

Praveen Punia

Doctoral Candidate, University of Houston

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Education

C.T. Bauer College of Business, University of Houston	2021 – Present
Doctor of Philosophy, Empirical Marketing	
Advisor: Prof. Michael Ahearne	
University of Hyderabad, India	2014 – 2019

Integrated Program in Financial Economics (MS)

Research Interests

Substantive:	Career Management, Sales Incentives, AI-Human Interactions, Live Streaming, Video Gaming
Methodological:	Causal Inference, Machine Learning, Analytical Modeling, Time Series, Game Theory

Doctoral Dissertation

Topic: Career Management in the Sales Force

Committee: Michael Ahearne (Chair), Johannes Habel (Co-Chair), Jim Hess, Thomas J Steenburgh

Papers Under Review

So Near Yet So Far: The Impact of Near Misses on Salesperson Turnover

with Michael Ahearne, Arpit Agrawal, Yashar Atefi, and Johannes Habel – *under 4th round review at Journal of Marketing Research*

- Winner best paper award at 2024 OFR Symposium, Sales Management Track at 2024 AMA Winter Academic Conference

Who Wins the War for Talent? Wage Levels, Unemployment, and Service Outcomes

with Michael Ahearne, Johannes Habel, Jim Hess, and Phillip Wiseman – *under review at Journal of Marketing*

Papers Preparing for Submission

How Does Sales Experience Affect Life Satisfaction?

with Michael Ahearne, Arpit Agrawal, and Johannes Habel – *reject and resubmit at Journal of Marketing Research*

- Conference Presentations: 2024 AMA Winter Academic Conference, 2024 University of Houston Doctoral Symposium
- Winner AMA Sales SIG 2025 doctoral dissertation proposal award
- Accepted at MSI Working Paper Series

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Work in Progress

A Predictive Framework for Forecasting Long-Term Video Game Performance Using Key Launch Period Metrics

with Sam Hui and Rahul Suhag – *working on the analysis; completed model specification and data collection*

AI-Human Collaboration in B2B Sales Negotiations

working on the data collection

- Winner 2025 Lisa Scheer Best Early-Stage Research Proposal

Build vs. Acquire: The Impact of Internal vs. External Sales Hiring on Firm Performance

with Michael Ahearne, Johannes Habel, and Jim Hess – *working on the analysis; completed model specification and data collection*

Freedom Isn't Free: How Self-Employment Reshapes Work, Health, and Happiness

with Michael Ahearne and Johannes Habel – *writing manuscript; completed analysis*

Awards & Honors

AMA – Sheth Foundation Doctoral Consortium Fellow	2025
ISMS – Marketing Doctoral Consortium Fellow	2025
AMA – Marketing Strategy Doctoral Consortium Fellow	2025
Lisa Scheer Best Early-Stage Research Proposal	2025
Sales SIG Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Award Winner	2025
University of Houston Symposium Fellow	2024
President Fellowship, University of Houston	2021 – 2023
Bauer Doctoral Fellowship, Bauer College of Business, University of Houston	2021 – 2026
Indian Academy of Sciences & National Academy of Sciences Summer Fellow	2018

Research Experience

C.T. Bauer College of Business, University of Houston, Houston Graduate Assistant to Prof. Michael Ahearne	2021 – Present
Indian School of Business, Hyderabad Research Associate with Prof. S. Arunachalam	2019 – 2021

Teaching Experience

Instructor, MARK3338: Introduction to Marketing Analytics Instructor Ratings: 4.8/5.00	Summer 2025
Instructor, MARK3338: Introduction to Marketing Analytics Instructor Ratings: 4.64/5.00	Summer 2024
TA for Mike Ahearne, Professional Selling	Fall 2022, 2023

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Industry Experience

Academic Consultant, Xactly Corporation

2023 – Present

Transform and analyze large, structured data into actionable business insights and solutions

Work directly with industry professionals to present and discuss actionable insights

Participate in regular meetings with executives across the organization

Relevant Coursework

Marketing

Marketing Models

Kachuen Sam Hui

Marketing Management and Strategy

Mike Ahearne

Seminar in Quantitative Marketing

Sriram Venkataraman

Marketing Research Methods (Dr.)

