A COMPARISON OF BUYER TRUST IN GOODS AND SERVICES SALESPEOPLE

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This article investigates how buying situation differences impact buyer perceptions of trust in goods and services salespeople. To undertake this investigation, a general model trust formation between buyers and sellers is developed. Then the model is tested in consumer goods and services buying contexts. Salesperson likability, customer orientation, dependability, and honesty are shown to affect trust formation differently, depending on whether the consumer is purchasing a good or a service.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, interest in developing successful, long-term relationships between buyers and sellers of goods and services has increased dramatically. Inherent in successful relationship building is the development of trust between the buyer and the seller (Schurr and Ozanne 1985; Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990). Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) imply that trust is the single most important factor in successful buyer-seller relationships. Developing a trustful relationship between buyer and seller makes meeting consumer needs easier (Schurr and Ozanne 1985; Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989). When buyers trust a salesperson, they are more likely to reveal their true needs to the salesperson (Swan and Nolan 1985; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Swan et al. 1988). Reliably determining the buyer's needs enables the salesperson to align those needs with a good or service offering (Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989). When buyer needs and product attributes are aligned, higher levels of customer satisfaction are the result. In addition, achieving a positive purchase outcome makes the likelihood of future transactions even more likely (Crosby, Evans and Cowles 1990). A satisfied customer often will give the company and the salesperson future business as well as a good reference (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990). As a result, developing trust influences the salesperson's ability to successfully close the immediate sale and is an important factor in developing relationships with clients that lead to future sales.

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Situational factors can also impact the outcome of the purchase process. In goods purchases, the buyer's attempt to achieve a satisfactory outcome is aided by the tangibility of the good under consideration (Shostack 1977). If a goods salesperson is not helpful, or is perceived as working against the buyer's best interests, the buyer can rely on the tangible cues available from the good itself to help achieve a satisfactory outcome. For many services, this is not possible. Services consumers must deal with intangible offerings that provide fewer salient cues (Shostack 1977). As a result, services purchasers rely more heavily on the salesperson (Shostack 1977; Dubinsky and Rudelius 1980; Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990).

Salespeople also sell services differently than they sell goods. For example, Dubinsky and Rudelius (1980) found that the techniques salespeople used to obtain information about the buyer, handle objections, and close the sale differed between goods and services contexts. In another study, Dubinsky, Ingram, and Rudelius (1985) found that goods and services salespeople used different appeals to the consumer. Goods salespeople tended to use tangible, attribute-based appeals, while services salespeople tended to use more personal and emotional appeals. Thus, it appears that the services buyer faces a different set of perceptual cues than the goods buyer. This is important because much of the sales and marketing literature has focused only on goods selling contexts. Unfortunately, the ability to generalize between goods and services is not fully understood. What works in selling goods may not work in selling services. Given the increasing importance of services in the U.S. economy (Quinn 1992), a better understanding of how buyer-seller relationships develop in services contexts is clearly warranted.

This article attempts to increase the understanding of differences in the selling context by building on previous theoretical research regarding the development of trust in buyer and seller relationships. The primary purpose of this research was to answer two related research questions: 1) How do the salesperson's personal characteristics and sales-related behaviors influence the development of trust between buyers and sellers? 2) Does the selling context (goods or services) modify the relationships among the factors that lead to developing trust between the buyer and the seller? To undertake this study, a model was developed that allowed buyer trust in the seller to be modeled as an outcome of the buyer's perceptions of the salesperson's behaviors and personal characteristics. Following the development of the model, the effects of the selling context were analyzed to investigate how the selling context affects the factors that lead to trust development between buyers and sellers.

PERCEIVED TRUST IN THE BUYER-SELLER RELATIONSHIP

Trust has been defined as the belief that information received from another person is reliable and that the other person will fulfill his or her obligations in an exchange relationship (Blau 1964; Rotter 1967; Schurr and Ozanne 1985). Three elements are necessary to demonstrate trust in an interpersonal situation: 1) The presence of risk arising from uncertainty about the outcomes of the situation. 2) The presence of various cues that provide information about possible outcomes to those involved in the situation. 3) A reliance on the information received through these cues (Schlenker, Helm, and Tedeschi 1973).

Consumer sales situations satisfy all three requirements. First, when purchasing most goods and services sold by consumer salespeople, there is an element of risk to the buyer. If purchased, the good or service may not meet the buyer's needs, or there may be some financial risk associated with the purchase. Second, information obtained from the salesperson provides the buyer with cues about the outcomes of the sales situation. For example, goods salespeople often use demonstrations to provide the buyer with information about how the good may best meet their needs. Informational cues can also come from the personal attributes and behaviors of the salesperson (Swan and Nolan 1985). A salesperson who is perceived as more likable or customer oriented may be more effective at determining customer needs and communicating benefits of the good or service to the buyer (Swan and Nolan 1985). The third element needed to demonstrate interpersonal trust is a reliance on information obtained from situational cues. This reliance is demonstrated when buyers purchase the good or service suggested by the salesperson. Past marketing studies have demonstrated that buyer-seller interactions satisfy all three requirements for demonstrating interpersonal trust (Schurr and Ozanne 1985; Dwyer and Oh 1987; Anderson and Weitz 1990; Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992; Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993).

