performance (or in-role behavioral performance) consists of an evaluation of the various activities and strategies salespeople engage in when executing their job responsibilities (Babakus et al., 1996), including adaptive selling, teamwork, sales presentations, sales planning, and sales support activities (Piercy et al., 1998), while the outcome performance are the results of salespeople's activities, that can be largely attributed to them. Traditional measures include sales, market share, new accounts, and customer satisfaction (Grant and Cravens, 1996), and management will place quotas and objectives to adjust outcomes, considering factors affecting outcomes (e.g., market potential, intensity of competition, brand image) that are not controllable by salespeople (Baldauf et al., 2001). Interestingly Piercy and Lane (2005) highlight the shift from the traditional focus on outcome performance as the main indicator of effectiveness, to a situation that requires the development of closer customer relationships and the implementation of a value-based strategy, where salesperson behavior performance appears to have a higher influence on long-term achievements.

b) Sales organization / unit effectiveness.

Sales organization effectiveness is defined as an evaluation of overall organizational results, generated by a sales organization during some specific time frame (Baldauf and Cravens, 1999). Turnover, profits, ROA, and the levels of customer satisfaction are major indicators to measure this construct (Babakus et al., 1996). The salesperson and his/her variables is a partial contributor, and other environmental and organizational variables affect this group outcomes, accordingly, salesforce performance should take in account only what falls under the salesperson's control (Barker, 1999; Verano-Tacoronte and Melián-González, 2008).

3.3. The AMO model

Literature on human resources management suggests the existence of major mechanisms that shape employee characteristics that influence performance by affecting: (1) the ability to perform, which includes the knowledge, skills, and abilities; (2) the motivation, which comprises the areas of compensation and incentives, that influence employees' attitudes by affecting their motivation, commitment, and satisfaction; and (3) the opportunity to perform, or how the involvement and job design may reduce turnover and absenteeism (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Katou and Budhwar, 2010). The AMO framework in a sales management environment focuses on the salesperson and the sales organizational performances, resulting from the different HR practices (control systems): behavioral, outcome, activity, capability, bureaucratic, clan, high and low. Using one or another system may influence differently on each of the mediators of this framework, considered either abilities, motivations or opportunities, and later on the sales performance, as described in figure 1. Deviations related with employees subjective perceptions about HR management practices may imply different mediating values and as a result, different performance levels (Marin-Garcia and Tomas, 2016; Vermeeren, 2010), making it difficult to find linear results on the scholar's studies.

4. Methodology

This work has reviewed studies on management and control systems of the sales forces, published over the last thirty-two years (1985-2016).

Initial articles on sales management appear still relevant as theoretical background: Churchill et al.'s (1985) and Anderson and Oliver's (1987) meta-analyses gather all previous relevant knowledge to date regarding sales control systems and propose the main constructs from the generally accepted framework for sales control systems to date. A total of five references from 1985 or before have been later added, in order to complete the conceptual development. The search was performed using as keyword formula: "Management Control" and Sale*, or "Control System*" and "Sale*", or "Output Control" and "Behavior Control", on the following engines: Web of Science, Scopus, Science Direct, and Business Source Premier (EBSCO).

Titles, abstracts, and keywords were used for the initial selection and group-specific criteria were used to screen the results. For example, in Business Source Premier, the research was limited to refereed academic articles. In Science Direct, the registers were restricted to the "Business, Management and Accounting" field. In addition, we limited in Scopus the field to Social Sciences and Humanities and excluded those with keywords that may not match our topic (inventories, mathematical models, computers, stochastic systems, etc.). Finally, we incorporate the 300 first registers of Google Scholar to conclude the initial collection of literature. Following Baldauf et al.'s (2005) criterion, we focused on peer-reviewed journals, because relevant conference proceedings' is often not available in working papers.

Figure 2 Results of each database and later screening

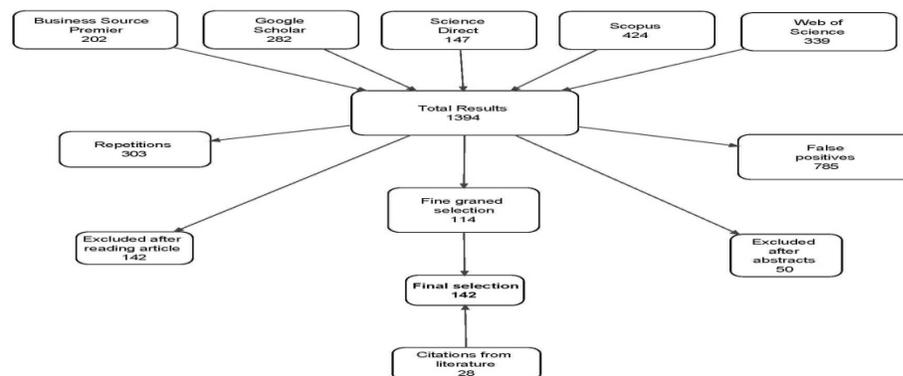


Figure 2 represents the selection breakdown: starting from the initial 1394 articles, 303 were dropped as repetitions and 785 were not connected with our topic (false positives) according to one author.