Ed Blair

Organizational Behavior and Management Theory

Derek Avery

Methods

Advanced Topics in Econometrics

Xun Tang

Data Science and Machine Learning

Randy Davila

Applied Econometric Analysis

Aimee Chin

Microeconomics Theory

Janet Kohlhase

Quantitative Economic Analysis

Vikram Maheshri

Econometrics – Cross Sectional Data

Samarjit Das

Econometrics – Panel Data

Samarjit Das

Data Analytics in Marketing

Sudhir Voleti

Probability

Rajeeva Karandikar

Game Theory

Naresh Kumar Sharma

Time Series Modeling

Raja Sethu Durai

Financial Econometrics

Debashish Acharya

Mathematical Optimization Techniques for Economics

Phanindra Goyari

Financial Modelling

Raja Sethu Durai

Method Workshops

Causal Inference Main Workshop

Fall 2022

Northwestern University

Advanced Causal Inference Workshop

Fall 2022

Northwestern University

Mathematics and Finance Summer School

Summer 2018

Chennai Mathematical Institute

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Languages and Statistical Tools

Programming	Python, R, Mathematica, MATLAB, SQL, JavaScript, React
Statistical Tools	STATA, EVIEWS, Mplus, GAMS
Typesetting	LaTeX, Markdown, HTML
Languages	English, Hindi, Urdu, Telugu

Institutional and Professional Service

Coordinator, Thought Leadership on the Sales Profession	2025
Anderson School of Management, University of California, Los Angeles	
Organizer, 41 st Marketing Doctoral Symposium	2024
Bauer College of Business, University of Houston, Houston	
Coordinator, Thought Leadership on the Sales Profession	2023
Darden School of Business, University of Virginia, Washington D.C.	
Vice Chair Productivity Research, AMA DocSIG	2023 – 2024
Assistant Vice Chair Productivity Research, AMA DocSIG	2021 – 2023
Reviewer, AMA Summer Academic Conference (x2)	2024 – 2025
Reviewer, AMA Winter Academic Conference (x2)	2024 – 2025

Conference Participation

ISMS Marketing Science Conference, Washington D.C.	2025
Winter AMA Conference, Phoenix, AZ	2025
Winter AMA Conference, St. Pete, FL	2024
Winter AMA Conference, Las Vegas, NV	2022

References

Michael Ahearne

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Mays Business School, Texas A&M
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Thomas J Steenburgh

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Selected Research Abstracts

How Does Sales Experience Affect Life Satisfaction? (Reject and Resubmit at JMR, MSI Working Paper)

Business-to-business (B2B) sales is perhaps the most ambivalent career the marketing discipline offers, entailing extreme advantages and disadvantages that might change individuals' lives for the better or worse. Thus, it is unclear how experience in a B2B sales role impacts an individual's life satisfaction, a terminal outcome of utmost importance given our pursuit of better marketing for a better world. We test this effect in three studies including cross-sectional data of 64,090 individuals, longitudinal panel data of over 12,500 individuals, and qualitative interviews with salespeople. Interestingly, we find that having experience in a B2B sales role on average enhances life satisfaction. This is because sales experience equips individuals with distinct interpersonal skills that they use to find greater satisfaction outside the work context, such as helping others, enforcing own interests, and building social relationships. The effect of sales experience on life satisfaction is more positive for individuals with a plastic personality, who are more likely to gain and transfer skills. Thereby, this study adds a neglected antecedent to life satisfaction theory and offers actionable implications for managers and educators on improving life satisfaction within organizations and society at large.

So Near Yet So Far: The Impact of Near Misses on Salesperson Turnover (Under 4th Round Review at JMR)

The role of sales is unique within organizations, marked by its high-profile nature and objective performance metrics. Meeting sales targets is vitally important for salespeople, and failure to do so can lead to significant frustration. It is well-established that quota attainment is a key factor influencing a salesperson's decision to quit. Research consistently shows that the lower the quota attainment, the higher the likelihood of the salesperson quitting. However, our study offers a new perspective and adds a subtle complexity to this understanding. Drawing from the concept of counterfactual thinking, we propose that salespeople who narrowly miss sales targets are more likely to quit, even if they are generally high performers. We examine this with two studies: 1) a panel dataset of over 2,900 retail salespeople and 2) cross-industry data on over 25,000 salespeople. Our results confirm that repeated quota near misses cause turnover and reveal three sources of heterogeneity: the effect of quota near misses on turnover increases with higher variable pay percentage and decreases with higher maximum possible pay and higher group performance diversity. Our findings extend sales force turnover theory and provide actionable implications for managers who aim at reducing turnover.

Who Wins the War for Talent? Wage Levels, Unemployment, and Service Outcomes

(Under Review at Journal of Marketing)

It is well established that service employees decisively shape service quality. Therefore, research has clarified how service firms should manage these employees, typically conceiving of them as a generally available and controllable resource. However, this general viewpoint faces severe limitations considering recent labor market disruptions, which pose severe challenges for service firms filling vacant positions. Building on this observation, we propose a theoretical model to explore the role of labor market and wages on expected service quality at a facility. Our model predicts that higher unemployment rates improve service quality by reducing employee turnover,

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higher wages enhance service quality through increased effort, with these effects demonstrating a significant negative interaction. Additionally, we predict these factors have a negative interaction, whereby high-wage facilities experience less benefit from rising unemployment than their low-wage counterparts. We empirically validate these predictions using two natural experiments in a retailing and fast-food restaurant context. The results suggest that as unemployment falls and labor supply becomes shorter, service quality decreases. Intriguingly, this effect particularly emerges for service firms that offer lower wages, while service firms that offer higher wages maintain their service quality levels. We discuss in detail how to evolve service quality theory based on these findings. Furthermore, we offer actionable guidance to managers and policymakers on how to safeguard service quality as the war for talent rages on.

