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Outi Aho

BENEFITS OF SALES FORCE AUTOMATION TO SALESPEOPLE AND TO THEIR CUSTOMERS IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETS

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ABSTRACT

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This study applied qualitative case study method for solving what kind of benefits salespeople and their customers perceived to gain when sales reps used a specific sales force automation tool, that defined the values and identified segment that best fit to each customer. The data consisting of four interviews was collected using semi-structured individual method and analyzed with thematic analysis technique. The analysis revealed five salespeople perceived benefits and four customer perceived benefits. Salespeople perceived benefits were improvements in customer knowledge, guidance of sales operations, salesperson-customer relationship building, time management and growing performance. Customer perceived benefits were information transmission, improved customer service, customer-salesperson relationship building and development of operations, which of the last was found as a new previously unrecognized customer benefit.

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Tässä työssä sovellettiin laadullisen tapaustutkimuksen menetelmää tutkittaessa millaisia hyötyjä myyjät ja heidän asiakkaansa kokivat saavansa myyjien käyttäessä erityistä myynnin automaatiotyövälinettä asiakkaiden arvojen ja heille parhaiten soveltuvan segmentin määrittämisessä. Aineisto koostui neljästä yksilöhaastattelusta, jotka toteutettin puolistrukturoidulla menetelmällä ja analysoitiin teema-analyysi tekniikalla. Analyysi paljasti viisi myyjien kokemaa ja neljä asiakkaiden kokemaa hyötyä. Myyjät kokivat, että myynnin automaation avulla toteutettava asiakassegmentointi voi parantaa myyjän asiakastuntemusta, ohjata toimintoja, rakentaa myyjän ja asiakkaan välistä suhdetta, tehostaa myyjän ajankäyttöä ja nostaa myyjän suorituskykyä. Asiakashyödyiksi nousivat tiedonsiirron helpottuminen, asiakaspalvelun parantuminen, asiakkaan ja myyjän välisen suhteen rakentuminen ja asiakkaan toiminnan kehittyminen, joista jälkimmäinen oli uusi ennestään havaitsematon hyöty.

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This thesis was my final task in the LUT University. Making it demanded the same features as the whole studying process over the years; persistence and self-confidence. There were times when I described my studying as being in a foxhole. Occasional working and having offspring during the studies gave a different perspective to life from time to time, but also increased the pressure as the years went by. When I reached the point that it was time to participate the master's thesis seminar it was very clear that I wanted to do the thesis for a company. Luckily an interesting subject was found from ABB Service.

From ABB I want to thank Marja Hawas for introducing my need of a research topic forward and Jarmo Heinonen for granting me the opportunity to do this study in spite of all the uncertainty that was in the air in spring 2013. Thank you Jarmo for acting as a supervisor of this thesis and for your guidance along the way. I also warmly thank all the members of the pilot team for your effort and time.

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Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my family, Miikka and Ronja, not only for your support in making this thesis but throughout the years. Thank you both for calmly accepting our ever-changing life situation during the years, the readiness to live apart, to move and to travel when it was necessary. Miikka, thank you for giving me the time and space but also for making it economically feasible for our family and tolerating my presence even at your beloved sandbox, ABB Service.

In Helsinki 24th of October 2014

Outi Aho

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABB	Asea Brown Boveri
B2B	Business to Business
CIF	Customer Interaction Frequency
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
EN	English
FI	Finnish
IT	Information Technology
NPS	Net Promoter Score
PC	Personal Computer
Q	Quarter
ROI	Return Of Investment
RQ	Research Question
SFA	Sales Force Automation
SRQ	Sub Research Question

1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter explains the background of the study, defines the research gap and research questions, introduces the conceptual framework and the key concepts, presents literature review and methods of the research, and describes the delimitations of the study and presents the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

Topic of this study arose in the case company after implementation of a new global service strategy and was evolved further during negotiations between researcher and the supervisors and the research process. Eskola and Suoranta (2003, 35) have said that in an ideal case, the topic should be interesting, but not too close, in order to obtain a sufficient distance. This was it. The new strategy in the company consisted of several initiatives and all initiatives together should lead the company to improve customer focus, build service excellence, sales productivity and delivery (ABB 2013a). One initiative of the new service strategy concerning marketing and business development was service customer segmentation. Customer segmentation can be defined as grouping of customers into categories that are similar in specific ways, such as behavior, values and needs (ABB 2013b, 2). It is expected that in a given period of time all ABB sales, marketing and proposal people, in every country, will segment their customers in a common way using a values and segment identifier software tool (Values Identifier tool) (Ibid; ABB 2013c, 12). Company had selected certain pilot countries that were the first ones to roll-out the initiative. Although Finland was not among the selected pilot countries a small-scale unofficial piloting has been carried out during this study to be able to investigate the desired matter. The purpose of this study became to examine the perceived benefits of segmentation for the salespeople of the case company as well as to their customers. Due to limited resources this study is focused only on perceived qualitative benefits that are mainly examined from the salespeople point of view.