The study from abstracts performed by the three authors excluded another group of 50 results, and finally, the reading of the remaining group eliminated 142 works. The final selection included 114 studies, focused on topics about sales management and sales teams control systems: theories, systems, mediators, relationships and consequences. Once this articles' research was performed, another 28 studies cited by these scholars was incorporated to the group. As described in table 2, the final group of 142 references emerges from top management, sales, and marketing papers.

The codification process has been started by one of the authors by creating a database with the following fields for each of the 142 articles selected: year – author – title – journal – introductory ideas and framework – sample – type of salesforce – unit of analysis – selection criteria – type of market – research instrument – type of control system – variables (mediators) – results – managerial implications – future research. The field of introductory ideas collected all the definitions of the mediators used in table 3. All three authors met later to verify the contents and to integrate similar constructs (i.e. role stress, job tension, and job-related tension; or organizational commitment, and affective commitment) in order to minimize the variables of the system. Later, we expanded a conceptual map in order to visualize the mediators between the control systems and the performances and its possible integration into larger categories (AMO). Variables either not affected by sales control systems or not influencing performances according to the literature, as well as those acting just as moderators –but not mediators- were excluded from the study.

5. Analysis and results.

5.1. Mediators between control systems and sales performance.

Table 3 summarizes each of the AMO model components' definitions and discusses some relevant issues that may complete its meaning as mediators in a sales context:

Table 3 Mediators definitions and/or comments	
Consistency of control system elements	Typical inconsistency patterns that combine behavioral and outcome elements, representing models of management with different kinds of adverse effects on sales performance: (1) the "ever-present manager", (2) the "black hole" with unknowable evaluation criteria for the salesperson, and (3) the "sublime neglect" pattern, who relies on behavioral elements, but does not provide any coaching to salespeople, so improvement becomes harder for the salesperson (Anderson and Onyemah's, 2009).
Customer relationship strategy	Includes the specific characteristics of motivation (both intrinsic and recognition) and the salesperson's orientation towards planning, sales support and the customer (Grant and Cravens, 1999).
Dysfunctional behaviors	Employee activities that further personal interests but are harmful to long-term organizational performance and come regarding outcomes in four forms: gaming, smoothing, focusing, and invalid reporting (Jaworski, 1988; Ramaswami, 1996).
Emotional exhaustion	Lack of vital energy that occurs in highly demanding people-oriented situations, such as boundary-spanning positions and is the first stage of the burnout process, followed by depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment (Babakus et al. 1999; Cravens et al., 2004).
Entrepreneurial orientation of the sales department	Seeking of innovative selling approaches and new business opportunities that constitute strategic advantages by differentiating from competitors (Spillecke and Brettel, 2013).
Extrinsic motivation (recognition)	Considers respect from supervisors and colleagues, and the pursuit of compensation. Therefore, it includes two components: compensation seeking and recognition seeking (Cravens et al., 1993; Miao et al., 2007; Miao and Evans, 2014; Piercy et al., 1999).
Goal congruence	The extent of alignment between sales manager's and salesperson's goals (Mallin et al., 2010).
Goal difficulty	The degree to which the goals assigned by a supervisor are attainable (Fang et al., 2005).
Goal participation	The degree of involvement of salespeople in setting the goals (Fang et al., 2005).
Goal specificity	The extent to which the goals are clearly defined by a supervisor (Fang et al., 2005).
Idea transfer	Relates the diffusion of original ideas or knowledge from the salesperson to other persons in the organization, as well as the assimilation of organizational knowledge, and newly diffusion to others, as a process that improves the firm's product and additional service quality (Flaherty and Pappas, 2012).
Information asymmetry	The extent to which a subordinate has more information than the supervisor (Jaworski and MacInnis, 1989; Ramaswami et al., 1997).
Intrinsic motivation	Orientation to challenge and enjoyment when performing the job, which results in a sense of accomplishment, self-actualization, and self-worth (Mallin et al., 2010). Accordingly, this type of motivation includes two components: challenge seeking and task enjoyment (Miao et al., 2007).

