

**Journal of Business Research Special Issue**

**The influences of branding on personal selling and sales management strategies for the digital age**

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**Special issue information:**

Personal selling and sales management is an important element of the marketing mix (Kim and Hyun, 2011) that is developing fast in the real world of business (Rapp, Calamusa and Bachrach, 2014; Squire, 2021). Research in the areas of personal selling and sales management has produced

various theories and concepts for effective management of customer relationships. Examples include key account management, value-based selling, and relational selling. However, such management models represent a top-down philosophy that assumes that the rest of the organization can adapt these strategies to environmental changes (e.g. emergence of digital technology) and react to changes in interactions with customers (Möller and Parvinen, 2015; Tzempelikos and Gounaris, 2015). Conversely, effective branding, especially in B2B markets, involves a bottom-up approach with controlled flexibility that could offer the ability to counter the competition with better strategies that can drive customer behaviour at the right time (Gupta 2022). In this context, the sales force is an important tool in promoting the brand in business markets (Allison and Flaherty, 2020). Relationships that encourage dialogues and informal interactions between salespeople and customers affect brand knowledge about the manufacturer brand (Ballantyne 2004). Salespeople essentially act as ‘brand ambassadors’ in customer interactions that help to acquire and disseminate insights that allow firms to create differentiation in complex market conditions (Srivastava and Thomas 2010). The synthesis and interplay between branding and personal selling and sales management is therefore an area that is crying out for research, yet the topic is not well served by quality journals (Panagopoulos et al., 2011). Over a decade ago it was reported that there was little research on links between selling and branding (Aspara and Tikkanen, 2008; Badrinarayanan and Laverie, 2011), and in particular, the effects of branding on sales strategies (Lynch and De Chernatony, 2007). Furthermore, papers on sales research published in the most prestigious marketing journals had declined markedly (Plouffe, Williams, and Wachner, 2008). There is little suggestion that the trend has reversed since. For example, a search of one of the main journals covering the area, *Industrial Marketing Management*, produced 16 results for “sales strategy(ies)” but only five are published since 2010.

Personal selling is known to be influenced by branding (Rouziou, 2018) and to influence branding (Hughes et al., 2019), yet this area has received little research. Links between branding (Granot, Greene, and Brashear, 2010), customer/company identity (Kang, Alejandro and Groza, 2015), corporate image (Ageeva, Melewar, Foroudi, Dennis and Jin, 2018) corporate reputation (Swaen, Demoulin and Pauwels-Delassus, 2021), ethical climate (Mulki and Lassk, 2019) and selling are important yet under-researched. The time is therefore right to raise the status of the scholarly research area in line with its commercial importance by generating a comprehensive body of research into the links between personal selling/ sales management and, for example, strategy, digital technologies, corporate branding, identity, image, reputation and brand equity, and particularly, the effects of branding on sales strategies.

## Submissions

Scholarly, conceptual and empirical papers are welcomed. Papers must make a significant contribution to business knowledge and may address issues including, but not necessarily limited to links between selling or sales management and:

### Strategy

### Digital technologies

Branding

Brand equity

Corporate branding

Corporate image

Corporate identity and/or

Corporate reputation.

This interdisciplinary special issue welcomes academic papers from researchers in any field of selling, sales management, corporate reputation, identity, branding, marketing, and related areas of the humanities, social sciences, communication technologies and other fields. The special issue organizers also extend an invitation for collaborative papers between academics, practitioners and policy makers.

Manuscript submission information:

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Select Article Type: To ensure that all manuscripts are correctly identified for inclusion into the special issue, it is important to select “VSI: Branding and Sales” when you reach the “Article Type” step in the submission process.

Where prompted, link to ORCID (if corresponding author has registered with ORCID)

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Figures and tables where separate.

This journal operates a double-blind review process. All contributions will be initially assessed by the editor for suitability for the journal. Papers deemed suitable are then typically sent to a minimum of two independent expert reviewers to assess the scientific quality of the paper.

Key dates:

Submission of papers opens: 16 January 2023

Submission of papers closes: 19 June 2023

Expected publication date: Each paper is published online and in print once accepted. The final special issue is curated virtually. Final date for online publication estimated to be June 2024.

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