1.2 Research gap and questions

This section presents the research gap and the research questions of this study. As the Values Identifier software tool processes the data gathered by salespeople and identifies customers segments (and values) the gaps of research are found from the segmentation as well as from the sales force automation (SFA) literature.

McKechnie (2006, 210) found that although benefits of market segmentation concept have been praised it is very difficult to find empirical support from the literature for the positive outcomes of market segmentation for an organization. In addition, several researchers (Park et al. 2010, 1129; Bush et al. 2005, 369; Speier & Venkatesh, 2002, 99) have been surprised to discover how little scholarly work have addressed the important and timely topic of sales force automation usage and the potential effectiveness and efficiency that sales force automation can bring to the sales force. Taken the scarcity of research on both of fore-mentioned fields, this study focuses on the intersection of sales force automation and market segmentation. In this study we will investigate the positive outcomes, i.e. the perceived benefits, of market segmentation for salespeople and thus also for the whole seller organization.

A review of the prior segmentation literature also indicated that benefits of segmentation approach are not examined from the customer perspective. Similarly, very little has been published on the impact of SFA on customers (Buttle et al. 2006, 228). Only one study (Boujena et al. 2009) could be found that examine the benefits of sales force automation from the customer point of view. Buttle et al. (Ibid.) remark that “although salespeople and companies are clearly important stakeholders in SFA implementations, so are those companies’ customers”.

This study examined also what kind of perceived benefits market segmentation implemented with the assistance of automation can bring to the customer of a company that has adopted the segmentation approach. Although researcher did not have a direct contact with the customers, issue was examined via selected salespeople of the ABB Service case business.

The main research question (RQ) is:

RQ: What kind of benefits sales force automation can bring to company's salespeople and to their customers?

In this study the sales force automation refers to the segment and value identifier software tool, Values Identifier, developed by the case company. Purpose of the tool is to define the key values of customer and identify segment that best fit to customer. Case company uses six (6) segments.

The following sub research questions (SRQ1 and SRQ2) shed light to the benefits and value gained from the use of the sales force automation tool:

SRQ1: What kind of benefits the use of sales force automation in segmenting the customers can bring to sales employees?

SRQ2: What kind of benefits the use of sales force automation by salespeople of a providing company can bring to its customers?

In this study it was only possible to investigate the qualitative perceived benefits due to the limited time frame of the study and the nature of business in the industrial field. This study examined what kind of benefits sales employees as well as their customers perceived to receive from the sales employees' use of sales force automation. Both, sales employees' and customers', benefits were studied from the sales employee perspective. This means that customers did not themselves contribute to the study by answering what kind of benefits they actually felt like receiving. However, customers answered did they feel that the use of sales force automation during a customer visit added value to a meeting. Case company decided that its own salespeople should do the customer segmentation during customer visits instead of researcher because the value of the visit and the discussion that could be raised around the tool and its questions were seen so valuable.

1.3 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in the figure 1.