Job satisfaction	The degree to which an employee is satisfied or happy with the job (Jaworski et al., 1993) including all characteristics of the job and its environment, which salespeople find rewarding, fulfilling and satisfying, or frustrating and unsatisfying (Grant et al., 2001).
Job tension / role stress / job related tension	The extent to which workers are bothered by work features, such as job evaluations and achievement of performance goals (Challagalla and Shervani, 1997; Lusch and Jaworski, 1991). Major stressors are role ambiguity and role conflict.
Learning/performance orientation	A learning orientation implies a strong desire to improve and master the selling skills and abilities continually, while a performance orientation seeks to obtain extrinsic rewards from supervisors by a successful outcome, what indeed is likely to lead to short-term payoffs (Kohli et al., 1998).
Opportunistic behaviors	Involve withholding or distorting information, shrinking responsibilities, cheating, or other subtle forms of dishonest behaviors (Atuahene-Gima and Li, 2002).
Organizational citizenship behavior	Represents the voluntary commitment from individuals, embodied in discretionary activities or attitudes important for the effective and successful functioning of the organization, which are not related to the contractual tasks and therefore are not directly or explicitly rewarded in the organization's formal reward system (Piercy et al., 2004a and 2006).
Organizational commitment, or affective commitment	Strength of a salesperson's involvement and loyalty to the organization (Grant and Cravens, 1996). This construct was termed affective commitment by Joshi and Randall (2001) referring to the development of identification by the salesperson with the organization, and the feeling that his/her relationship with the organization is a "satisfying self-defining relationship".
Organizational customer orientation	Salesperson's perception of the extent to which the sales organization promotes and engages in activities aimed at providing quality services and satisfaction to the customer (Evans et al., 2007).
Problem solving	Salesperson's effort to understand the customer's goals and objectives, uncover their needs, and offer unique solutions to specific customer problems (Wang et al., 2012).
Risk aversion	Basically, refers in this study to income stability.
Role ambiguity	Occurs when an employee lacks the salient information needed to effectively enact his or her role (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996).
Role conflict	The extent to which role expectations defined by managers are incongruent with the role orientation of the employee (Jaworski et al., 1993).
Sales innovativeness	The extent to which salespeople perceive an organization as demonstrating flexibility and willingness to accept new ways of problem-solving with regard to the sales function (Evans et al., 2007).
Sales manager control competences	Refer to how well is control exercised by managers, comprising aspects as team leadership role, and the skill-set (coaching strategically, and diagnosing performance) appropriate to this role (Piercy et al., 2009; Piercy et al., 2012).
Sales orientation	Attempt to maximize short-term sales gains by stimulating demand for products (Wachner et al., 2009), rather than a long-term approach by generating satisfaction (customer orientation).
Sales supportiveness	Salespeople's perception that their organization cares about their well-being and appreciates their contributions (Evans et al., 2007).
Sales territory design	Territory boundaries (or allocating account responsibility), deciding the salesforce size, and allocation of selling effort across customers and prospects, products, geographical areas and other territory dimensions (Babakus et al., 1996; Grant and Cravens, 1996; Piercy et al., 1998; Piercy et al., 2004b), to provide each salesperson the work unit under his/her responsibility.
Salesperson satisfaction with supervisor	Extent to which salesperson positively evaluates managerial: (1) fairness, (2) praising for work well done, and (3) keeping of promises.
Salesperson supervisee trust	Salesperson's faith in the supervisor's benevolence and fairness (Atuahene-Gima and Li, 2002). Alternatively, managerial trust represents the reliance involving repeated exchanges, future obligations, and the belief that the salesperson will fulfill his/her obligations in the long run.
Task clarity	The extent to which salesperson is aware of what activities to perform, and how his performance will be measured (Joshi and Randall, 2001).
Transformational leadership	Salespeople's motivation to perform beyond their transactional agreements, to do more than expected by recognizing and satisfying their higher order needs (Panagopoulos and Dimitriadis, 2009).