To develop a better understanding of trust in buyer-seller relationships, it is necessary to understand what cues buyers use to help them attribute trustworthiness to a salesperson. One model of buyer trust development, proposed by Swan and Nolan (1985), suggests that attributions of trustworthiness are determined by the buyer's experience, image of the firm, and initial impression of the salesperson. Of the factors identified as contributing to attributions of trust, the two best known are the personal characteristics of the salesperson and the buyer's experience-based belief that the salesperson can be trusted. Trust can exist only when the buyer believes that the risk inherent in the buying situation can be reduced by relying on the information obtained from the salesperson (Swan and Nolan 1985).

This study used the belief dimension of the trustworthiness construct by investigating buyers' beliefs about their own ability to trust a salesperson. This conceptualization is important because it allowed us to model trust as an outcome of the informational cues that buyers use to assess how much they can trust a salesperson. In the research presented here, this process was modeled by examining buyer beliefs about the personal characteristics and behaviors of the salesperson that led them to trust that salesperson.

The importance of positive sales-related behaviors and personal characteristics of the salesperson have been identified as contributing to success in selling (Churchill et al. 1985). Past research has demonstrated that the personal attributes and behaviors of the salesperson are prominent factors in building trust with the buyer (Swan and Nolan 1985; Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993). Empirical research regarding the development of buyer perceptions of salesperson trustworthiness has confirmed the role of salesperson attributes and sales-related behaviors in building trust with the consumer. For example, Hawes, Mast, and Swan (1989) investigated perceptions of buyer trust in business-to-business sales contexts and found trust to be related to the likability, competence, dependability, customer orientation, and honesty of the salesperson. In another study, honesty, dependability, competency, responsibility, and likability were related to buyer perceptions of business-to-business salesperson trustworthiness (Swan et al. 1988). These factors appear to influence trustworthiness in other business-to-business contexts as well. For example, Wilson and Lichtenthal (1985) found sales behaviors and related personal characteristics of sales personnel to be among the most important factors that help salespeople meet customer needs in industrial buying situations. Research has, therefore, demonstrated a link between positively perceived salesperson attributes and sales-related behaviors and the development of trust between buyers and sellers in business-to-business situations. However, because of the limited amount of research performed to date, our understanding of how trust development differs in consumer goods and consumer services selling contexts is not as well developed.

This study increases the knowledge of how these relationships develop in consumer goods and services settings. Research in social psychology has demonstrated the existence of situational effects on interpersonal trust development (Schlenker, Helm, and Tedeschi 1973). Therefore, the ability to generalize between business-to-business and consumer settings and across the goods and service dimension cannot be taken for granted and needs empirical validation. As a result, developing a model of trust in the relationship between buyers and sellers of consumer goods and services was an important objective of this research.

GOODS VERSUS SERVICES SALES CONTEXTS

Research into buyer and seller interactions has previously looked at goods and services contexts separately. Developing trust in buyer-seller relationships has been studied in service contexts, (Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990; Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992; Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993) as well as in goods contexts (Swan and Nolan 1985; Swan et al. 1988; Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989). However, in spite of this research activity, the ability to generalize findings from goods contexts to service contexts and vice versa is not well known. This is especially true given that most of the studies investigating trust formation between buyers and sellers have used business-to-business contexts, rather than retail or other consumer settings. Of the research cited above, only Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990) looked at consumer settings in their study of relationship quality in life insurance selling. A study investigating trust in consumer goods and services contexts would, therefore, add to the knowledge base in marketing.

To explore the differences that we believe exist in trust development between buyers and sellers in consumer goods and services, we turned to the services marketing literature. Researchers in the services marketing area have provided evidence that marketing services varies substantially from marketing goods (Shostack 1977; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1985). Perhaps the most significant difference between goods and services marketing contexts is due to the intangible nature of most services. Fewer cues regarding the applicability of the service to meet the consumer's needs are available in a service context (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1985; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1990). Product attributes such as size, shape, and color are all salient cues that impact the consumer decision making process for goods. For services, however, the inability to use physical cues often complicates the consumer's decision process. As a result, consumers considering a service purchase rely more on social cues (including the salesperson) as a source of information (Shostack 1977; Zeithaml 1981).

The differences encountered in selling goods versus services are believed to impact the degree in which trust develops in the model. In general, services salespeople will be more subject to attributions of dishonesty and will see less trust developing with the buyer due to the uncertainty created by the intangibility of the service (Zeithaml 1981). As a result, we postulate an increased role for honesty in the services setting and believe it will play a more significant role in determining the level of trust that develops between buyer and seller in the services setting.