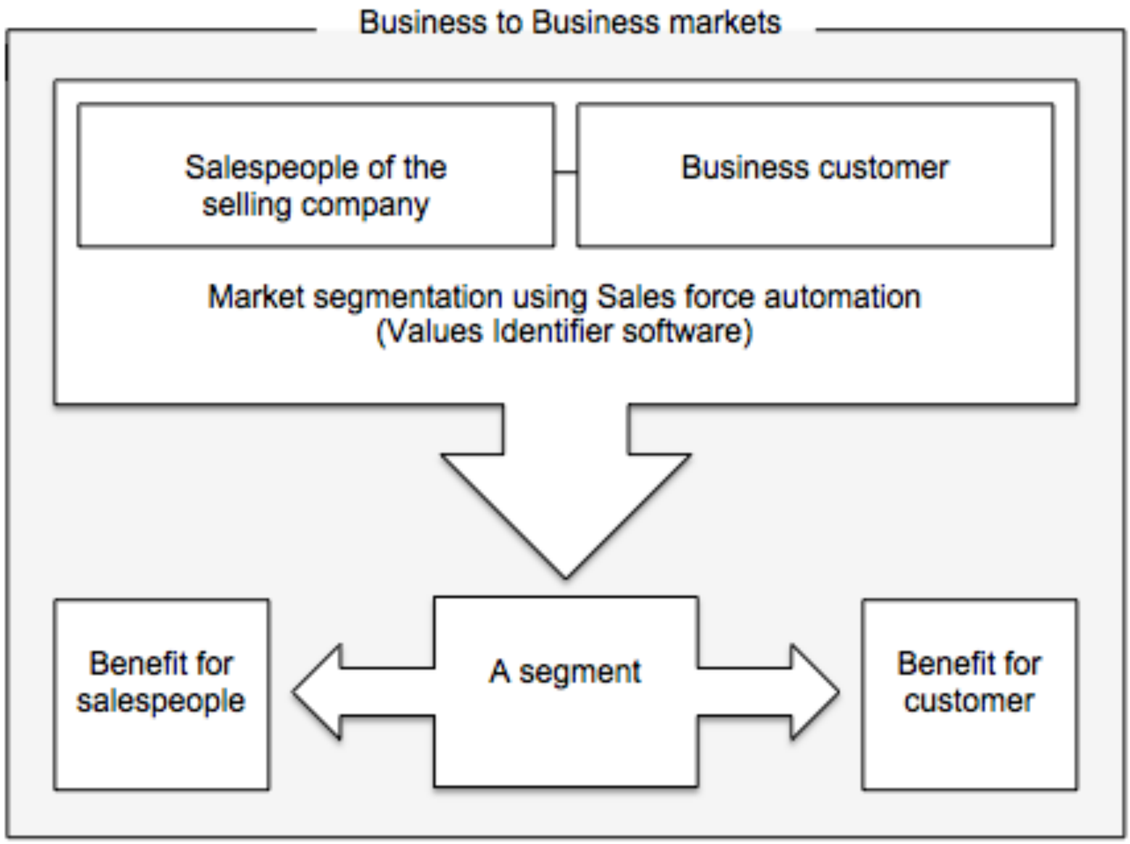

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

1.4 Key concepts of the study

This sub chapter presents the key concepts of the study, which are business-to-business markets, (industrial / business) salespeople, business customer, market segmentation, sales force automation, Values Identifier software, a segment and a benefit. Next they are presented in alphabetical order.

A benefit is whatever provides advantage or gain (Manning et al. 2010, 132). Customer perceived benefit is a combination of positive characteristics that the customer in some way connects to the product, service, transaction experience or to the place where the transaction takes place (Monroe 1991, 38). According to Woodall (2003, 14) benefits consist of the features of the product or the service as well as of the consequences of the use or the results. Benefit can be divided into four categories that are economic, symbolic, functional and experience based benefits (Henriksson 2014, 34).

A segment can be described as something that has to be identified, chosen, and thereafter targeted by an adjusted marketing mix. “Segments are developed as a result of the interaction processes between the buying and the selling company”. (Freytag & Clarke 2001, 477)

Business customer (also industrial customer) purchase products or services to use in the production of other products (Hibbard 2014).

Business to business (B2B) **markets** is characterized by often large and powerful buyers, purchasing predominantly for the furtherance of organizational objectives and in an organizational context using skilled/professional buyers. Demand in B2B markets is normally derived demand. Buyers are likely to negotiate on price, and delivery and service are particularly important. The salesperson is likely to be dealing with skilled negotiators and the process of buying, and hence selling can extend over months or even years. (Jobber & Lancaster 2009, 11)

(Industrial / business) **salespeople** include both technical and non-technical salespeople. Technical salespeople sell for example heavy equipment, machinery, chemical products and complex electronic equipment and must have a good technical understanding of their products and customer needs. Non-technical salespeople sell for example office equipment and disposable goods and office supplies. (Manning et al. 2010, 39)

Market segmentation is a process of identifying and splitting customers, or potential customers, within a market into different groups, or segments that share similar needs and wants and will respond in a unique way to a given marketing effort (Jobber & Lancaster 2009, 18; McDonald et al. 2004, 33-34). “Companies who segment their markets match their strengths and offerings to the groups of customers most likely to respond to them” (Goyat 2011, 50). “The purpose of segmentation is the concentration of marketing energy and force on subdividing to gain a competitive advantage within the segment” (Goyat 2011, 45). To learn more see also chapter “2.1 Introduction to market segmentation concept”.

Sales force automation (SFA) can be defined as the application of information technology (IT) to support the sales function. “SFA provides a mechanism for collecting, storing, analyzing and distributing customer-related data to salespeople and managers" (Buttle et al. 2006, 213, 214). The use of such system should lead to increase sales force/firm productivity (Pullig et al. 2002, 402). In practice sales force automation and customer relationship management (CRM) are usually integrated (Rogers et al. 2008, 221). To learn more see also chapter "3.1 Introduction to sales force automation".

Values Identifier software is a tool developed by ABB to determine service customer segments consistently. The results from the tool should help salespeople for example in matching service products from offering portfolio to customer requirements, in building specific value propositions to customers and in customer evaluation and prioritization. Salespeople use the tool directly with customers. Tool loads onto PC and helps salespeople lead customers through a series of questions about their supplier values. Answers are used to identify their values and segment according to a statistical analysis. The Values Identifier software tool is built on a statistical algorithm and is designed to identify segments in six or fewer questions. The data is refined until the most accurate values are identified. The tool produces a chart of values, ranked from most to least important, that reflects the segment of a customer. The segment name of each customer interviewed is saved into a file of salespeople PC for further use in developing targeted messages, value propositions, customer care actions and account plans. (ABB 2013b, 17) The software language was English at the time of this study, but will be translated to the local language (Finnish) in the future.

