

Economy Section Article

Value-Based Selling as an Intervening Variable: Impacts on Salesperson Innovativeness and Performance

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses gaps in understanding the role of salesperson innovativeness and its influence on salesperson performance, specifically examining the mediating effect of value-based selling. The study seeks to answer whether salesperson innovativeness impacts performance and if value-based selling mediates this relationship. The study was conducted in a sales organization where respondents were selected using purposive sampling, employing a quantitative approach. Data was analyzed through regression and mediation analysis. Results indicate that salesperson innovativeness significantly enhances performance but does not significantly affect value-based selling. Additionally, while value-based selling positively impacts performance, it does not mediate the relationship between innovativeness and performance. According to the findings, encouraging innovation results in a direct boost in performance, but relying on value-based selling as a means of communication is ineffective. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to understand long-term effects, incorporate other relevant variables, conduct comparative studies across different industries, and utilize mixed-methods research to gain deeper insights into the dynamics between innovativeness, value-based selling, and performance. These approaches will help develop more comprehensive strategies for improving salesperson performance.

KEYWORDS

customer-centricity; innovation; mediation analysis; salesperson performance; value-based selling

1. INTRODUCTION

Salespeople play a crucial role in selling products and services within a company (Bowen et al., 2021). A skilled salesperson can enhance marketing effectiveness and achieve superior sales performance (Alnakhli et al., 2021). Life insurance agents, in particular, hold a significant position in the insurance industry as they act as the front line in product promotion (Baranauskas, 2021). The salesperson's ability to build trust and shape the company's image can influence customers to purchase insurance policies, thus increasing the premiums received by the insurance company (Arditto et al., 2020).

Several studies have examined the impact of salesperson innovativeness on sales performance. Ayodele & Kehinde (2020) concluded that idea generation and idea realization indicators in salesperson innovativeness do not affect performance. However, Edwards et al. (2023) demonstrated that salespeople with innovative abilities have the potential to create breakthroughs and capabilities, thereby enhancing sales initiatives and improving sales performance. This research aims to address the gaps in previous studies.

Customer value is crucial for companies. Products that provide high value to consumers tend to satisfy their needs and enhance transactional outcomes (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2021). Salespeople play a crucial role in creating product and service value by building quality relationships, understanding customer needs, and providing appropriate solutions (Böhm et al., 2020). Value-based selling is an effective sales method because it enables customers to make purchasing decisions based on the value they receive.

In the highly competitive sales world, salespeople must continuously innovate to stay ahead (Yi & Amenuvor, 2022). Value-based selling, a widely adopted approach, emphasizes understanding customers' fundamental needs and providing tailored solutions (Liu & Zhao, 2021). Despite its popularity, there is a lack of extensive research on how value-based selling specifically impacts sales performance by enhancing the innovativeness of salespeople (De Toni et al., 2022). This method's potential to drive sales success through fostering creativity and novel approaches among sales personnel remains an area ripe for exploration (Mullins et al., 2020). Understanding this relationship could provide valuable insights into optimizing sales strategies and improving overall sales effectiveness (Chaker et al., 2022).

This study aims to answer the question: Does value-based selling impact sales performance by enhancing the innovativeness of salespeople? It contributes new insights by investigating the role of innovativeness as an intervening variable linking value-based selling to sales performance. By understanding this mechanism, companies can develop more effective training programs to enhance value-based selling skills, ultimately driving improved sales performance. This research highlights the potential for innovation-focused strategies to optimize sales outcomes and offers a pathway for businesses to leverage value-based selling for sustained success.

This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it enhances our understanding of the factors influencing sales performance by uncovering the mediating role of innovativeness. Practically, the findings can assist companies in designing more effective sales strategies by emphasizing the development of value-based selling skills and the innovative capacities of their salespeople. By integrating these insights, businesses can create training programs and strategic initiatives that boost sales performance and foster a culture of continuous improvement and creativity among their sales teams.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Basic Research Method

This quantitative research uses quantitative data directly from the respondents (Irawan et al., 2023). This research is classified as basic research regarding the depth of exploration in developing knowledge. This research aims to test the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable. This research will test the hypothesis and explain the influence of the independent variable, namely salesperson innovation, on salesperson performance, using value-based selling as an intervening variable.