5.2. Classification according to the AMO model dimensions.

The allocation from the mediators of our research to each dimension of AMO model may cast different results depending on the different subjective assessments that could be used. In order to perform this process adequately, each of the authors has made a percentage of the setting of each mediator, as an ability, motivation-related element, or as a facilitator factor, of the independent seller work of the above. While performing this allocation process, no differences in terms of allocation were found, and this sorting is presented in table 4:

Table 4

Table 4 Attribution of mediators to dimensions of the AMO model	
Construct	AB/MO/OP
Consistency of control system elements	Opportunity
Customer relationship strategy	Motivation
Dysfunctional behaviors	Motivation
Emotional exhaustion	Motivation
Entrepreneurial orientation of the sales department	Opportunity
Extrinsic (recognition) motivation	Motivation
Goal congruence	Opportunity
Goal difficulty	Opportunity
Goal participation	Opportunity
Goal specificity	Opportunity
Idea transfer	Opportunity
Information asymmetry	Motivation
Intrinsic motivation	Motivation
Job satisfaction	Motivation
Job tension/role stress	Motivation
Learning/performance orientation	Ability
Opportunistic behaviors	Motivation
Organizational citizenship behavior	Motivation
Organizational commitment, or affective commitment	Motivation
Organizational customer orientation	Opportunity
Problem solving	Ability
Risk aversion	Opportunity
Role ambiguity	Motivation
Role conflict	Motivation
Sales innovativeness	Opportunity
Sales manager control competences	Ability
Sales orientation	Opportunity
Sales supportiveness	Opportunity
Sales territory design	Opportunity
Salesperson satisfaction with supervisor	Opportunity
Salesperson supervisee trust	Opportunity
Task clarity	Motivation
Transformational leadership	Opportunity

5.3. Mediators between the sales control systems and the performances:

According to the AMO framework, people that perform better have achieved the abilities (age, knowledge, education, etc.), the motivation (willingness to perform: personality, values, and expectations), and the work environment is adequate to develop such capabilities and motivation at the highest level (opportunities). The grouping proposed for the mediators is discussed next.

5.3.1. Abilities

Challagalla and Shervani's (1996) splitting of behavior control into activity and capability control, and highlighted the importance of managerial effort on granting salespeople the skills necessary that current's customer orientation requires. Wang et al. (2012) evidenced that combinations of activity and output control, and activity and capability control interact negatively on problem-solving, while capability and output control interact positively to enhance problem-solving. Additionally, customer-directed problem solving positively affects customer relationship satisfaction, and the later affects customer share of wallet.

Similarly, Piercy et al. (2009) evidenced strong relationships between the sales manager behavior-based control level, the control competences of sales manager, the salesperson behavior performance, the salesperson outcome performance, and the sales unit effectiveness. Also, they found a mediating effect of control competences between sales manager behavior control and salesperson behavior performance, likewise Kohli et al. (1998) between the three supervisory orientations (end-results, activity, and capability), salespeople goal orientations (learning and performance), and salespeople's performance.

Following the widely accepted paradigm that, the greater the competition, the more effective is the relational approach, high skilled salespeople who solve customer's problems will serve better the interests of firms. Capability control –and more widely- behavioral control, enhance such salesperson's skills in order to establish trust with the buyer, by listening, communicating, and showing expertise about the product and how it brings value to the customer. In another hand, skills, and abilities stay aside the outcome control, and managers do not focus on how the customer is approached.

5.3.1. Motivations

Many studies have evidenced entailments between control systems and performances, mediated motivational constructs. This group starts with positive expressions, as intrinsic and extrinsic (recognition) motivation, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, and conclude with factors that negatively affect the salesperson willingness to achieve a better performance, as role conflict, role ambiguity, and emotional exhaustion.

Baldauf et al. (2001) study with chief sales executives showed that behavior-based control results in higher levels of salesperson intrinsic and recognition motivation. Similar results were obtained researching field sales managers (Baldauf et al., 2002), where behavior control improved salespeople's job-related characteristics (attitudes, intrinsic and recognition motivation, and capabilities), resulting in turn in a higher salesperson performance. Regarding the components of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Miao et al.'s (2007) investigation on American salespeople, evidenced different positive impacts among sales control systems (activity, capability, and outcome), intrinsic and extrinsic components of motivation (challenge seeking, task enjoyment, recognition seeking, and compensation seeking), and the salesperson performances (behavioral and outcome).

Sales strategy affects motivation as well, as shown by Mallin and Bolman-Pullins (2009), which stated that higher levels of customer relationship orientation increased salesperson intrinsic motivation. Miao and Evans' (2012) proposed that the outcome-capability control combination is positively related to intrinsic motivation, while activity-capability control combination is negatively related to intrinsic motivation. In addition to this, the authors found no impact from intrinsic motivation on salesperson performance. However, it mitigates the negative effect of role ambiguity on salesperson performance. A later study of Miao and Evans (2014) evidenced that capability control and activity control have respectively augmentative and diminutive moderating effects on the positive effect of outcome control on task enjoyment (as a part of intrinsic motivation) and recognition seeking (as part of extrinsic motivation).