THEORETICAL RELATIONSHIPS

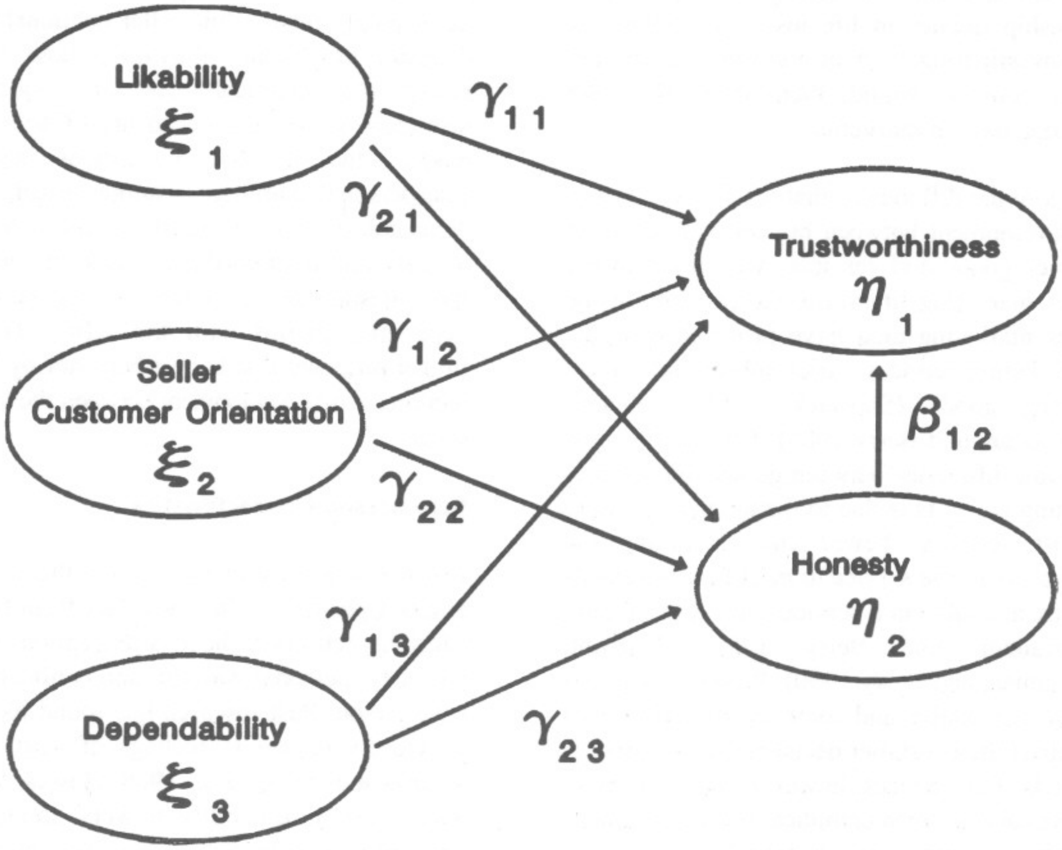
Figure 1 presents a general model of trust development in buyer and seller relationships. This diagram graphically illustrates how a set of salesperson characteristics and sales-related behaviors serve as antecedents of trust. In our model, the buyer's perceptions about the salesperson's likability, customer orientation, and dependability are predicted to lead to feelings of honesty and trustworthiness. Honest behavior by the salesperson is shown as an outcome of experience gained with the seller. The model further proposes that honest behavior by the seller reinforces trust development between the buyer and seller.

Salesperson Characteristics

Likability is the extent to which the salesperson elicits a positive feeling or affect from the buyer. Likability reflects the buyer's perceptions about the sincerity, personal warmth, and confidence of the salesperson. Past research has found likability to be closely related to feelings of trust toward a salesperson (Swan et al. 1988; Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989). Likability is very similar to the concept of congeniality, which was shown to be related to trust in past studies (Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993). However, unlike Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman's congeniality construct, likability does not include a measure of customer orientation. Instead, customer orientation was conceptualized as a separate construct in this study.

How much impact does likability have on developing buyer trust in the seller? Past research provides evidence that buyers and sellers value likability differently. In a recent comparison of buyer and seller beliefs about business-to-business salesperson trustworthiness, sellers believed that buyers thought more likable salespeople were more trustworthy (Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989). However, the same study showed that buyers rated likability as important, but felt it was less of a factor in trust development than did the salespeople. In our model, buyer's perceptions

FIGURE 1
Model of Perceived Trust in Goods and Services Contexts



regarding likability of the salesperson are predicted to have a direct impact on trustworthiness. Thus, Figure 1 shows likability of the salesperson having a positive effect on trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,1}$). This is formally represented by the following research hypothesis:

H_1: Higher levels of likability will be positively associated with greater attributions of salesperson trustworthiness.

Seller Customer Orientation is the buyer's feeling that the salesperson is working in the buyer's best interest (Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989). A customer orientation is important because sales personnel must balance their desire to close the sale with their desire to serve the customer (Saxe and Weitz 1982). This is especially important when customers do not have well-defined ideas about which goods or services will best meet their needs. The role of seller customer orientation in earning the trust of buyers has been investigated from the perspectives of both the buyer and the seller. Hawes, Mast, and Swan (1989) found that buyers and sellers agreed that placing the buyer's interests ahead of the seller's interests greatly increased trust in the buyer-seller relationship. This finding is reflected in the model in Figure 1. When buyers believe the salesperson has their best interests in mind, increased attributions of trustworthiness are predicted to develop ($\gamma_{1\,2}$). To test this relationship, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

H_2: Higher levels of seller customer orientation will be positively associated with greater attributions of salesperson trustworthiness.

Dependability is the perception that another person will behave in a positive and predictable manner (Remple, Holmes, and Zanna 1985; Remple and Holmes 1986). As one person gains experience with another person, the ability of the first person to forecast the behavior of the second person improves. Over time, the first person gains enough experience with the second person that prediction gives way to beliefs about the second person (Remple, Holmes, and Zanna 1985). In buyer-seller relationships, positive and predictable sales behaviors are predicted to lead to attributions of dependability. In essence, the buyer begins to believe that the salesperson can be relied upon to help. To enhance trust development, the salesperson must act in positive ways. As a result, dependability reflects the aid or assistance provided to the buyer. This definition of dependability, therefore, recognizes that salespeople can behave in predictably bad ways, as well as predictably good ways. This is an important distinction because only positive behavior contributes to higher levels of trust in the buyer's relationship with the seller.

