CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS: THE IMPACT OF TACTICAL SELLING APPROACHES

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This study applies an extended adoption model based on the technology acceptance model (TAM) and theory of reasoned action (TRA) to examine the impact of three specific sales tactics (i.e., product-focused, competitive-focused, and customer-focused) on the adoption of a consumer technology innovation. The findings indicate that the selling tactics had a differential effect on the relationships between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, normative pressures, perceived enjoyment, and adoption outcomes (i.e., attitude toward usage and purchase intention). Specific consumer behavior and sales management implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer adoption of technology products continues to be a challenge for marketers. New products fail at a rate of between 33 percent and 90 percent, depending on the industry (Peter and Donnelly 2006). U.S. packaged goods companies introduce 30,000 products each year, but 70 percent to 90 percent do not stay on the store shelves for more than 12 months (Gourville 2006). Faced with a rapid proliferation of technological advancements and the bombardment of new technology categories, many consumers are overwhelmed. These innovations often require consumers to change their behavior and/or incur transaction costs. More importantly, consumers are not always able to recognize the full advantages of technology innovations (Campbell 1999).

Consumer technology products and services have shorter lifecycles, are more complex, require a great deal of consumer learning, and are perceived as more risky than other innovations (Rogers 1995). Since learning about technological innovation involves exposure to new and sometimes difficult information, research indicates that using a conversational mode rather than a written mode may increase the perceived usefulness of marketing information (Lee, Lee and Schumann 2002; Wilkie and Dickson 1985). A salesperson can customize information about a new product or service to help facilitate customer understanding. If a customer has a better understanding of the technology, the probability of his or her adoption of the new technology also increases (Davis 1989; Rogers 1995). Given the aforementioned challenges faced by marketers of innovative products, the question is whether there are selling approaches that enhance the likelihood of consumer technology adoption.

Personal selling is a "critically important element in the marketing mix of almost every industrial firm" (Spiro and Perreault 1979, p. 435). The importance of personal selling is especially salient during new product commercialization (Atuahene-Gima 1997). The value of personal selling stems from the premise that salespeople can facilitate consumers' decision of adoption by implementing the appropriate selling tactics (Sujan, Weitz and Sujan 1988). Over the years, multiple studies have demonstrated that vigorous sales force support is critical to new product success (Booz, Allen and Hamilton 1982; Cooper 2000; Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). However, despite the role of personal selling as an important promotional

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tool, academic research on selling approaches has been limited largely to business-to-business (B2B) settings (Spiro and Weitz 1990; Sujan, Weitz and Sujan 1988; Weitz 1978). More to the point, the effectiveness of alternative personal selling tactics has not been sufficiently evaluated in a business-to-consumer (B2C) context.

B2C marketing refers to a transaction that occurs directly between a company and a consumer. Examples of B2C salespeople are telemarketers, residential real estate brokers, and retail store salespeople (Johnston and Marshall 2006). It represents a significant section of the U.S. economy. In fact, most of the 26 million Americans who are employed in sales occupations work in B2C selling environments (Spiro, Rich and Stanton 2008). Unlike B2B environments, B2C environments involve consumers as single decision makers. The B2C decision making process is typically treated as more spontaneous and less complicated than its B2B counterpart (Johnston and Marshall 2006). In consumer markets, the challenge of salespeople is to understand how prospects perceive a new product and develop effective ways of positioning and communicating values associated with the new product. It is therefore essential for them to understand the effectiveness and appropriateness of different tactical selling approaches.

The purpose of this study is to provide marketers of new consumer technology products guidance in the development of effective selling tactics. In the context of an experimental shopping scenario for a consumer technology innovation, we examine the impact of personal selling tactics on the consumer technology adoption process. This study answers the call of Ziamou and Ratneshwar (2003) for research examining the effectiveness of sales presentations as communication strategies for launching product innovations in the marketplace. Specifically, we use a model combining the theory of reasoned action [TRA] (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975) with an extended version of the technology acceptance model [TAM] (Davis 1989). The sales tactics are adapted from the taxonomy of selling techniques used in B2B buyer-seller relationships as set forth by DelVecchio et al. (2002). One approach, *customer-focused,* highlights a salesperson's attempt to link the benefits of the new product with the unique needs of customer. A second approach, *product-focused,* emphasizes the attributes and benefits of the innovative product being offered. The third approach, *competitive-focused*, relates similar customers and competitive products to the innovation. If specific selling tactics can be shown to have a differential effect on elements of the TAM and TRA and to strengthen the relationship between the key dimensions, this study can provide marketers with insight into appropriate selling tactics for innovative products.

CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

Consumer Adoption of Technological Innovations

Since its introduction more than a decade ago (Davis 1989), TAM has received a great deal of attention among IS researchers in their efforts to predict and explain user acceptance of information technology. Several empirical studies have validated the usefulness of this model, and TAM is widely considered a "robust, powerful, and parsimonious model" for predicting and explaining user acceptance of an innovation (Venkatesh and Davis 2000, p. 187). This model has been applied in understanding the adoption of several consumer technology products including mobile chat services (Nysveen, Pederson and Thorbjornsen 2005) and cellular phones (Kwon and Chidambaram 2000). The TAM model which consists of five concepts: perceived ease-of-use, perceived usefulness, attitudes towards use, intention to use, and actual use, focuses on the attitudinal determinants of intention to use a specific technology or service. To date, research has focused on the moderating effects of experience, gender, and age of the technology user on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables

(Jarvenpaa and Todd 1997; Thompson, Higgins and Howell 1994; Venkatesh and Davis 2000).

