

Antecedents and Consequences of Salesperson Accuracy in Customer Relationship Perception

Ryan Mullins

ABSTRACT

In relationship marketing, the overwhelming reliance on improving customer perceptions to increase performance has created an “assumption of salesperson accuracy” in salesperson-customer relationships. However, salespeople are often inaccurate in their customer evaluations, and fail to translate improved customer perceptions into long-standing and profitable customer relationships. With this in mind, I use a dyadic perceptions model to illustrate how the salesperson’s misperception of customer relationship quality has detrimental effects on relationship marketing efforts. Using survey and performance data from salesperson-customer dyads within a global consumer and industrial goods supplier, I show that salesperson perceptual accuracy provides improvement for both short- and long-term performance outcomes (i.e., customer profitability and future purchase intention), while inaccurate perceptions hinder the salesperson’s ability to produce profitable and loyal customers. In addition, I demonstrate that relationship quality predictors (i.e., customer orientation, self-efficacy) bias the salesperson’s perception of the customer’s true level of relationship quality, causing relationship inaccuracy. Finally, I provide behavioral based control system as a managerial solution to attenuate the salesperson bias, and improve relationship marketing effectiveness.