2.2. Research Location Selection Method

The research was conducted in Semarang City, Indonesia, which was chosen for its large concentration of life insurance companies and its diverse population of life insurance agents. This setting provided a rich environment for studying the dynamics of value-based selling and salesperson innovation, offering a broad spectrum of data due to the varied backgrounds and practices of the agents (Tienken et al., 2023). The city's unique market characteristics make it an ideal location to explore how innovative selling techniques can enhance sales performance in the life insurance sector.

2.3. Research Respondent Determination Method

Primary data for this research was obtained directly from respondents through questionnaires containing relevant questions related to the studied variables (Suswadi & Irawan, 2023a). Salespersons of life insurance companies in Semarang City represent the population chosen for this research. The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling, which selects samples based on certain characteristics. The respondents who will be used as samples in this research are life insurance agents who have been actively working in the sales field for over a year and hold an AAJI license. The total number of respondents for this research was set at 52 people.

2.4. Research Data Collection Method

A structured interview with a questionnaire to get detailed information on the studied factors was used to gather research data (Suswadi & Irawan, 2023b). The questionnaire featured closed-ended questions with pre-determined answer choices, ensuring consistency and ease of analysis. This approach allowed for systematic data collection, enabling the researchers to capture respondents' insights and experiences accurately. By standardizing the responses, the method facilitated a clear understanding of how the variables interacted, providing robust data for testing the research hypothesis and exploring the relationships between salesperson innovation, value-based selling, and sales performance.

2.5. Research Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method used in this research is regression analysis using SPSS as the analysis tool. Regression analysis is used to test the extent of the influence of the independent variable, salesperson innovation (X), on the dependent variable, salesperson performance (Z), and to test the mediating effect of the intervening variable, value-based selling (Y). The Sobel test is used to test the influence of the intervening variable.

Operational Definition of Variables

- a) Salesperson innovation (X): The ability of a salesperson to develop and implement new ideas to improve sales performance.
- b) Value-based selling (Y): A sales approach that focuses on understanding the customer's needs and providing solutions that create value for the customer.
- c) Salesperson performance (Z): The level of achievement of a salesperson in meeting sales targets.

Hypothesis

- H1: There is a positive relationship between salesperson innovation and salesperson performance.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between value-based selling and salesperson performance.
- H3: Value-based selling mediates the relationship between salesperson innovation and salesperson performance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Validity and Reliability Test Result

Validity and reliability are two essential aspects of research that ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of the findings (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Conducting validity and reliability tests in this study is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, validity testing ensures that the measurements of salesperson innovation, value-based selling, and salesperson performance accurately reflect the true essence of these constructs, providing confidence in the genuine relationships between the variables (Corsaro & Maggioni, 2022). Secondly, reliability testing assesses the consistency and stability of these measures over time and across different conditions, ensuring that the results are robust and replicable (Forbes et al., 2021). Lastly, demonstrating the validity and reliability of the measures enhances the credibility of the research, instilling confidence in the conclusions drawn and facilitating acceptance within the academic community and the broader field of business management (Cvitanovic et al., 2021).

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test Result

Variable		R Table	R Calculate	Validity	Cronbach Alpha	Reliability
Salesperson Innovativeness	X1	0.852	0.2732	Valid	0.678	Reliable
	X2	0.862				
	X3	0.724				
	X4	0.655				
	X5	0.809				
Value-based Selling	Y1	0.884	0.2732	Valid	0.782	Reliable
	Y2	0.837				
	Y3	0.949				
	Y4	0.914				
	Y5	0.918				
Salesperson Performance	Z1	0.919	0.2732	Valid	0.794	Reliable
	Z2	0.932				
	Z3	0.924				
	Z4	0.967				
	Z5	0.914				

Source: Primary data analysis

Table 1 shows that all the indicators in this study have a calculated R-value greater than the tabled R-value, indicating they are valid measurement tools for the research variables (Firdausy & Budisetyowati, 2022). The questionnaire items effectively capture the concepts of salesperson innovativeness, value-based selling, and salesperson performance (Guenzi & Nijssen, 2023), confirming the study measures what it intends to. The reliability testing yielded a Cronbach Alpha (α) value greater than 0.60 for all variables, demonstrating good internal consistency (Baistaman et al., 2020). This result ensures the questionnaire items within each variable consistently measure the same construct. Validity and reliability tests confirm the questionnaire items accurately reflect salesperson innovativeness, value-based selling, and sales performance, providing a solid foundation for further analysis (Benova et al. 2020).