Based on TAM, both perceived ease-of-use and perceived usefulness were included in this study. Perceived ease-of-use is defined following Davis (1989, p. 320), as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort." In essence, perceived ease-of-use reduces uncertainty about the cause-effect relationship involved in the innovations' capacity to solve an individual's problem. Positive effects of ease-of-use on usage intention have been found in a number of studies on various information systems (Agarwal and Karahanna 2000; Venkatesh 2000). Perceived usefulness is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her performance" (Davis 1989, p. 320). In the context of consumer innovations, usefulness relates to compatibility with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters (Rogers 1995). In previous consumer based studies, perceived usefulness has been found to influence usage intentions (Nysveen, Pederson and Thorbjornsen 2005).

Given the fact that this study examines the adoption of a consumer technology, non-utilitarian motives such as expressiveness and enjoyment are used. These motives have been investigated in studies of mobile services within both uses/gratifications and domestication research (Leung and Wei 2000). Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002) found "fun" to be a significant driver of attitudes, even for more utilitarian service. *Perceived expressiveness* is defined as individuals' ability to express their emotions or identity (Cassidy et al. 1992). Results from domestication studies indicate that the sending, receiving, or filtering, and sharing of messages is an expressive communication activity to displaying style and social capital (Skog 2002). *Perceived enjoyment* refers to "the extent to which the activity of using the computer (technology) is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated" (Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw 1992, p. 1113).

Normative pressure is defined as "a person's perception that most people who are important to her/him think s/he should or should not perform the behavior in question" (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, p. 302). Normative pressure - or social norm - is revealed to influence behavioral intention in numerous studies based on the theory of reasoned action. The relationship between normative pressure and behavioral intention is also supported in previous consumer studies (Hung, Ku and Chang 2002).

Tactical Selling Approaches

A single, universally accepted taxonomy of selling tactics does not exist in B2C environments. However, in the B2B context, the concept of adaptive selling as a distinct selling approach has been advanced based on the principle of communication adaptation (Eckert 2006; Park and Holloway 2003; Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz 1981). These communication adaptations include employing different influence strategies (Spiro and Perreault 1979); altering communication styles (Merrill and Reid 1981); and considering source credibility, similarity, and physical attractiveness of the message sender (Dwyer, Richard and Shepard 1998; Lichtenthal and Tellefsen 2001). Message factors include the order of the arguments, the sided-ness of the arguments, and the basis for the appeal being made (O'Keefe 2002). Of particular note, a recent study by DelVecchio et al. (2002) utilizes a taxonomy of selling tactics based on message adaptation. It identifies three specific selling tactics (i.e., *product-focused, competitive-focused*, and *customer-focused*) used in managing different buyer-seller relationships.

Product-focused tactics focus on a one-way communication that informs or educates the buyer (Weitz and Bradford 1999). This selling strategy is aimed at the attributes and performance of the product. The statements used by the salesperson adopting this approach emphasize the technical details associated with either the product or its application. Such

information may concern aspects of the core product (e.g., quality and satisfaction ratings; performance and safety specifications), peripheral benefits (e.g., warranties; financing options), price (e.g., this item has been discounted), retail outlet (e.g., good return policy), or manufacturer details (e.g., country of origin). The salesperson is interested in uncovering the existence of a need and then persuading the consumer to purchase. The communication behaviors tend to be declarative statements made by the salesperson rather than questions asked by the buyer (Delvecchio et al. 2002).

The competitive-focused approach recognizes that the buyer faces a set of challenges (and opportunities) but views these as common to other buyers in the category. Because the challenges are viewed as similar to others, the salesperson does not "engage in detailed diagnosis of the buyer's problem, but recommends a set of solutions that have proven successful in similar situations" (Delvecchio et al. 2002, p. 40). In addition, the salesperson adopting this approach recognizes the buyer's position within his or her industry and draws comparisons with competitive focus that includes comparisons relevant to both the buyer and to the seller. This approach involves more attempts to influence the buyer, and frequently draw comparisons to similar product categories and customers (Delvecchio et al. 2002). Media studies indicate that comparative ads are often more effective than non-comparative ads in generating attention, brand awareness, message processing, and increased purchase intentions (Hill and King 2001). In certain situations, making comparisons may be particularly effective for promoting dynamically-continuous or discontinuous innovations by mapping existing category attributes to the new offering.

The customer-focused approach views customer's problems as unique and in need of customized responses (DeComier and Jobber 1993). According to DelVecchio et al. (2002, p. 39), "a salesperson attempting to develop the most customer-focused type of relationship will engage in creative problem solving and suggest innovative solutions." These techniques would include acknowledging the seller's viewpoint and encouraging a discussion of personal or relational matters. Their findings indicate that when approaching buyers occupying higher levels of authority within an organization, the customer-focused approaches tend to garner higher responsiveness ratings. Spiro and Weitz (1990) argue that empathic ability is vital to effective selling ability. They believe that sellers gain "unique insights" by being able to place themselves psychologically and emotionally in the position of the customer.