Job satisfaction appears as a motivational factor that increases with output and cultural controls, as presented by Mallin and Bolman-Pullins (2009) as well as with clan control, and especially high control system (Jaworski et al., 1993), which means that high levels of informal control result in higher job satisfaction. This result is in line with Cravens et al. (2004)'s results, that reveal higher levels of job satisfaction when a high management control was in use, followed in sequence by clan, bureaucratic, and low control systems. In addition, in line with those from Onyemah et al.'s study (2010), postulating that the more the sales force control is behavior-based, the higher is salespeople's satisfaction with their supervisor, job, and promotion possibilities.

Organizational commitment appeared on Anderson and Oliver's (1987) analysis, resulting from behavior-based management control systems. Salespeople, whose organizational commitment is high, also display relatively high behavior and outcome performances (Grant and Cravens, 1996; Piercy et al., 1998). Pettijohn et al. (2001) found higher levels of salesperson organizational commitment when an input evaluation system is in use. And Grant and Cravens (1999) proved for organizations using behavior-based sales management strategies, that salesforce organizational commitment is closely linked to sales unit effectiveness. These authors, in line with Low and Moncrief (2001), found a positive result from higher job satisfaction and lower role ambiguity on organizational commitment. Piercy et al. (2011), in an extensive study in seven countries, confirmed organizational commitment as antecedent of the sales unit effectiveness, and peculiarly, reciprocal effects may emerge, as salesperson performance was considered an antecedent of organizational commitment, considering that poorly performing salespeople tend to attribute their low performance to a lack of organizational support.

Organizational citizenship behavior appears as an interrelated and similar mediator to organizational commitment. Piercy et al.'s (2006) study evidenced an empirical path from sales manager behavior control to organizational citizenship behavior (direct but also mediated by perceived organizational support), and from there to in-role behavior performance, and similarly Piercy et al. (2012) research evidenced a positive path between sales manager control level, to sales manager organizational citizenship behavior, and to salesperson performance.

This significant amount of investigation (in different countries, industrial sectors, organizational levels, and research approaches) presents a common pattern about motivational factors, as mediators between the control systems and the performances. That is, capability control systems and customer relationship orientation impact positively on sales teams' motivation (challenge seeking, task enjoyment, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, recognition seeking, and compensation seeking), and the results are even better if combined with outcome control. In addition, these investigations discussed an apparent contradiction between the positive effect that generates a behavioral system (as a whole, including activity and capability) and the negative effect that activity control may cause on motivation (which applies to job satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation). Sales managers monitoring of selling activity can effectively limit the salesperson's task enjoyment, and challenge and recognition seeking. However, a behavioral system also includes the capability control, and those managers who use the proper techniques and relational approach to monitor the salesperson's activity, and additionally enhance his/her knowledge and skills, might have the best results on motivation and consequently on the behavioral and outcome performances.

Beyond the internal and external inputs described previously, a group of constructs identified in this literature review that is discussed next, describe patterns that adversely affect the willingness to have a positive attitude for work and consequently will be included in this category. Challagalla and Shervani (1997) proposed that excessive focus on day-to-day tasks (activity and capability control) can increase job tension (or role stress, or role-related tension) and it might mitigate by tying rewards to the performance of these routine activities. Role conflict and role ambiguity are the major role stressors, and they have been the subject of frequent research as mediators between sales control systems and performances (Agarwal, 1999; Avlonitis and Panagopoulos, 2007; Cravens et al., 2004; Jaworski et al., 1993; Joshi and Randall, 2001; Miao and Evans, 2012 and 2013; and Ramaswami, 2002).

Role conflict arises when salesperson's task orientation does not fit with management's guidelines. According to the literature, formalization and process control generate a larger amount of ruling than in outcome control systems, where salespeople do not have as many limitations when performing their job, and the potential for conflict generation is lower. Similarly, firm's boundary spanners face complex and changing environments, which drive to situations of uncertainty about how they have to do their work when subjected to high levels of formalization. The limitation of their freedom to make decisions regarding their job can sometimes make it difficult to provide an adequate and rapid response to the demands of the customer. Therefore, the salesperson senses that following the rules may result in the detriment of the company, which generates a conflict –role ambiguity- between what the company regulates, and what he/she considers that should be done. Due to these types of job stress, several negative effects may occur in the salesperson, as a lower motivation, less organizational commitment, less willingness to the effort, opportunistic behaviors, and others, that will result in lower behavioral and outcome performances.