Forecasting Platforms' Long-Term Revenue from Early Signals: A Temporal Fusion Transformer Approach (*Work in Progress*)

When analyzing early performance signals on digital platforms, it is important for firms to understand how initial engagement metrics predict long-term revenue. We introduce a Temporal Fusion Transformer (TFT) framework that models the relationship between early-stage behavioral patterns and future value generation in environments with high temporal volatility. We propose a multi-head attention architecture that combines static characteristics with time-varying characteristics to forecast revenue trajectories. The model employs variable selection networks to identify relevant predictors from high-dimensional temporal data, while multi-horizon forecasting capabilities capture both immediate trends and long-term temporal dependencies. By processing known historical patterns through encoder-decoder structures, the TFT generates probabilistic predictions that account for heterogeneous lifecycle trajectories. We demonstrate this approach through an application to livestreaming platforms, where game revenue predictions based on early performance metrics inform promotion and investment decisions. Using daily game-level data from major Asian platforms, we show how managers can leverage temporal fusion mechanisms to optimize resource allocation under uncertainty. This results in more accurate revenue predictions and outperforms traditional forecasting approaches such as ARIMA models and gradient boosting methods. Beyond livestreaming, our temporal fusion framework provides a generalizable solution for forecasting long-term outcomes from early indicators across other domains.

AI-Human Collaboration in B2B Sales Negotiations (*Work in Progress*)

In B2B sales negotiations where multi-stakeholder dynamics and trust are critical salespeople face challenges processing vast data and adapting strategies in real time. AI offers potential to enhance these capabilities but raises concerns about trust and alignment with human judgment. To explore AI's role in this context, we ask three critical questions: (1) How do AI agents balance efficiency and relationship-building in B2B sales negotiations? (2) What mechanisms explain AI's impact on social coordination costs and strategic decision-making in iterative negotiations? (3) How can prompt engineering align AI personas with salespeople traits to optimize collaboration and outcomes? We aim to develop *SalesSynergy* a custom platform enabling human-AI collaboration in simulated and real-world negotiation. We employ a mixed-methods approach with 2 interconnected studies. First, a controlled experiment with sales professionals randomly assigned to different conditions will complete negotiation tasks. Second, using a quasi-experimental design in a field study with a B2B firm to validate findings using real

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negotiations. By extending negotiation theory and human-AI collaboration frameworks, this research offer actionable frameworks for sales practitioners and AI developers while advancing academic understanding of AI-augmented negotiations in B2B.

Build vs. Acquire: The Impact of Internal vs. External Sales Hiring on Firm Performance *(Work in Progress)*

In business-to-business (B2B) sales, firms face critical decisions about salesforce compensation and skill development that significantly impact performance. This paper examines two key questions: (1) What are the performance implications of hiring salespeople internally versus externally? And (2) Among the salespeople hired internally versus externally who are likely to stay longer with the firm? We develop an analytical model that captures the key trade-offs in these decisions and test it using a unique dataset of 40 companies. For hiring source decisions, we show that while internal hires initially outperform due to firm-specific knowledge, external hires exhibit steeper learning curves and may eventually match or exceed internal hire performance. Our empirical analysis validates these theoretical predictions and quantifies the magnitude of these effects across different industry contexts. The findings provide actionable insights for sales managers making hiring decisions under uncertainty, while contributing to theories of salesforce management and human capital development.

Freedom Isn't Free: How Self-Employment Reshapes Work, Health, and Happiness *(Work in Progress)*

Self-employment represents a fundamental trade-off between autonomy and personal well-being, yet its impact on individuals' lives remains incompletely understood. This research examines three critical questions: (1) How does transitioning to self-employment affect key life outcomes including income, work hours, life satisfaction, job satisfaction, health satisfaction, and leisure time? (2) How do individual characteristics—specifically gender and age—moderate these relationships? (3) How does business size influence the trade-offs between economic success and personal well-being in self-employment? Using longitudinal data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) tracking over 92,000 individuals. Our findings reveal that self-employment improves job satisfaction and life satisfaction but creates significant trade-offs, particularly around work hours, leisure time, and health. The effects are strongly moderated by gender—with men experiencing higher income gains but worse health outcomes, while women achieve better work-life balance at the cost of lower earnings. Age and business size further moderate these relationships, with older entrepreneurs and those managing smaller ventures better able to preserve work-life balance. These results enhance our understanding of how entrepreneurship shapes individual well-being and highlight important boundary conditions around gender, age, and organizational context. The findings have implications for theories of occupational choice and work-life balance, while offering practical insights for potential entrepreneurs and policymakers.