Although the three selling tactics are originally developed in B2B settings, we expect that the framework can be easily applied to the B2C context. The marketing literature on persuasion indicates that salespeople are viewed as a valuable source of information (Swan et al. 1988). Not surprisingly, consumers often seek advice from them (Schuster and Danes 1986). For example, consumers typically perceive that salespeople who work in specialty stores such as Best Buy and Circuit City possess useful information about a new technology due to their experience and product training. The influence from salespeople can therefore be used to reduce consumer's uncertainty and facilitate product adoption (Atuahene-Gima 1997; Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). A typical B2C encounter is brief and spontaneous, compared to its B2B counterpart. Therefore, it is critical to understand the effectiveness of different tactical selling approaches in a B2C context. This study explores the potential moderating role of different selling tactics on the relationships between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, normative pressures, perceived enjoyment, and technology adoption outcomes (i.e., attitude toward usage and purchase intention).

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

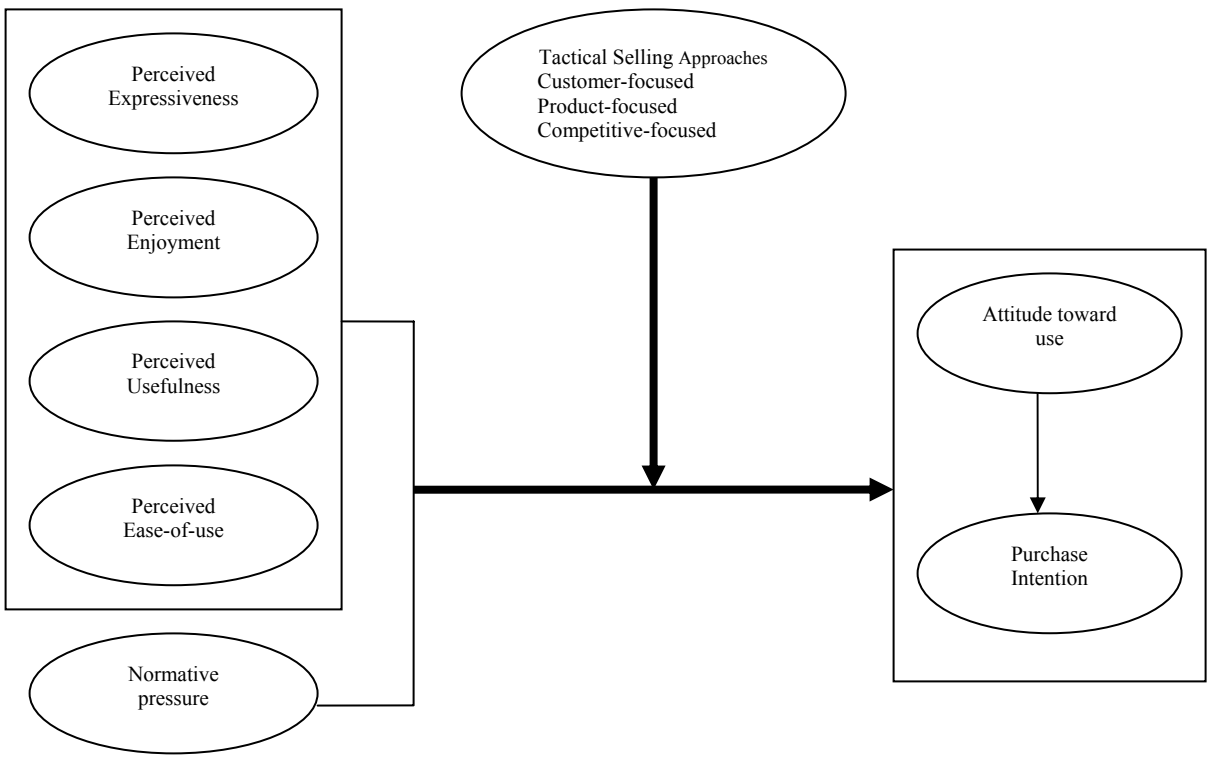
As discussed previously, the linkages among the elements of the TAM and TRA have been studied extensively over the past decade. However, a meta-analysis of TAM literature mentions that the role of external variables has

received limited attention (Legris, Ingham and Collerette 2003). Based on a detailed analysis of 22 articles from six journals, the authors found that only 60 percent of TAM studies considered external variables (e.g., age, technology experience, education) and that there was "no clear pattern with respect to the choice of the external variables considered." The literature on diffusion of innovation suggests that information about technological innovations can travel through a variety of communication sources to members of a social system (Rogers 1995). That is, a salesperson can customize information about a new product/service to help facilitate customer understanding. If a consumer has a better understanding of the technology, the probability of his/her adoption also increases (Davis 1989; Rogers 1995). We explore the role of tactical selling approaches on consumer adoption of technology within the context of a sales encounter.

The relationship between perceived usefulness and technology adoption is strongly influenced by the belief that an innovation is compatible with existing practices and habits. Innovations that require changes in customers' routine require a relatively longer diffusion process before gaining customer acceptance. If the buyer is familiar with older technologies, he or she is more capable of judging the present innovation in terms of its superiority over prior offerings (Ostlund 1973). The competitive-focused selling approach allows sales representatives to draw favorable comparisons between the usage of the product by similar consumers (e.g., testimonials) as well as offer evidence of its relative advantage compared to similar products or brands. Thus, we predict:

H_1: Employing competitive-focused selling tactics will positively impact the relationship between perceived usefulness and attitude toward use (H_{1a})/purchase intentions (H_{1b}).