The common patterns for most of this research regarding the sales control systems and the factors that negatively affect motivation, suggests that the higher the levels of ruling and monitoring are, the more likely is that the salesperson fails to perform adequately, overwhelmed by comparing the management's expectations, with the own capabilities, the market circumstances, and the firm's support.

If additionally, an outcome control is in use, this tension may increase if all the ruling and monitoring is perceived as an obstacle to achieving the quantitative results. At this point, it is likely to occur an opportunistic behavior shaped like either sharing inaccurate information about the market or the job performance, or shifting from a relational to a transactional customer approach. Alternatively, a capability control oriented to enhance the salesperson's skills, attitudes, and knowledge, is likely to decrease the stressors because of higher levels of self-confidence, being even lower when capability control is combined with outcome control, by setting the seller clear quantitative targets that he/she is expected to achieve.

5.4. Opportunities

Opportunity dimension considers all tools, materials, leadership behavior, procedures, and working conditions, considered as organizational support, for launching the changes needed (Bainbridge, 2015; Ozelik and Uyargil, 2015). In a sales force environment, several mediators between control systems and performances can be included in this category by matching this definition, but also for staying conceptually away from the two previous categories (abilities and motivations).

Literature presents organizational factors belonging to this group that are affected by sales controls. Evans et al.'s (2007) study conclude that process control results in higher organizational customer orientation, and output control increases sales supportiveness and sales innovativeness, as capability control enhances the three salesperson psychological climate perceptions: organizational customer orientation, sales supportiveness, and sales innovativeness.

Sales territory design has been widely studied as a mediator between the sales controls and the performances. Behavior-based control resulted in higher levels of satisfaction with the sales territory design and this satisfaction enhances sales organization effectiveness, and salesforce behavioral and outcome performance (Babakus et al., 1996; Baldauf and Cravens, 1999; Grant and Cravens, 1996; Grant et al., 2001; Piercy et al., 1998, 1999, 2004a, and 2004b).

Goal-setting has also been studied in the sales control framework, and appears as an opportunity according to Fang et al.'s (2005), moderating the relationship between sales control systems and performance. Schwepker and Good's (2005) study on sales managers found that a higher perceived goal (quota) difficulty increases the probability that sales managers let salespeople weaken their behavioral performance in favor of a quick sale, or even let them act unethically with the customer, in order to achieve the sales objectives. Interestingly Anderson and Onyemah's (2009) cluster research on salespeople of high-value industries evidenced that inconsistency of the control system elements is negatively related to salesperson performance, and Flaherty et al. (2014) evidenced that the fit of control strategy to individual, firm, and environmental variables has a positive effect on salesperson performance and salesperson championing.

The research proposed an impact of leadership and trust on several mediators of the sales control systems. Behavior-based control was found as a positive antecedent of transformational leadership behaviors, and these with salesperson's job performance, satisfaction with supervisor and affective commitment (Panagopoulos and Dimitriadis, 2009). This means that managers operating in a behavior-based control with greater emphasis on coaching and mentoring activities- will also engage in transformational leadership behaviors and the salespeople are energized to go beyond the commonly agreed behaviors and outcomes, enhancing their performances, as well as their commitment and satisfaction. Likewise, Spillecke and Brettel (2013) postulated that capability control positively affects sales department entrepreneurial orientation, and in turn, enhances firm performance and more intensely when competitive intensity is high. Atuahene-Gima and Li (2002) unveiled a partial positive relationship between process control and supervisee trust, and supervisee trust is likely to enhance sales performance when output control is high. These scholars (2006) pursued the subject in a second investigation on salespeople in new product selling, and found different effects of sales controls on supervisee trust. Process control increases supervisee trust, although trust will be weakened when the manager has a long-term orientation and when the manager adopts a participative supervision style, and trust will be strengthened with highly volatile environments, and when the salespeople have received intensive training for selling the new product. In another hand, output control has no significant effect on trust, except when the sales manager is long-term oriented, probably because this combination implies an inherent recognition that salespeople need time to achieve the required output performance.

Additionally, Pappas and Flaherty (2008) evidenced that supervisee trust on salesperson increases the involvement of the salesperson in strategic behaviors (e.g., suggesting new ideas, or encouraging peers to implement new strategic initiatives) resulting as well in a supervisor's perception of higher levels of salesperson's performance.