In the model in Figure 1, higher levels of perceived dependability are predicted to lead to greater attributions of trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\ 3}$). When a salesperson acts in a positive and predictable manner, the buyer learns to trust the salesperson for assistance with the good or service under consideration. This predicted relationship is a result of the buyer gaining experience with the salesperson. At the onset of the buyer-seller interaction, the buyer seeks cues regarding the trustworthiness of the salesperson. If the seller provides information and acts in a positive and dependable manner, the buyer in turn attributes trustworthiness to the seller. To test this relationship, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_3: Higher levels of dependability will be positively associated with greater attributions of salesperson trustworthiness.

Honesty is the perception that another person is being truthful or believable (Schlenker, Helm, and Tedeschi 1973; Larzelere and Huston 1980). Honesty has been shown to be related to perceived trust in several studies. Hawes, Mast, and Swan (1989) show honesty, as perceived by both buyers and sellers, as a significant contributor to trust development in the buying relationship. Swan et al. (1988) also demonstrated support for including honesty in research on buyer trust. In these studies, attributing honesty to the salesperson was a factor in increasing trust. Negative perceptions of a salesperson's honesty were found to decrease trust development (Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989).

In the model (Figure 1), honesty is shown as an outcome of the buyer's perceptions of the seller's personal characteristics and sales-related behaviors. This is because buyers must interact with a salesperson to be able to make attributions of honesty or dishonesty. Further, given the buyer's incomplete information about the seller's goals and constraints, the attribution of honesty or dishonesty is an outcome of the buyer processing perceptual cues regarding likability, dependability and general customer orientation. As a result, honesty was modeled as a dependent variable, which allowed us to test the effect of honesty as a moderating influence on trustworthiness. To investigate these relationships, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{4a}: Higher levels of likability will be positively associated with higher levels of perceived honesty.

H_{4b}: Higher levels of seller customer orientation will be positively associated with higher levels of perceived honesty.

H_{4c}: Higher levels of dependability will be positively associated with higher levels of perceived honesty.

When buyers perceive the salesperson to be honest, increased levels of honesty should result in increased attributions of trustworthiness. Therefore, hypothesis five is proposed:

H_5: Higher levels of honesty will be positively associated with higher levels of perceived trustworthiness.

METHODS

To test the hypotheses and to determine if differences existed in the goods and services contexts, a study of buyers' perceptions of goods and services salespeople was conducted. Data was collected from 550 members of the Arkansas Household Research Panel (AHRP), which is composed of households from cities and surrounding communities in Arkansas with populations of 5,000 or more. For this research, a household panel survey was considered an appropriate data collection mechanism because the goods and services purchase decisions studied were considered household decisions.

The survey was sent to panel members, with a cover letter and instructions asking for it to be completed by the head of the household. This helped to insure that one of the primary decision makers in typical household purchase decisions would complete the questionnaire. To reduce recall difficulties, each respondent was first asked a series of questions about purchasing major household goods such as autos, appliances, furniture, and carpeting. Then the respondent was asked questions about major household services such as real estate services, life insurance, appliance repair, and home improvements. To further assist buyers in recalling their experiences, respondents were then asked a series of questions about recent household goods and services purchases that they had been involved in. Each respondent was then asked a series of questions about their beliefs regarding salesperson likability, customer orientation, dependability, honesty, and trustworthiness. This was done first for the goods under consideration, then for the services. Useable surveys numbered 378 for the services items and 389 for the goods items, which yielded response rates of 69 percent and 71 percent, respectively.

Measures

Measures for this study were adapted from previous research regarding salesperson attributes (Hawes, Rao, and Baker 1993), behaviors (Swan and Nolan 1985), and seller customer orientation (Michaels and Day 1982; Saxe and Weitz 1982). Items were broadly based on these previous studies, but were adapted for the present research and used to represent the likability, seller customer orientation, honesty, and trustworthiness dimensions of the salesperson. In addition, items were adapted that measured the dependability of the salesperson as an information source. This was considered an important factor due to the emphasis in our definition of trust on informational cues provided by the salesperson (Blau 1964; Rotter 1967; Schlenker, Helm, and Tedeschi 1973; Schurr and Ozanne 1985).

Salesperson likability, seller customer orientation, and trustworthiness were assessed with six point Likert type scales with Very Favorable and Very Unfavorable as scale anchors. Honesty was assessed with a six point Likert type scale with Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree as scale anchors. Dependability was assessed with six point Likert type scales with Very Dependable and Very Undependable as scale anchors. These are shown in Appendix A. Because no attempt to assess the measurement properties of these scales had been made in previous research, a procedure for assessing the measurement properties of these scales was performed. This procedure follows the recommendations made by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) in which a measurement model is developed and tested prior to estimating a structural model. To develop the measurement model, a confirmatory factor model was first developed. As an integral part of the development and testing of the confirmatory model, an item analysis was performed on the scales (Churchill 1979). Assessments of unidimensionality, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity also were performed. Following development of the measurement model, the estimation of the structural model was undertaken (Anderson and Gerbing 1988).