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Framework: Impact of Selling Tactics on Consumer Technology Adoption



Alternatively, perceived lack of usefulness is manifested in a lack of understanding of the product's functionality and may create "fear effects" and extreme resistance to the innovation (Veryzer 1998). Consumer resistance stems from the item not fitting with the customer's knowledge structure, product schema, or consumption patterns. Studies indicate that where consumers are explicitly shown an innovation (e.g., by a friend or salesperson or at tradeshows), perceived compatibility or usefulness is likely to have an immediate effect (Olshavsky and Spreng 1996). Therefore, consumers are able to acclimate and move through the process of mental adoption of the new product. This type of selling situation requires informing the buyer about the product. The buyer is interested in knowing whether the product will meet his or her needs and requires concrete product specifications and visual cues. Thus, we posit:

H_2: Employing product-focused selling tactics will positively impact the relationship between perceived usefulness and attitude toward use (H_{2a})/purchase intentions (H_{2b}).

Compared to perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use is more important in determining satisfaction in the consumption process. When an item has ease of use, it is free from effort and lacks complexity. If a technological innovation is viewed as complex, it probably will not be perceived as being easy to try or as having operations and /or advantages easily recognized and explained to others. Complexity has also been linked to increased purchase risk (Holak and Lehmann 1990). The ability of the new product to be understood in terms of how it is to be operated and the benefits that it offers have a considerable impact on consumer evaluation. Moreover, the ability of a product to be readily understood reduces the investment of time and effort required by customers to learn how to use it. Similar to perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use is best achieved with a product-focused strategy. By using the product-focused approach, the salesperson encourages direct user-product interface to reduce consumer apprehension about product performance and safety. Thus, we predict:

H_3: Employing product-focused selling tactics will positively impact the relationship between perceived ease of use and attitude toward use (H_{3a})/purchase intentions (H_{3b}).

The potential for an innovation to tap into the personal expressiveness of the consumer can be greatly enhanced by the sales interaction. We posit that a customer-focused approach allows the salesperson to uncover latent motives by creating linkages with feelings associated with intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan 1985) and/or peak experiences (Waterman 1990). The objective of the sales presentation is to show how the innovation can potentially fulfill unmet needs and to define what is possible and worth having in life (e.g., E-books allow intellectuals greater portability). Subsequently, feelings of personal expressiveness and self-realization are linked to the point where the innovation is seen to enhance personal potentials. Thus:

H_4: Employing customer-focused selling tactics will positively impact the relationship between expressiveness and attitude toward use (H_{4a})/purchase intentions (H_{4b}).

Perceived enjoyment, which is adapted from Davis et al. (1992), reflects a consumer's inherent satisfaction and playfulness derived from a specific activity. When consumers first have direct experience and interface with a new technology, a sense of intense curiosity and anticipation can often occur. For example, in any Windows-based systems, software manufacturers are attempting to provide interfaces that are "fun," "cute," and tie into social functioning. Such design features aim to create enjoyment albeit with the goal of enhancing attitude toward usage. Given this perspective, we posit that the "hands on" approach often used in the product-focused selling strategy will play a role in affecting the relationship between perceived enjoyment and technology product adoption. Thus:

H_5: Employing product-focused selling tactics will positively impact the relationship between enjoyment and

attitude toward use (H_{5a})/purchase intentions (H_{5b}).

Normative pressure can be particularly relevant in the purchase of technology products. High technology products that are socially visible, viewed as luxuries, or become relevant to a group's functioning are susceptible to normative pressure (Lord, Lee and Choong 2001). The competitive-focused selling approach draws comparisons to similar consumers and usage situations. For instance, when the salesperson recounts the successful experience of product usage by ordinary consumers, an identification effect occurs and enhances the believability and relevance of the message (Reinartz 1999). Thus, we posit:

H_6: Employing competitive-focused selling tactics will positively impact the relationship between normative pressure and purchase intentions.

Due to the considerable individual interest and situational influences (e.g., purchase risk) associated with many high technology purchases, involvement is a key determinant of how information is processed and attitudes are changed. According to the elaboration likelihood model, marketers should focus on central, product-related features and factual information for high involvement situations (Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann 1983). The product-focused strategy allows salespersons to strengthen the linkage between attitudes and purchase intention by highlighting the performance of the innovation on one or more critical attributes, reinforcing or altering brand selection criteria, or providing information to add new information to the consumer's belief structure. Thus:

H_7: Employing product-focused selling tactics will positively impact the relationship between attitude toward use and purchase intentions.

METHODOLOGY

Procedure

To investigate the research hypotheses, a field experiment was conducted to assess the effects of three alternative selling strategies on the adoption of an innovative consumer technology product. A between-subjects design assessed the moderating effects of the selling strategy on the interrelationship among perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, expressiveness, enjoyment, attitude toward usage, and purchase intent.