The study of Verano-Tacoronte and Melián-González (2008) on industrial selling firms highlighted the positive influence of behavior-based control on all facets of performance; especially, in environments of high uncertainty and when the sales force has relatively risk aversion. However when sales force risk aversion moderates, output control systems' may work better. Finally, Flaherty and Pappas (2012) evidenced that self-control has a positive effect on idea transfer, even higher with low levels of output control. In another hand, professional control has a negative effect on idea transfer and is negatively amplified with high levels of output control. In addition, there is a positive relationship between sales professional's idea transfer and both selling performances (individual and organizational).

This review of opportunities reveals, that under behavior-based controls are achieved the highest levels of: (1) organizational customer orientation, (2) satisfaction with territory design (by both: the sales manager and the salesperson), (3) transformational leadership, and (4) supervisee trust. Additionally, studies that consider capability control separately, evidence positive results in the following opportunities: (1) organizational customer orientation, (2) sales innovativeness, (3) sales supportiveness, (4) transformational leadership, and (5) entrepreneurial orientation. Such results underline that the organizational processes and conditions related to the sales teams impact more positively on the salesperson performance and the organizational effectiveness, when the sales managers direct and control salesperson's activities and capabilities. This shows higher levels of involvement of the managers on their sales teams, developing affective and emotional concerns -at the salesperson's level- about the company's interests and competitiveness (Le Bon, 2006).

Organizational culture is another relevant issue in this dimension: after being diffused, workers replicate the values established by the company on their daily tasks, and in a context of sales teams, aspects such as customer orientation, trust, leadership, or innovation, relocate from a management practice to a customer relationship level, and generate different positive results by generating customer value.

6. Conclusions, managerial implications, and further research

The multiple connections between the managerial policies, the AMO elements and the individual and group outcomes presented in this study, suggest a considerable number of professional inferences, and new paths for future investigations, that are presented next. The first managerial issue is related with behavior-based control, that emphasizes coaching working with the sales team in order to develop their skills and relationship strategies- and leading, rather than commanding (Grant and Cravens, 1996; Piercy et al., 1998).

Sales managers coaching time should preferably be devoted to employees who: (1) are younger, (2) have a lower confidence in the products to be sold, (3) lack of formal education, and (4) have values which do not completely fit with those of the organization (Onyemah, 2009).

In such groups, attitudes and behaviors will be enhanced to a higher level. A large amount of scholars proposed behavior-based control systems – or high control systems- as producers of the strongest positive effects than the other control systems. However, some informal mechanisms should also manage to ensure high morale and group cohesiveness (Jaworski et al., 1993).

Secondly, sales teams achieve better results in teams where managers are more satisfied with the territory designs. Consequently, sales managers should evaluate the adequacy of each design, by determining the satisfaction in the salesforce from regular feedback in meetings and reports. If satisfaction is low, the sales manager should assess if salesperson's perception is correct and act accordingly, either to redesign the territory, or to clarify misperceptions (Grant et al., 2001). Improving a faulty territory design may have a larger impact in sales results than other mediators, and this new design will influence positively on motivation, as better designs increase the salesperson's chances to perform well (Grant and Cravens, 1999). This implies that managers need to expand their skills in behavioral control and territory design, which traditionally have been secondary compared to selling abilities and outcome control skills (Piercy et al., 1999).

The third group of implications involves trust management: process and output controls impact in dysfunctional behaviors, and are moderated when salespeople are provided with training on task procedures, so that

their knowledge of the transformation process is enhanced (Ramaswami, 1996). Information collected by managers with formal control systems is utilized to guide sales teams reward decisions and in turn, salespeople may provide discretionary information favorable to them and hide unfavorable information, accordingly having opportunistic behaviors (Ramaswami, 2002). Trust reduces the level of information asymmetry between a salesperson and his/her manager, which in turn reduce dysfunctional behaviors and increase performance (Ramaswami et al., 1997). Managers may enhance trust levels by the following procedures: (1) communicate clearly their expectations, (2) measure employee inputs and outputs accurately, (3) make unbiased evaluation and reward decisions, (4) encourage salespeople to provide explanations for their performance, and (5) provide feedback to their sales teams. Another positive effect of managerial trust appears to be the salesperson involvement on strategic activities (presenting new ideas and initiatives, supplying strategic initiatives, summarizing and integrating strategic information), which are ordinarily reserved for upper and middle managers, and that consequently enhance of manager's perception of salesperson's performance (Pappas and Flaherty, 2008).