The results confirm that the questionnaire accurately measures value-based selling strategies, emphasizing understanding customer needs and providing tailored solutions. Validity tests highlight their impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty, while reliability tests confirm accurate capture of sales performance metrics. This rigorous validation enhances the study's credibility, offering precise insights into the relationships between salesperson innovativeness, value-based selling, and sales performance (Razi et al., 2022). Businesses can use these validated tools to develop effective sales strategies and training programs, driving improved performance and competitive advantage.

3.2. Path Analysis Test Result

The core objective of this research is to investigate how value-based selling mediates the relationship between salesperson innovativeness and performance. Path analysis is employed to examine these mediating effects, estimating both the direct impact of salesperson innovativeness on performance and the indirect impact through value-based selling. This method visualizes relationships through a path model, clearly illustrating the direction and strength of the hypothesized effects (Nicholson et al., 2020). Additionally, path analysis includes statistical tests to assess the significance of these effects, enabling a determination of whether value-based selling's mediating role is statistically significant.

3.2.1. Path Analysis 1 ($X \rightarrow Y$)

Path analysis is a crucial tool for understanding the relationship between salesperson innovation (X) and value-based selling (Y) in this research. Unlike simple correlation analysis, path analysis explores causal relationships and identifies mediating mechanisms that affect sales performance. It allows us to distinguish between salesperson innovation's direct and indirect effects on value-based selling, revealing both immediate impacts and subtle influences through mediating variables. Additionally, it provides a clear visual representation of these relationships, simplifying complex interactions into an understandable diagram (Xu et al., 2020). This interaction helps identify key areas for improving sales performance. Path analysis also uses robust statistical tests to confirm whether the observed relationships are genuine causal connections (Hofmann et al., 2020).

Table 2. Path Regression Analysis for the Relationship of Variables X and Y

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.655	1.181		4.788	.000
	X	.254	.152	.231	1.678	.100

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Source: Primary data analysis

The empirical findings of this study, shown in **Table 2** and presented in the form of the linear regression equation $Y = 0.231X + e$, underscore the pivotal role of salesperson innovation in fostering value-based selling practices. The positive coefficient of 0.231 indicates that a one-unit increase in salesperson innovation leads to a 0.231-unit increase in their ability to implement value-based selling strategies. This significant association highlights the transformative power of innovation in empowering salespeople to adopt customer-centric approaches that prioritize understanding and addressing customer needs. These results align with research by [Salonen et al. \(2021\)](#), which states that innovative salespeople are more likely to challenge conventional sales tactics, embrace new ideas, and experiment with creative solutions, ultimately leading to the successful implementation of value-based selling.

The findings of this research hold profound implications for sales organizations aiming to elevate their performance. Companies can foster a more customer-centric sales environment by cultivating a culture of innovation and encouraging salespeople to embrace new ideas ([Giovannetti et al., 2022](#)). This approach leads to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and enhanced sales outcomes, creating a competitive edge in the market ([Sheth et al., 2020](#)). Path analysis has proven invaluable in unravelling the intricate relationship between salesperson innovation and value-based selling, highlighting the importance of fostering innovation within sales organizations to empower salespeople and achieve superior sales performance.

3.2.2. Path Analysis 2 ($X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z$)

Path analysis emerges as a powerful tool to unravel this complex web of relationships, shedding light on the direct and indirect pathways leading to sales excellence ([Alzoubi et al., 2022](#)). Unlike mere correlation analysis, path analysis explores causal relationships and mediating mechanisms shaping sales outcomes. This method shows how value-based selling mediates the impact of innovation on performance, revealing the pathways to improved sales outcomes.