To compare the goods and services contexts, and to analyze possible differences, the following procedure was used. First, a measurement model was developed for the goods data. Second, services data were fit to the goods measurement model and assessed. Finally, the two structural models were analyzed and compared. The decision to analyze the goods data first was arbitrary and not driven by any theoretical concept. This methodology was selected because independent samples were not used to assess the two situational contexts. As a result, the multiple group analysis discussed in Joreskog and Sorbom (1989) could not be used.

RESULTS

To analyze the data, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on the data first (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Final CFA results demonstrated a good fit for the measurement model with AGFI = .94 for the goods model and AGFI = .95 for the services model. χ^2 for the goods model was 58.90, 24 d.f., and p = .0001, while χ^2 for the services model was 51.96, 24 d.f., and p = .001. Unidimensionality and convergent validity were confirmed for this model, since no significant cross-loadings were exhibited in either the final goods or final services CFA and all loadings exhibited t-values in excess of +/-1.96 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Discriminant validity for each model was tested by a series of analyses in which the inter-factor correlations were set equal to one in a pair-wise manner. All inter-factor correlations in both models proved significantly different than one, as measured by a Chi-square difference test (Anderson and Gerbing 1988), therefore supporting the discriminant validity of the measurement models. Reliabilities (see Table 1) for the constructs were excellent.

Testing the Goods Structural Model

To investigate the relationships presented in the research hypotheses, a system of simultaneous linear equations was analyzed under the SAS CALIS software. In this model, all parameters were allowed to be estimated, with the exception of the error terms for honesty and trustworthiness. For these constructs, the error terms ($\theta\varepsilon$) were set to $(1 - \alpha)\sigma^2$, where α is an estimate of the reliability for the items in the scale (Howell 1987). In the case of both single item indicants, the reliability was estimated using the R^2 for the item (Bollen 1989). Results from the initial goods modeling analysis produced a χ^2 of 74.51, df=36, AGFI=.94. In this analysis, three parameters, $\gamma_{1\,3}$, $\gamma_{2\,3}$ and $\beta_{1\,2}$ had insignificant loadings. These parameters were eliminated from the model one at a time. After eliminating each insignificant parameter, results for the other parameters were checked for changes in significance level. Eliminating the non-significant parameters produced the final goods model shown in Table 3 and Figure 2.

In the final goods model, four hypotheses were supported. The final model demonstrated significant relationships between likability and trustworthiness, (hypothesis 1, $\gamma_{1\,1}$), seller customer orientation and trustworthiness (hypothesis 2, $\gamma_{1\,2}$), likability and honesty (hypothesis 4a, $\gamma_{2\,1}$), and between seller customer orientation and honesty (hypothesis 4b, $\gamma_{2\,2}$). The path coefficients for these parameters were used to interpret the structural modeling solution. For the hypothesized relationship between likability and trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,1}$), the path coefficient was 1.07, implying a strong relationship. Likability also had expected positive impact on honesty, in that the path coefficient between likability and honesty ($\gamma_{2\,1}$) was found to be .31. Testing the hypothesized relationship between seller customer orientation and trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,2}$) demonstrated a small but significant path coefficient of .15, while testing the relationship between seller customer orientation and honesty ($\gamma_{2\,2}$) demonstrated a path coefficient of .15. The three insignificant paths in the model were between dependability and trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,3}$), dependability and honesty ($\gamma_{2\,3}$), and honesty and trustworthiness ($\beta_{1\,2}$).

Testing the Services Structural Model

To investigate potential differences in the services model, the services data were fit to the hypothesized model shown in Figure 1. Again, all parameters were allowed to be estimated with the exception of the error terms for honesty and trustworthiness. As in the goods models, these parameters were set to $(1 - \alpha)\sigma^2$ (Howell 1987), with the reliability being estimated using the r^2 for the item (Bollen 1989). Results from the initial

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities for Goods and Services Models

Construct and Items	Goods Model: Means	Goods Model: Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	Services Model: Means	Services Model: Standard Deviation
Likability	α = .82			α = .84	
X_1 Sincerity	3.96	1.08	*	4.07	1.12
X_2 Warm Personality	4.24	1.10		4.17	1.10
X_3 Confidence	4.05	1.15		4.07	1.14
Seller Customer Orientation	α = .90			α = .90	
X_4 Gives buyer time to decide	3.93	1.43		3.98	1.41
X_5 Does not rush buyer into decision	3.87	1.41	**	3.94	1.41
X_6 Does not intimidate	4.02	1.46		3.99	1.45
Dependability	α = .79			α = .80	
X_7 To explain various alternatives	3.74	1.16	*	3.87	1.18
X_8 To explain financial implications	3.59	1.31		3.65	1.35
X_9 To explain both good and bad aspects	2.96	1.34	*	3.18	1.35
Honesty					
Y_1 Seller honesty	2.51	1.24	*	2.67	1.24
Trustworthiness					
Y_2 Seller trustworthiness	3.70	1.26	*	3.85	1.29

* Significant difference in means at the .05 level
**Significant difference in means at the .10 level

