In many business relationships, but especially B2B sales relationships, there is a critical component of creating and nurturing business relationships in order to maintain consistent customer transactions. This is particularly important in B2B sales as current and potential customers lists are usually much smaller than in typical B2C transactions. There is much literature on how relationships and their facets impact sales. The quality of the relationship between selling teams and their key accounts plays a critical role in determining profitability (Gupta, 2019). To create quality business relationships, salespeople need to shift from persuasion-based approaches to communication-centered strategies. Specifically, one should foster interactive communication processes in order to foster trust and commitment (Duncan, 1998). In conjunction with interactive communication, strategic collaboration communication that involves the customer in decision making positively influences key account performance through emphasized trust building, mutual understanding and shared goals (Schultz, 2002). Furthermore, co-producing the product or service with the customer increases performance. However, when the intensity, or stress, associated with co-producing the end result is high, it negatively affects customer satisfaction. But, implementing value-enhancing communication strategies can mitigate this effect (Haumann, 2015). Firms need to measure and manage the value they provide to customers, and the value customers provide to the firm through sales (Kumar, 2016). In order to effectively communicate value and maintain quality of relationships, firms need to understand the most effective type and frequency of communication with their customer. For differing levels of performance from the customer, the level of firm-initiated communication must differ (Ramos, 2024). There are also specific forms of communication that are situationally beneficial. For example, synchronous communication (i.e. face-to-face) is better for repairing a business relationship compared to asynchronous communication (i.e. email). The perceived salesperson competence and warmth mediate the effectiveness of communication formats as well (Mangus, 2024). Regarding modeling this relationship between communication and performance, there have been three key drivers identified: the volume of communication, the mix of communication channels, and the alignment with customers’ preferences. Once the ideal level of communication is exceeded, customers begin to react negatively. That negative response can be exacerbated with the use of multichannel communication but mediated by aligning the channels with customer preferences (Godfrey, 2011).

While there is much research on attribution in various business models, there is a lack of literature on attribution models in a B2B sales situation with emphasis on different communication methods or mix of communication methods. This study will empirically show the effectiveness of varying communication methods on sales performance, while also taking into account customer preferences.

Since the survey data that will be used will also feature qualitative data, a text analysis will be crucial to understanding the holistic picture of the customer’s perspective. Two methods for making text analysis more effective were suggested by Allenby and Singh. Allenby found that incorporating sentence structure into the text analysis model helps with accuracy and added value, because many sentences are structured with a single underlying topic (Allenby, 2016). Singh tested differing sampling methods in developing a text-analysis model. He found that both a largest number of information units sampling method and a sequential random sampling method were more effective than traditional simple random sampling methods, as they only sampled for information rich data (Singh, S.N., 2011). Singh emphasizes the limitation and place for further research in adding an additional analysis that draws common themes out of the customer reviews, which we will add to our text analysis model.

An effective model that combines different sectors of knowledge found in previous literature, both theoretical and empirical, will be able to provide empirical evidence that quality communication that aligns with customer preferences will increase sales performance. This would be a more applicable quantitative approach to many of the previously proven sales frameworks. A model showing the effectiveness of communication will provide salespeople with a starting point in their sales strategy as they will know which communication methods are most profitable.