Table 3. Path Regression Analysis for the Relationship of Variables X, Y, and Z

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.605	1.134		.533	.596
	X	.691	.124	.598	5.583	.000
	Y	.230	.112	.220	2.051	.046

a. Dependent Variable: Z

Source: Primary data analysis

Table 3 presents the empirical findings of this study, illustrated by the linear regression equation ($Z = 0.598X + 0.220Y + e$), underscoring the multifaceted nature of sales performance. The significant coefficient of 0.598 highlights the direct impact of salesperson innovation on performance, indicating that a one-unit increase in innovation leads to a 0.598-unit increase in sales performance. This direct effect reflects the transformative power of innovation, empowering salespeople to challenge conventional tactics, embrace new ideas, and experiment with creative solutions, ultimately leading to more effective strategies and improved performance. Additionally, the coefficient of 0.220, representing the effect of value-based selling on performance, underscores the importance of customer-centric approaches in driving sales success. This positive association indicates that a one-unit increase in value-based selling practices results in a 0.220-unit increase in sales performance, highlighting the combined impact of innovation and customer-focused strategies on achieving superior sales outcomes.

The path analysis reveals that value-based selling mediates the influence of salesperson innovation on sales performance. These results are in line with research by [Giovannetti et al. \(2022\)](#), which underscores the importance of fostering innovation and channelling it into customer-centric practices. Innovative salespeople who implement value-based strategies can better understand customer needs, tailor solutions, and build strong relationships, enhancing sales outcomes ([Alnakhli et al., 2021](#)). The findings suggest that sales organizations should cultivate a culture of innovation and encourage customer-centric approaches to improve performance.

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

3.3.1. Influence of the Innovativeness of Salespersons on Value-Based Selling

Based on **Table 2**, the linear regression equation $Y = 5.655 + 0.231X + e$ suggests a positive association between the two variables. However, the critical aspect lies in the significance value of the path coefficient (0.231) exceeding 0.05. This result indicates that the observed positive association between innovation and value-based selling is not statistically significant at the conventional alpha level of 0.05. Furthermore, the t-value (1.678) being smaller than the critical t-value from the t-table (2.00958) reinforces the acceptance of the null hypothesis (H_0), stating no significant relationship. Consequently, authors must reject the alternative hypothesis (H_a) that proposed a positive influence of innovation on value-based selling. These results align with research by [Corsaro \(2022\)](#), which underscores the complexity of the relationship and suggests that other factors may mediate or moderate the impact of innovation on value-based selling practices.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination for the Relationship of Variables X and Y

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.231 ^a	.053	.034	1.54872

a. Predictors: (Constant), X

Source: Primary data analysis

Based on **Table 4**, the coefficient of determination (R^2) measures how much the independent variable influences the dependent variable. In this study, the R^2 value is 0.034, indicating that salesperson innovativeness accounts for 3.4% of the variance in value-based selling. This result means that other variables not included in the model influence the remaining 96.6% of value-based selling, suggesting that innovativeness alone is not a significant driver of value-based selling practices.

Sales innovativeness has been identified as a crucial factor in value-based selling, emphasizing the value provided to customers rather than just product features or price. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of marketing innovation, including sales innovativeness, in driving firm value and performance. Furthermore, research shows that consumer innovativeness and perceived value significantly influence the adoption of technological innovations (Ahmad et al., 2022).

One study by Azeem et al. (2022) found that marketing innovation, whether market-driven or market-driven, positively impacts firm value through effects on cash flow drivers. This impact is influenced by market conditions such as demand uncertainty, technological turbulence, and competitive intensity. Additionally, service, service, and managerial innovations positively affect customer value. Researchers suggest that implementing innovative services can enhance customer satisfaction, and consumer innovativeness influences the adoption of technological innovations, with perceived value mediating this relationship.

3.3.2. Influence of Value-Based Selling on the Salesperson's Performance

Regression analysis emerges as a powerful tool for examining the relationship between variables. This study allows us to assess how much a salesperson's innovativeness (X) can explain the variation in their performance (Z). Based on Table 3, the analysis yielded a regression coefficient 0.598 for the innovativeness variable, with a significance value of 0. This result signifies a statistically significant positive relationship. In simpler terms, we observe a corresponding average increase of 0.598 units in salesperson performance for every unit increase in salesperson innovation. Furthermore, the t-value of 5.598 exceeding the critical t-table value (2.00958) reinforces the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0), stating no relationship. Consequently, we can accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a) that posits a positive influence of innovation on performance.