A pretest of ten consumer electronics products taken from a recent Consumer Electronics Conference web site was conducted to determine an appropriate focal product category. Since we wanted to simulate a high involvement shopping scenario with a salesperson-buyer interaction, the pretest product categories included popular home entertainment products such as media players, high definition televisions, cameras, and navigation devices. A pretest of 80 student participants was conducted and revealed that based on a 1(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert scale, the portable media player rated high on innovativeness (M = 3.67) but relatively low on product knowledge (M = 2.67) and brand familiarity (M = 2.26). More importantly, there were no gender differences among any of the criterion variables ($p = 0.01$). As a result, the portable media player was selected as the focal product category.

A total of 312 subjects were recruited for the main study. They consisted of marketing students from a Midwestern university who were offered course credit to participate. Participation was voluntary. Their median age was 22 with an age range of 19-52 years. In terms of gender, the participants group had slightly more males (55 percent male, 45 percent female).

To simulate a personal selling encounter, student subjects were asked to pretend that they were visiting a local electronics retailer. After

APPENDIX
Summary of Experimental Stimuli

Product Description
Introducing the portable media player! It lets you take all your movies, music and photos in a light, pocket-sized device. You can also tune in the radio, record your favorite talk show, or make personal voice memos with the built-in microphone.

Product-focused sales interaction (abridged version)
After arriving at the store, you were greeted by one of the store's sales representatives, Tom Small. After introducing himself, Tom recited the key features of the portable media player. He said, "This multi-media device is loaded with 30 or 60 GB of memory. At this capacity you can carry tens of thousands of photos, 240 hours of movies (500 Kbps MPEG4-SP), or up to 30,000 songs (WMA encoded at 64 Kbps), all in the palm of your hand." Tom also emphasized that it displays your media in a widescreen, 16:9 format.

Competitive-focused sales interaction (abridged version)
After arriving at the store, you were greeted by one of the store's sales representatives, Tom Small. After introducing himself, Tom said that the portable media player was one of the store's most popular products. He told you about Susan who recently purchased a portable media player. Susan was a college student whose daughter was involved in several extracurricular activities and she needed a device that could store a large number of digital photos and videos. Tom also mentioned another college student, Mark, who bought the portable media player because of its flexibility. It has FM radio capabilities and could record radio programs like a TIVO. He further explained that Mark could use the portable media player like a traditional tape recorder to record class lectures.

Customer-focused sales interaction (abridged version)
After arriving at the store, you were greeted by one of the store's sales representatives, Tom Small. After introducing himself, Tom asked you several questions such as: "Are you thinking about buying the portable media player for yourself or as a gift?" "Have you ever owned one before," and "Would you use this media player for leisure, business, or both?"

Tom continued to ask you questions about situations in which you might need to have access to music or would like to relax by watching a movie. He also asked whether you own a cell phone or a MP3 player and if they fulfilled your needs. Tom also queried you about how useful some of the features might be. He asked, "Are there situations where you could use a handheld FM radio? "Do you ever wish you could record your favorite radio programs?" In general, he made sure you understood what the media player does.

viewing an illustration and product specification for the portable media player, subjects were told to imagine that they were approached by a retail salesperson and provided information regarding the new technology product. Each subject was provided information that represented one of the three basic tactical selling approaches advanced by DelVecchio et al. (2002) – namely, product-focused, competitive-focused, and customer-focused (see Appendix). Special attention was given to assure that each selling scenario was similar in length, focused on similar product attributes, and concluded with the salesperson asking for the order. After completing that task, participants were directed to complete the questionnaire about their perceptions of the media player and the likelihood of adoption. Finally, the subjects were asked to write what they thought was the purpose of the study was. No subject listed the hypothesis as the purpose of the study. The entire process took approximately 20 minutes.

Measures

The measures of the TRA and an extended version of the TAM were refined from a similar study of mobile chat services (Nysveen, Pedersen and Thorbjernsen 2005). In preparation, a set of items were developed through expert review to determine the relevant issues in the adoption of a portable media player. These scales measured: *perceived expressiveness, perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, normative pressure, attitude toward use*, and *intention to use*. A pretest of a convenience sample of 67 undergraduate students provided feedback on the clarity and validity of the items. After factor analysis and reliability assessments were performed, a total of 27 of the original 35 items were retained for the experimental study.

Subjects were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements using a five-point, Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitude toward use were measured using items developed from adapting the original items of Davis (1989). Given the nature of portable media players, perceived enjoyment included elements of "entertainment value" (Leung and Wei 2000), "enjoyment" (Papacharissi and Rubin 2000), and "fun-seeking" (Leung and Wei 1998). Perceived expressiveness measured how well a product expresses values beyond instrumental utility (Mittal 1994) and serves as a status item (Leung and Wei 2000). Normative pressure was based on measures developed by Taylor and Todd (1995) and Mathieson (1991) and revised for our setting.

Following the two-step approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we first estimated a measurement model that consists of all seven constructs. The maximum likelihood estimation generated a modest fit (χ^2 = 963.87, DF = 474, NFI = 0.86, RFI = 0.84, IFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, CFI = 0.922, and RMSEA = 0.058). The fit was unsatisfactory as indicated by the fact that the relative chi-square (χ^2 /DF) was above 2.0 and both NFI and RFI were below 0.9. In addition, modification indices suggested that deleting six items and allowing two error terms to be correlated would improve the model significantly. The modification resulted in a better overall fit (χ^2 = 440.94, DF = 302, NFI=0.93, RFI=0.91, IFI=0.98, TLI=0.97, CFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.038). Comparison of the two models shows that the incremental chi-square is significant with 172 degrees of freedom ($\Delta\chi^2 = 522.93$, p = 0.001).