TABLE 2
Confirmatory Factor Model Results for Goods and Services Models

	Goods Model Unstandardized Parameter Estimates		Services Model Unstandardized Parameter Estimates	
Description	λ	θ_δ	λ	θ_δ
Exogenous Constructs				
Likability				
X_1 Sincerity	.97	.40	1.03	.39
X_2 Warm Personality	.89	.55	.94	.49
X_3 Confidence	1.00	.51	1.00	.49
Seller Customer Orientation				
X_4 Gives buyer time to decide	1.00	.35	1.00	.36
X_5 Does not rush buyer into decision	.99	.31	1.03	.25
X_6 Does not intimidate	.87	.79	.90	.78
Dependability				
X_7 To explain various alternatives	.94	.45	.91	.54
X_8 To explain financial implications	.93	.86	.99	.79
X_9 To explain both good and bad aspects	1.00	.80	1.00	.80
Interfactor Correlations and χ^2_d	φ	χ^2_d *	φ	χ^2_d *
φ_{21} Likability and Customer orientation	.67	5.54 [1]	.69	6.10
φ_{31} Likability and Dependability	.75	13.24	.69	17.36
φ_{32} Dependability and Likability	.50	10.93	.52	9.42
χ^2	58.90		51.96	
d.f.	24		24	
p value	.0001		.0008	
AGFI	.94		.95	

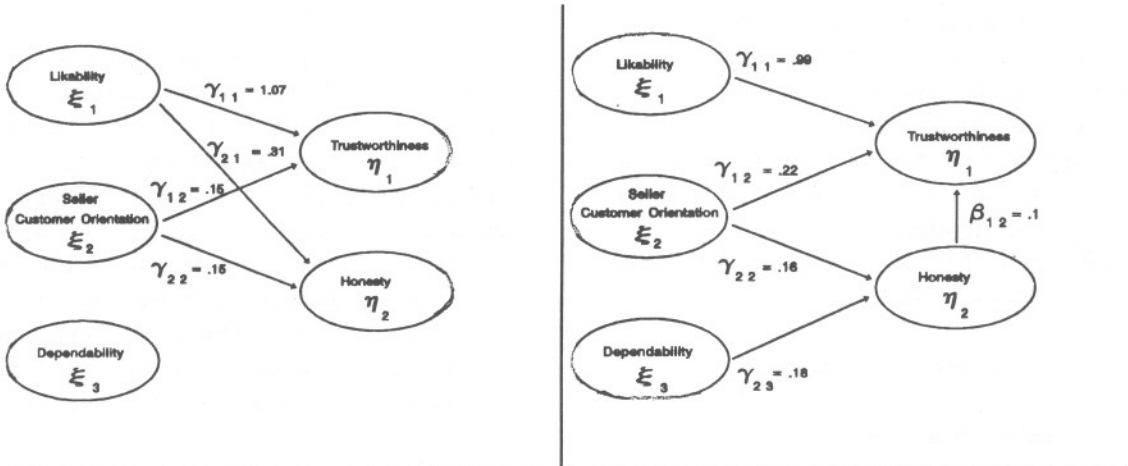
Unless otherwise marked all parameters are statistically significant at the .05 level.
[1] Significant at the .10 level.
* χ^2_d score for model with φ parameter constrained to 1.

TABLE 3
Results for Final Goods and Services Structural Models

Description	Parameter	Goods Model Parameter Estimates	Lower C.I.	Upper C.I.	Services Model Parameter Estimates	Lower C.I.	Upper C.I.
ξ_1 to η_1	γ_{11}	1.07 (12.63)	0.90	1.24	.99 (10.86)	0.81	1.17
ξ_2 to η_1	γ_{12}	.15 (3.22)	0.06	0.24	.22 (4.20)	0.12	0.32
ξ_3 to η_1	γ_{13}	N.S.			N.S.		
ξ_1 to η_2	γ_{21}	.31 (2.97)	0.11	0.51	N.S.		
ξ_2 to η_2	γ_{22}	.15 (2.19)	0.02	0.28	.16 (2.33)	0.03	0.29
ξ_3 to η_2	γ_{23}	N.S.			.18 (2.03)	0.01	0.35
η_2 to η_1	β_{12}	N.S.			.12 (1.69)	0.00	0.24
ξ_1 and ξ_2	φ_{21}	.76 (9.25)	0.60	0.92	.76 (9.29)	0.60	0.92
ξ_1 and ξ_3	φ_{31}	.68 (9.06)	0.53	0.83	.61 (8.49)	0.47	0.75
ξ_2 and ξ_3	φ_{32}	.66 (7.43)	0.49	0.83	.66 (7.38)	0.48	0.84
η_1	ζ_{11}	.41 (9.84)	0.33	0.49	.53 (10.96)	0.44	0.62
η_2	ζ_{22}	1.37 (13.91)	1.18	1.56	1.37 (13.76)	1.17	1.57
χ^2		77.98			86.24		
d.f.		39			38		
p value		.0002			.0001		
AGFI		.94			.93		

T-values are shown in parenthesis.