Capability control is the fourth managerial topic: minimizing role ambiguity and role conflict can contribute to reducing emotional exhaustion, which consequently will contribute to increasing job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Employee training that lower role ambiguity could reduce as a result opportunistic behaviors (Ramaswami, 2002) however, sometimes is advisable letting emotionally exhausted salesperson leaves the team and replace him/her with someone who is more emotionally in tune with the organization (Babakus et al. 1999). Moreover, salesperson selling skills' positive effect on performance in a customer orientation environment justifies the role of coaching and training as a means to improve these capabilities. Training of junior salespeople or other groups with weaker selling skills, should focus on identifying needs, matching products to needs, and translating features to benefits, rather than in customer-orientation, which would be a better long-term investment, but will not succeed until the salesperson acquires the required capabilities (Wachner et al., 2009). Sales manager training to improve activity and capability control skills, as well as the thorough evaluation of salespeople organizational citizenship behavior, should be a focus for sales executives concerned with enhancing salesperson in-role performance. The reciprocity between observed organizational support, with organizational citizenship and organizational commitment, highlights the need for managers to increase the perception and actual existence of organizational support to the sales teams (Piercy et al., 2006). Sales control systems should deploy in a complementary manner, in order not to lead to undercuts with each other. If a control system goal concurs with those of others, it is likely to decrease the affective commitment and the task clarity, which likely will result in a lower performance and a lower customer orientation (Joshi and Randall, 2001). Based on Fang et al.'s study (2005), in a low-context country (U.S.) when end-outputs are the main concern of managers, higher levels of outcome control along with fairly demanding specific goals seems to be the best option. When behavioral performance is the central subject, high rates of capability and activity control together with mild and nonspecific goals should be the choice. However, in a high-context culture (China), when managers seek end-results, an outcome control plus moderately hard, nonspecific objectives would be pertinent, while capability and activity control, with easy, generic goals, with high levels of participation, should be adopted when behavioral performance is the priority of management.

As a last implication, managers who prefer activity control should assign useful and challenging activity goals, involving the salesperson in the process, in order to define the optimal level of hardness. If the goals are highly challenging, higher fixed salary is likely to increase the motivation. Since motivation and behavioral performance are not positively influenced by outcome control, managers should assess behavioral control as a means to enhance such enablers of long-term outcome performance (Miao et al., 2007). In view of their impact on salespeople behavioral performance, sales manager control competences play a major role in a market orientation corporate strategy. Best managers guide sales teams in delivering higher customer value, enhancing satisfaction and long-term sales, which justifies the importance of recruiting, promoting and training managers to display superior competences (Piercy et al., 2009).

Finally, the AMO grouping in a sales department context, suggests new challenges for scholars of this field. Most research on sales management is cross-sectional, which involves the analysis of one specific dyad of sales manager and salesperson, determined by concrete momentary circumstances. Nevertheless, studies about how the

control system affects each mediator over time, would provide a more complete and accurate information. Therefore, longitudinal studies are frequently a means to use dynamic data that confirm the causal mechanisms proposed on each mediator requested (Aherne et al. 2007; Atuahene-Gima and Li 2006; Baldauf et al. 2002; Darmon and Martin 2011; Homburg et al. 2014; Jones et al. 2005; Joshi and Randall 2001; Katsikea et al. 2011; LeMeunier et al. 2007; Lo et al. 2011; Menguc and Barker 2005; Miao and Evans 2014; Murphi and Li 2012; Onyemah 2009; Onyemah and Anderson 2009; Panagopoulos and Avlonitis 2010; Pappas and Flaherty 2008; Piercy et al. 2012; Sarin et al. 2012; Verano-Tacoronte and Melián-González 2007).

Furthermore, Wright and Nishii (2007) suggested multi-level analysis between the different corporate levels (organizational, team and individual) as a means to overcome the limitations of a linear study between the management policies and the performances, even when mediating variables are included. Research on this framework applied to the salesforce management would clarify the mechanisms that generate the best performances, and should include how the sales general policies, the team management and the individual behavior and perceptions impact: (1) between them, (2) on the mediators described in this study, and (3) on the outcomes at each level (organizational, team and individual). Similarly, the influence of the company's strategy and objectives, on the sales organization (mediators and moderators) at the sales salesperson level may address to new evidences, to better explain how each type of control system might affect the salesperson and the sales organization performances.

7. References

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