Descriptive statistics and construct intercorrelations are presented in Table 1. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis are reported in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, all item loadings on their corresponding construct were significant, an indicator of convergent validity. To test discriminant validity, we set

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

	Mean	S.D.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1 Expressiveness	2.58	0.83	1.00					
2 Enjoyment	3.76	0.81	.311**	1.00				
3 Usefulness	3.67	0.79	.158**	.557**	1.00			
4 Ease of Use	3.87	0.73	0.097	.311**	.229**	1.00		
5 Attitude	5.35	1.05	.239**	.692**	.519**	.264**	1.00	
6 Normative Pressure	2.14	0.86	.494**	.359**	.269**	.158**	.363**	1.00
7 Intention to Purchase	3.74	1.45	.281**	.517**	.421**	0.099	.513**	.362**

Note: **p<0.01, *p<0.05.
N = 312.

the latent construct correlations to 1, one at a time. A chi-square test revealed that all latent construct correlation were significantly different from one, demonstrating discriminant validity.

Based on these results, we accepted the revised measurement model and used it for subsequent analyses. Following a similar paradigm used by Nysveen, Pedersen and Thorbjornsen (2005), we modeled perceived expressiveness, perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use, and normative pressure as exogenous variables, whereas perceived usefulness, attitude, and intention to purchase were modeled as endogenous variables. Prior to testing the moderating effects, we first estimated the structural relationships of the model by pooling together all three groups to build a baseline for comparison purposes (Avlonitis and Panagopoulos 2006). After consulting modification indices, we added a path from perceived enjoyment to perceived usefulness. This change decreased the chi-square statistic by $\Delta\chi^2$ =121.1 (DF = 1; p = 0.000). The final model demonstrated a good fit χ^2 = 445.07, DF = 305, NFI = 0.92, RFI = 0.91, IFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, and RMSEA = 0.038). Overall, the results support the model tested by Nysveen, Pedersen and Thorbjornsen (2005) with one noticeable difference: the relationship between perceived ease of use and purchase intention was negative. The results are reported in Table 3.

RESULTS

Manipulation Checks

To check the effectiveness of the tactical selling approaches manipulation, analysis of variance was employed with measures of perceived customer-focused (coefficient alpha = .950), perceived competitive-focused (coefficient alpha =.851), and perceived product-focused (coefficient alpha = .787) as the dependent variables. Subjects in the customer-focused scenario considered the salespersons behavior to be more consistent with that approach than other strategies (M_{cust} = 3.81, M_{comp} = 1.89, M_{prod} = 1.66, F = 201.7, p = 0.01). In the competitive focused condition, subjects rated the salesperson more consistent with that approach (M_{comp} = 4.35, M_{cust} = 2.63, M_{prod} = 2.16, F = 161.9, p = 0.01). Last, subjects who were exposed to the product-focused selling scenario rated the salesperson as being more consistent with that approach (M_{prod} = 4.54, M_{comp} = 3.20, M_{cust} = 3.12, F = 128.3, p = 0.01).

Hypotheses Testing

The effects of the tactical selling approaches on consumer perceptions were assessed by applying multigroup equation modeling to test for invariant pattern of causal structure. The

TABLE 2
Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results (Measurement Model)

	Loadings
Perceived Expressiveness **(Alpha = 0.786)**	
1 Buying the portable media player would reflect the type of person I am.	0.75
2 I believe using a portable media player would give me status among my friends.	0.67
3 I think that using a portable media player expresses my personality.	0.82
Perceived Enjoyment **(Alpha = 0.920)**	
1 I think I would find the portable media player entertaining.	0.88
2 Using the portable media player would be exciting.	0.82
3 It would be fun to use the portable media player.	0.86
4 In my opinion, the portable media player would be boring to use (R).	0.70
5 I believe I would enjoy the portable media player.	0.88
Perceived Usefulness **(Alpha = 0.789)**	
1 The portable media player would be a convenient way of watching movies or listening to music anytime.	0.71
2 The light, pocket-size of the portable media player would be very convenient for me.	0.81
3 The portable media player would be useful as a multi-media device.	0.74
4 The portable media player would be a good way of storing my family photos.	0.57
Perceived Ease of Use **(Alpha = 0.925)**	
1 Learning to use the portable media player would be easy for me.	0.89
2 I believe it would be easy to make the portable media player to do what I want it to do.	0.88
3 I believe it would be easy to understand and use the features of the portable media player.	0.91
4 It would be easy for me to become skillful at using the portable media player.	0.80
Attitude **(Alpha = 0.915)**	
1 Good/bad	0.85
2 Wise/foolish	0.77
3 Favorable/unfavorable	0.84
4 Beneficial/useless	0.81
5 Positive/negative	0.88
Normative Pressure **(Alpha = 0.788)**	
1 I believe people important to me would want me to own a portable media player.	0.54
2 People I look up to would expect me to own a portable media player.	0.83
3 My friends would expect me to use a portable media player.	0.91
Intention to Purchase **(Alpha = 0.841)**	
1 Unlikely/likely	0.88
2 Impossible/possible	0.64
3 Improbably/probable	0.90
Fit Indices	
Chi-Square Statistic	440.90
Degree of Freedom	302
RMSEA	0.038
CFI	0.98
IFI	0.98
TLI	0.97