FIGURE 2
Final Goods and Services Models - All Significant Paths



<u>Goods Model</u>
χ^2 = 77.98
d.f. = 39
p value = .0002
AGFI = .94

<u>Services Model</u>
χ^2 = 86.24
d.f. = 38
p value = .0001
AGFI = .93

fitting of the data to the model produced a χ^2 = 86.15, df=36, AGFI=.93. Significant paths were found between likability and trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,1}$), seller customer orientation and trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,2}$), and seller customer orientation and honesty ($\gamma_{2\,2}$). As with the goods model, a series of models were tested that eliminated the insignificant paths from the model. Once again, the elimination of nonsignificant parameters was performed one path at a time. However, unlike the goods model, this elimination process produced a final services model with two additional significant paths between dependability and honesty ($\gamma_{2\,3}$) and honesty and trustworthiness ($\beta_{1\,2}$).

Final results for the services model are shown in Table 3 and Figure 2. The hypothesized relationship between likability and trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,1}$) demonstrated a path coefficient of .99, and the hypothesized relationship between seller customer orientation and trustworthiness ($\gamma_{1\,2}$) demonstrated a path coefficient of .22. The hypothesized relationship between seller customer orientation and honesty ($\gamma_{2\,2}$), was significant and demonstrated a path coefficient of .16, while the hypothesized relationship between dependability and honesty ($\gamma_{2\,3}$) was supported with a coefficient of .18. One finding in the service model that differed significantly from the goods model was support for the hypothesized relationship between honesty and trustworthiness ($\beta_{1\,2}$). In the services model, $\beta_{1\,2}$ demonstrated a coefficient of .12.

Given the differences in the models presented in Table 3 and Figure 2, we concluded that the final goods and services models were significantly different. This conclusion was supported by inspecting the pattern of path coefficients in the two models, and by calculating a χ^2_d score based on the χ^2 values of the two final models shown in Table 3. The final goods and services models produced a χ^2_d value of 8.26, with 1 degree of freedom difference, and a p-value = .0041.

Having determined that the two models were different, we examined the paths that differed between the models in more detail. As shown in Table 3, the predicted relationship between dependability and honesty was significant only for the services model where $\gamma_{2\,2}$ demonstrated a significant path coefficient of .18. In addition, honesty appeared to have a greater impact on trustworthiness in the services model. As shown in Table 3, $\beta_{1\,2}$ was significant at the .10 level with a path coefficient of .12 in the services model. In the goods model, $\beta_{1\,2}$ was not significant.

DISCUSSION

Building a trustful relationship between buyers and sellers of goods and services is a key step in satisfying buyer needs. Salespeople who are able to gain the buyer's trust are better able to assist the buyer and ensure that the outcome is to the buyer's satisfaction. To do this, salespeople need to focus on developing behaviors that ease the buyer's transition from a customer to a partner in the relationship. Consistent with previous studies, likability, seller customer orientation, and dependability influenced the buyer's perceptions of the salesperson's honesty and trustworthiness. Further, the salesperson attributes used in this model demonstrated different effects in the goods and services models.

Likability was a major influence on the development of feelings of trustworthiness toward the seller. As predicted in hypothesis 1, likability was related to feelings of trustworthiness in both the goods and the services models. Strong parameter coefficients of 1.07 in the goods model and .99 in the services model support this conclusion. Also significant, likability was the most important factor in determining trustworthiness of the seller. The strong relationships between likability and trustworthiness, as measured by the path coefficients in both models, illustrate that salespeople may be correct in assuming that likability is among the most important factors that persuade buyers to trust them (Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989). Thus, it appears that salespeople can emphasize their sincerity, warmth, and confidence to help reduce consumer anxiety, build trust, and open better channels of communication with the buyer.

Our second finding is of real interest to services marketers. In the goods model, likability had the expected positive impact on the development of feelings of honesty (hypothesis 4a). A coefficient of .31 between likability and honesty demonstrated that goods salespeople who are liked by the buyer are more likely to be viewed as honest. In the services model, this hypothesis was not supported, which was unexpected. Our a priori expectations were that likability would be an important factor in developing feelings of honesty in both contexts.

The presence of a customer orientation in the seller was also hypothesized to have a positive effect on trustworthiness. This hypothesis proved consistent with past research and was supported in both models. A customer orientation in the goods model had a favorable impact on trustworthiness, as demonstrated by a path coefficient of .15 in the goods model. In the services model, a customer orientation had a somewhat stronger impact. Testing hypothesis 2 in the services model demonstrated a path coefficient of .22 between customer orientation and trustworthiness. These results indicate that in both models, buyers felt a greater degree of trustworthiness if the sellers were customer oriented. Sellers who did not push their buyers into decisions and did not display intimidating behaviors were viewed as more trustworthy. Confirming the link between the seller's customer orientation and trustworthiness across the service-goods dimension is important because it aides generalizability between the two contexts. In addition, confirming the importance of customer orientation as an antecedent of trustworthiness supports previous research indicating that customer orientation is an important factor in developing trust between the buyer and the seller (Schurr and Ozanne 1985; Hawes, Mast, and Swan 1989).

Hypothesis 4b predicted that higher levels of seller customer orientation would lead to higher levels of perceived honesty. This hypothesis also was supported in both models. In the goods model, customer orientation demonstrated a path coefficient of .15; in the services model, it demonstrated a path coefficient of .16. Not surprisingly, regardless of the selling context, customer orientation is one way of increasing the buyer's perception of honesty.