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination for the Relationship of Variables X and Z

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.683 ^a	.467	.445	1.23074

a. Predictors: (Constant), Y, X

Source: Primary data analysis

Based on Table 5, the coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the extent to which the independent variables influence the dependent variable. In this study, the R^2 value is 0.445, indicating that salesperson innovativeness and value-based selling account for 44.5% of the variance in salesperson performance. This result means that 55.5% of the variation in performance is due to other factors not included in the model, highlighting that innovativeness and value-based selling are not the sole determinants of salesperson performance.

The existing literature on sales force performance primarily focuses on innovation and value-based selling. However, recent research indicates that these are not the only factors affecting a salesperson's success (Eroğlu & Kiray, 2020). For instance, personal characteristics such as listening skills, effort, and product knowledge are crucial, and addressing deficiencies in these areas through training can enhance performance (Singh Dubey et al., 2022). Additionally, organizational context, including support and resources, and the quality of peer collaboration significantly impact sales outcomes (Chen et al., 2021). Moreover, understanding customer needs and adapting sales approaches to different

environments is vital for success (Rangarajan et al., 2020). Therefore, a holistic approach considering personal, organizational, peer, buyer, and situational dimensions is essential for developing comprehensive strategies to support and empower sales teams (Ohiomah et al., 2020).

3.3.3. Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis is a statistical technique used to assess whether a third variable (the mediator) explains the relationship between an independent variable (X) and a dependent variable (Z). In this study, the analysis aimed to determine if value-based selling practices (Y) mediate the influence of salesperson innovation (X) on salesperson performance (Z). The hypothesis was that salesperson innovation affects performance indirectly through its impact on value-based selling. Essentially, the goal was to ascertain if innovation leads to enhanced performance by promoting value-based selling practices, thereby highlighting the importance of this mediation process in achieving superior sales outcomes.

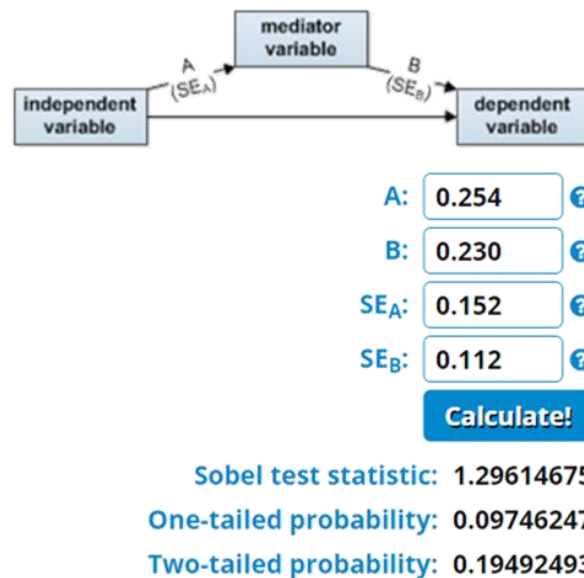


Figure 1. Sobel Test Result

The Sobel test is a widely used method to assess the significance of an indirect effect in mediation analysis. According to **Figure 1**, the Sobel test yielded a test statistic 1.296 with a p-value of 0.19. Since a p-value greater than 0.05 indicates non-significance, these results suggest that the observed indirect effect is not statistically significant. In simpler terms, value-based selling does not mediate the relationship between salesperson innovation and performance in this study. While salesperson innovation may still impact performance, this effect appears to be direct rather than mediated by value-based selling practices.

While salesperson innovation may still impact performance, this effect appears to be direct rather than mediated by value-based selling practices. Recent research suggests that salesperson innovation can directly influence outcomes beyond its effect on value-based selling, challenging past assumptions that value-based selling is the sole pathway for enhancing performance (Liu & Zhao, 2021). Salesperson innovation encompasses a range of creative and adaptive behaviours, from identifying customer needs to developing tailored solutions (Salonen et al., 2021). Prior studies have shown that these innovative activities can enhance value-based selling practices, such as effectively communicating product benefits and aligning offerings with customer requirements (de Jong et al., 2021). However,

the current research proposes that salesperson innovation may also have a direct, additive effect on performance, irrespective of its impact on value-based selling (Mangus, 2023).