Note: All factor loadings are standardized and significant at $p<0.01$.

procedure involves establishing a multigroup baseline model against which we can compare subsequent models "in which equality constraints are specified" (Byrne 2001, p. 250). We allowed the hypothesized structural paths to be freely estimated across the three types of selling tactics before comparing the fit of this model with one in which we arbitrarily set those paths to be equal across the three subsamples (Avlonitis and Panagopous 2006). For the purpose of clarity, we denoted the freely estimated model as M_{free} and that of the equality model M_{equal}. As shown in Table 3, th χ^2 of the M_{free} was 1313.2 (DF = 915), whereas that of the M_{equal} was 1351.5 (DF = 939). Since the chi-square difference between the two models was significant $\Delta\chi^2$ =38.3 Δ DF = 24; p = 0.032), we concluded that all structural paths are not equal across the three types of selling tactics.

TABLE 3
Estimated Coefficients for the Three Selling Tactics

Relationships	M_{free}	M_{equal}	Selling Tactics		
			Customer-focused	Competitive-focused	Product-focused
DV: Attitude					
H1a: Usefulness on Attitude	0.159**	0.106	-0.056	0.231*	0.134
H2a: Usefulness on Attitude	0.159**	0.106	-0.056	0.231*	0.134
H3a: Ease of Use on Attitude	-0.005	0.009	0.232***	-0.114	-0.029
H4a: Expressiveness on Attitude	0.055	0.042	0.098	0.064	0.014
H5a: Enjoyment on Attitude	0.618***	0.715***	0.786***	0.534***	0.633***
DV: Intention					
H1b: Usefulness on Intention	0.111	0.019	0.178	-0.113	-0.115
H2b: Usefulness on Intention	0.111	0.019	0.178	-0.113	-0.115
H3b: Ease of Use on Intention	-0.132**	-0.088**	-0.012	-0.201***	-0.106
H4b: Expressiveness on Intention	0.106	0.079	0.011	0.204	0.165
H5b: Enjoyment on Intention	0.280***	0.359***	0.473**	0.321*	0.286**
H6: Norm. Pressure on Intention	0.132*	0.140**	0.071	0.295***	0.045
H7: Attitude on Intention	0.219**	0.215***	0.031	0.230*	0.306**
Chi-square	445.1	1351.5		1313.2	
D.F.	305	939		915	
RMSEA	0.038	0.058		0.038	
CFI	0.98	0.93		0.93	
IFI	0.98	0.93		0.93	
TLI	0.97	0.92		0.92	

Note: *** p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10.

Shaded area highlights hypothesized selling strategy.

As displayed in Table 3, perceived usefulness had a positive and significant impact on consumers' attitude towards using the new product when salespeople used competitive-focused selling tactics (β = 0.231, p = 0.098). In contrast, the relationship between perceived usefulness and intention to use was insignificant using this sales approach (β = -0.113, p = 0.435). Therefore, H1a was supported, but H1b was not. In the product-focused condition, both the relationships between perceived usefulness and attitude toward use (β = 0.134, p = 0.328) and intention to use (β = -0.115, p = 0.397) were not significant. Therefore, H_2 was not supported.

H_3 predicts that perceived ease of use would impact consumers' attitude and intention to purchase when salespeople choose product-focused selling tactics. This hypothesis was not supported as the coefficients were insignificant for both the ease of use and attitude to use relationship (β = -0.029, p = 0.766) and the ease of use and intention to purchase relationship (β = -0.106, p = 0.270). However, in the customer-focused condition, the ease of use had a significant effect on attitude (β = 0.232, p = 0.003). In addition, we had a surprising finding that the relationship between ease of use and purchase intention when salespeople used competitive-focused tactics was significant but negative (β = -0.201, p = 0.019).

The results in Table 3 show that perceived expressiveness had no significant impact on either attitude (β = 0.098, p = 0.227) or purchase intention (β = 0.079, p = 0.937) when salesperson used customer-focused selling tactics. Therefore, H_4 was not supported. In contrast, perceived enjoyment had positive and significant impacts on both consumers' attitude and purchase intention. For the perceived enjoyment – attitude relationship, the positive and significant effect holds for all three sets of selling tactics, i.e., the customer-focused selling tactics (β = 0.786, p = 0.000), the competitive-focused selling tactics (β = 0.534, p = 0.000), and the product-focused selling tactics (β = 0.633, p = 0.000). Similarly, perceived enjoyment had positive and significant impacts on purchase intention when salespeople used customer-focused tactics (β = 0.473, p = 0.033), competitive-focused tactics (β = 0.321, p = 0.069), and product-focused tactics (β = 0.386, p = 0.016). These results partially supported H_5.

According to H_6, perceived normative pressure influences consumers' purchase intention positively when competitive-focused selling tactics are used. The findings indicated that perceived normative pressure had a positive and significant impact on purchase intention (β = 0.295, p = 0.006). Finally, the effects of attitude on purchase intention under a product-focused selling approach, was supported (β = 0.306, p = 0.014). Though not predicted, attitude had a positive effect on purchase intention when salespeople used competitive-focused tactics (β = 0.230, p = 0.065). Thus, H_7 was partially supported.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Is there a best way to sell technology products to consumers? Drawing guidance from the technology acceptance and theory of reasoned action literature, our findings indicate that personal selling can differentially affect the relationships between key elements in the technology adoption process. This study also focuses attention on the use of message-based tactical selling techniques which have received less attention in the sales literature and applies it to a B2C context. The message-based taxonomy (i.e., product-focused, competitive-focused, and customer-focused) tested in this study is an amalgamation of various sales orientations and is applicable to a wide range of selling situations.