In this study, dependability focused on the salesperson's skill in serving as a predictable source of information about the ability of the good or service to satisfy the consumer's needs. Buyers that attributed feelings of dependability to the salesperson were predicted to attribute greater feelings of trust toward that person. This hypothesis was not supported in either context. In addition to directly contributing to trustworthiness, salesperson dependability was predicted to increase the feelings of honesty the buyer would attribute to the salesperson. This hypothesis was supported only in the services model (see Table 3) by a path coefficient of .18.

The role of honesty in buyer-seller interactions is very interesting. Hypothesis 5 predicted that higher levels of honesty would lead to higher levels of trust. Results for this hypothesis were mixed. In the goods model, no relationship between honesty and trustworthiness was found. However, in the services model, the hypothesis was supported, as demonstrated by a path coefficient of .12. However, a word of caution may be in order since this parameter was significant only at the .10 level. Although it appears that honesty does increase attributions of trustworthiness, more research is needed to clarify this relationship.

Perhaps of more interest than the direct effect of honesty on trustworthiness are the indirect effects that were found in the services model. Two factors, customer orientation and dependability had a positive impact on developing feelings of honesty. Of these two factors, dependability exerted its influence on trustworthiness only through an increase in feelings of honesty. Based on the findings presented here, it appears that services salespeople increase feelings of honesty by providing dependable assistance to the buyer. Salespeople who do this increase buyer feelings of salesperson honesty, which then helps create feelings of trustworthiness.

CONCLUSION

A major thrust of this research was to develop a better understanding of the differences salespeople face when selling goods and services. The findings of this study have several implications for managers and researchers interested in understanding these differences. First, and most importantly, this study found that buyers viewed the likability, customer orientation and dependability of goods and services salespeople in a very similar manner. This conclusion is supported by the means for the items shown in Table 1. Mean differences were not large for any of the items used to represent the constructs. As a result, it appears that the major differences in the models arose as a result of the differences in the sales contexts.

Recent research into trust development between buyers and sellers of goods and services has focused on a variety of factors that effect developing trust in that relationship. This study suggests that trust development between a buyer and a seller is influenced by the personal characteristics of the salesperson. As a result, this article supports previous research (e.g., Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990) that suggests that relationship quality is influenced by the salesperson's personal characteristics. In the research presented here, these characteristics took the form of likability, seller customer orientation, and dependability of the salesperson. The positive impact of these attributes on trust development suggests that salespeople should be encouraged to enhance these characteristics. Recent research into the types of selling behaviors that are rewarded by sales compensation systems indicates that qualitative outcomes often are overlooked (Anderson and Oliver 1987). This is not surprising to many sales managers. However, the negative impact of a transactional focus (e.g., an overemphasis on closing) on trust development was clearly demonstrated in our study. It is especially important for salespeople to be rewarded for trust building behaviors in selling contexts where a long term relationship is needed.

To use these findings to serve customers better, it is important that salespeople constantly be sensitized to building a relationship with the buyer. The emphasis should not be solely on closing the sale, for this often frustrates buyers and insures that the transaction, if it occurs, will be a one time event. This is especially important in selling services, where it appears that real differences exist in how trust develops between the buyer and seller. Witness the differences in the role of dependability in the development of trustworthiness in the services context, compared to the goods context (see Figure 2). When buyers are faced with purchasing highly intangible services and when the service outcome varies widely, buyer uncertainty increases. This uncertainty forces the buyer to depend on the salesperson. Buyers become frustrated with a salesperson who behaves in a way that is perceived as undependable. The result is that the buyer often attributes feelings of dishonesty to the salesperson. When this occurs, the perceived trustworthiness of the salesperson suffers. This, in turn, impacts the ability of the salesperson to build the long term relationship buyers need to feel confident about their purchase decisions. If services salespeople attend to the buyer's needs, they will appear more customer oriented and more dependable. This will increase both feelings of honesty and attributions of trustworthiness. When buyers trust the salesperson, the salesperson can determine and meet the buyers needs more effectively. In the long run, trust will lead to increased customer satisfaction and a higher level of repeat business.

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APPENDIX A
Instrument Items

Likability Items:
These items used six point Likert type response scales with Very Favorable and Very Unfavorable as the scale anchors. Respondents were asked to evaluate past experiences with salespeople regarding the salesperson's...

Sincerity
Warmth of Personality
Confidence

Seller Customer Orientation Items:
These items used six point Likert type response scales with Very Favorable and Very Unfavorable as the scale anchors. Respondents were asked to evaluate past experiences with salespeople regarding...

Lets me take my own time to decide.
Does not rush me into a decision.
Does not intimidate me.

Dependability Items:
These items used six point Likert type response scales with Very Dependable and Very Undependable as scale anchors. Respondents were asked rate the dependability of salespeople...

To explain various alternatives.
To explain various features.*
To explain financial implications.
To advise on whether the purchase is suitable to our needs.*
To explain both good and bad aspects.
To suggest what is good for me.*

Perceived Trust Items:
This item used a six point Likert type scale with Very Favorable and Very Unfavorable as the scale anchor. Respondents were asked to evaluate past experiences with salespeople regarding the salesperson's...

Trustworthiness

Salesperson Honesty Items:
These items used six point Likert type scales with Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree as the scale anchors. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with the following statements.

Most salespeople are honest
Most salespeople rush me into making a wrong decision (Reverse Scored).*
Most salespeople care about customers' interests.*

* Item was eliminated based on the scale refinement procedure described in the text.