Innovative salespeople may have a heightened capacity to anticipate and respond to dynamic market conditions, allowing them to uncover and capitalize on opportunities that transcend the boundaries of value-based selling (Itani et al., 2022). By demonstrating adaptability, creativity, and a solution-oriented mindset, innovative salespeople may forge stronger customer relationships, secure more favourable terms, and ultimately drive superior sales outcomes (Locander et al., 2023). Empirical findings from a meta-analysis of relevant studies support this perspective, suggesting that while value-based selling practices remain important, salesperson innovation can exert a distinct, direct influence on performance (Alnakhli et al., 2021). These results highlight the need for a more holistic understanding of the factors driving salesperson effectiveness, recognizing the multifaceted role of innovative behaviours.

3.4. Discussion

Salesperson innovativeness positively influences performance, functioning as a key factor in marketing success (Endres et al., 2023). An innovative salesperson who understands customer needs and has direct access to information plays a crucial role in creating and delivering value (Itani et al., 2022). These creative individuals can effectively articulate value, provide tailored solutions, handle problems positively, and create a positive environment that engages customers (Chathoth et al., 2020). Such abilities enhance overall performance and boost the sales of new products (Shahbaz et al., 2020). Additionally, salespersons who sell creatively can develop new sales methods, increasing customer sales value and contributing significantly to the company's success (Yi et al., 2021).

This research demonstrates that salesperson innovativeness does not significantly influence value-based selling. This finding aligns with previous studies by Graciafernandy (2022), which suggest that salespersons still prefer traditional sales processes. These conventional methods have a long history of proven effectiveness, contributing positively to salesperson performance (Paesbrugge et al., 2020). Salespersons continue to feel comfortable using traditional approaches when interacting with customers, as supported by Scholz et al. (2021) study, which indicates that many consumers still favour the traditional sales process. In such a setting, salespersons can concentrate on closing sales without investing substantial time and effort into creating value, which may explain the limited impact of innovativeness on value-based selling (Alnakhli et al., 2021).

This research confirms that value-based selling positively influences salesperson performance, aligning with findings from previous studies by Graciafernandy (2022). Value-based selling activities and methods positively impact sales success, as noted by Alamäki & Korpela (2021). Creating superior customer value is crucial for a company's success in competitive markets (Hossain et al., 2021). By applying value-based selling, salespeople can help customers rationalize their investments, facilitating purchasing decisions (Keränen et al., 2020). Emphasizing valuable offerings in sales increases purchase intentions, even at high prices (Wang et al., 2021).

The results of the statistical tests in this study show an insignificant relationship, which shows that value-based selling cannot mediate the relationship between sales force innovation and performance. According to Salonen et al. (2021), this approach often limits salespeople's creativity in finding innovative market solutions. In their research, Liu & Zhao (2021) mentioned that salespeople must adhere to company values, which can limit their ability to be creative and offer unique solutions. According to de Jong et al. (2021), value-based selling emphasizes meeting sales targets, often at the expense of developing

innovation. Salespeople under pressure to hit targets may be stuck in routine practices, lacking the time or motivation to develop new ideas (Rapp et al., 2020). As a result, without the drive to innovate, their performance tends to stagnate (Freixanet & Rialp, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigates the influence of salesperson innovativeness on salesperson performance, using value-based selling as an intervening variable. The findings reveal that while salesperson innovativeness significantly enhances salesperson performance, it does not directly impact value-based selling. Additionally, value-based selling positively affects salesperson performance but fails to mediate the relationship between innovativeness and performance. Based on these results, it is recommended that sales organizations foster innovativeness to boost performance directly, but they should not rely on value-based selling as a mediating factor. Future research should explore the long-term effects of innovativeness through longitudinal studies, incorporate other relevant variables, conduct comparative studies across industries, and employ mixed-methods research designs. These approaches will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between salesperson innovativeness, value-based selling, and salesperson performance, offering valuable insights for enhancing sales strategies and practices.

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