The competitive-focused tactics affect a broader range of technology acceptance variables than the product-focused or customer-focused strategies. When consumers are approached by salespeople employing the competitive-focused strategy, perceived usefulness is positively related to attitude toward usage (H_{1a}). The effectiveness of

competitive-focused strategy is consistent with research that suggests that consumers often use existing knowledge about existing competing products (a base) to better understand innovative products or services (the target) (Gregan-Paxton and John 1997; Yamauchi and Markman 2000). The other mechanism in which this relationship may operate is group identification influence. Such influence occurs when an individual has internalized the group's values and attitudes. For instance, when a seller of smartphones shows how the product is consistent with the lifestyle of other socially active young singles, the perceived usefulness of the innovation is enhanced.

As predicted, the competitive-focused approach positively impacts the relationship between normative pressures (H_6) with purchase intention. Many consumer technologies are consumed in public and are associated with a strong group commitment to specific brands (e.g., Apple computer or Harley Davidson). To fully capitalize on this selling approach, salespeople need to categorize consumers into similar benefit/need groups and understand which product attributes are consistent with their consumption beliefs. The sales training and development process may play a critical role by providing category-specific benchmarks. Moreover, collaborative efforts, such as team selling, provide salespeople with vital information about consumer usage problems as well as success stories.

The results of technology acceptance were mixed for the product-focused approach. The fact that perceived usefulness was not related to attitude/purchase intention (H_2) is revealing. Since the product-focused tactics rely on attribute-based instead of more holistic, attitude-based evaluations, consumers may not be able to assess usefulness. Conversely, the relationship was significant between attitude toward usage and purchase intention (H_7). The experiential nature of the product-focused approach buoyed the "fun, hedonic" aspect of product evaluations. This experience is likely to be enhanced in the case of a discontinuous, new-to-the-world technology product. Further, the product-focused approach may be best suited for less experienced salespeople who use canned (i.e., tell and sell) presentation styles. Finally, promotional tactics such as product sampling, trial offers and demonstrations should be relied on to strengthen the attitude toward use and purchase intention relationship.

For the customer-focused tactics, the hypothesized relationship for perceived expressiveness and attitude/purchase intention (H_4) was not supported. The fact that perceived expressiveness was not a strong driver of intention to use the portable media player may be indicative of the lack of self-identity associated with some technology innovations. Rather, other social and psychological mechanisms appear to be at play here. In hindsight, we might expect more of a gender or involvement moderation of this relationship (Nysveen, Pederson and Thorbjornsen, 2005).

Some surprising findings were revealed. The perceived ease of use and attitude toward use relationship was evident in the customer-focused condition, not the product-focused scenario (H_3). One explanation to this counterintuitive finding is that salespersons using the customer-focused tactics assumed lower consumer product knowledge and a lack of evaluative criteria. Effective questioning can be used to uncover common usage problems experienced when interfacing with particular technology products. The finding that perceived enjoyment is a strong driver of attitude and purchase intention among those in the customer-focused condition in addition to the hypothesized product-focused condition (H_5) highlights the importance of the dyadic relationship in selling. A salesperson could spend additional time sharing information about his or her family status and educational background with a client with whom he or she wishes to have a strong personal bond. The customer-focused approach is likely to be more effective for experienced salespeople with strong relational skills.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings reported here are subject to some limitations. First, the subjects were undergraduate business students. College students are heavy users of technology products. Despite our attempts to minimize the influence of product knowledge and involvement, they may exhibit a set of attitudes and behaviors that differs from the general population. Second, we examine a single product category, portable media players. This limits the generalizability of our findings to consumer technology innovations that are hedonic, recreational in nature and consumed by a younger consumer group. Finally, the external validity of our findings is reduced by the use of a shopping scenario that describes an asymmetric interaction that is typically dyadic. Findings from our laboratory setting might be enhanced by the use of role playing or video reenactments of personal selling scenarios.

Future research should continue to focus on modifying the technology acceptance model for business-to-consumer situations. The proposed extensions applied to TAM in the present study– the integration of normative pressures, perceived expressiveness, and perceived enjoyment – represent a similar perspective that other consumer based studies have taken in this research stream (e.g., Nysveen, Pederson and Thorbjornsen 2005; Kwon and Chidambaram 2000). Of particular note is the strong positive relationship of perceived enjoyment with both attitudes toward usage and purchase intention across all three personal selling conditions. For consumer innovations, an alternative conceptualization of TAM that takes into account the dual hedonic-utilitarian aspects of technology acceptance is needed.

Additional research is warranted into other situations and circumstances in which there is partial mediation of external variables of the original TAM constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. For instance, the role of expertise may represent an important theoretical consideration in technology acceptance and usage. A novice consumer may rely more on attribute–based information (i.e., product-focused approach) in order to understand the usefulness of the technology innovation.

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