1.5 Literature review

This section of the study takes look at the prior literature published about the main themes of the study; market segmentation and sales force automation. Purpose is to provide an understanding of the concepts discussed and present different views and themes examined in the academic literature.

1.5.1 Market segmentation

Although this study is mainly interested about the benefits found from the prior literature on business segmentation, an extensive review on segmentation literature was conducted to receive a comprehensive view of concept in general but also due to the fact that benefits could only be gathered using that method. Also the case company expressed interest in a wider review of the concept.

There are some differences found in the prior literature about the origin of the segmentation concept. Goller et al. (2002), claims it was 80 years ago (1934) by Frederick, whereas Quinn et al. (2007) places concept's underpinnings in economic pricing theory of Stigler (1942) who suggested that discriminatory pricing could be used to maximize profits amongst different consumer groups (Quinn et al. 2007, 440), but they and most of other advocates determines that it was an American professor of marketing, Wendell R. Smith in 1956, who first extended the link to user differences (Goyat 2011, 451; Clarke & Freytag 2008, 1024; Croft 1994, 1;). "Smith recognized that segments are directly derived from the heterogeneity of customer wants" (Wedel & Kamakura, 2000, 3). During the 1950s literature concerned the base variables that could be utilized in identifying market segments.

Since the concept emerged it has gained increasing importance in both consumer and business domains (Goller et al. 2002, 252). It has been one of the most researched topics in marketing literature and today there is a wide agreement that segmentation is a fundamental component of marketing strategy (Palmer & Miller 2004, 779; Dibb et al. 2002, 113; Rao & Wang 1995, 58). Segmentation has in some level been covered in nearly every basic marketing book. According to Wedel and Kamakura (2000, 5) the leading reference on market segmentation is the book by Frank, Massy and Wind (1972). They distinguished two major dimensions in segmentation research; the bases and the methods. In 2002 Dibb et al. (2002, 113) raised the book of Kotler (1997) as a leading textbook.

Despite the amount of the market segmentation literature there are still gaps between theory and practice – academics and practitioners (Clarke & Freytag 2008, 1023; McKechnie 2006, 117, 120; Palmer & Miller 2004, 780-781; Goller et al. 2002, 267). Goller et al. (2002, 252) found that most of the academic literature in business domain have focused on four main areas: 1) the development of segmentation bases and models (e.g. File & Prince 1996; Moriarty & Reibstein 1986; Bonoma & Shapiro 1983; Wind & Cardozo 1974; Haley 1968; Hummel 1960), 2) research methodologies in terms of data requirements and collection methodologies (e.g. Mitchell 1994; Flodhammar 1988; Silk & Kalwani 1982; Webster 1978), 3) the development and applications of statistical analysis tools (e.g. Balakrishnan et al. 1996; Fisher et al. 1995; Green & Krieger 1991; Klastorin 1983; Acito & Jain 1980; Green & Carmone 1977; Rao & Winter 1977; Frank & Green 1968;) and 4) the implementation of segmentation into strategy (e.g. Piercy & Morgan 1995; De Kluyver & Whitlark 1986; Mahajan & Jain 1978; Beik & Buzby 1973). The underlying logic and the reward that segmentation offers are well established, but the literature has repeatedly been criticized for failing to offer managerial guidance on how to handle the segmentation process and deal with the outputs in business marketing (Simkin 2008, 464; McKechnie 2006, 117, 120; Palmer & Miller 2004, 779; Dibb & Wensley 2002, 231; Dibb 1998, 394; Dibb & Simkin 1997, 53). McKechnie (2006, 120) claims that “segmentation theory is founded on conceptual rather than empirical evidence, and explains how organizations’ should segment their markets rather than how they really create homogeneity in practice”.

Goller et al. (2002) suggest that concentration to those four main areas mentioned previously might have slowed the theory development and research in business segmentation. Bonoma and Shapiro commented on paucity of scholarly work on industrial market segmentation already in 1983 (Sudharshan & Winter 1998, 8). According to Sudharshan and Winter (1998, 8) there had been very little academic work done on industrial segmentation by 1998. Powers and Sterling (2008, 170-171) noted that business-to-business segmentation research has been limited because of challenges in identifying actual company needs and marketplace preferences during the development of market segments.

Several advocates of the market segmentation praise the benefits of segmentation, but it is very difficult to find empirical evidence in the market segmentation literature of positive consequences for an organization (McKechnie, 2006, 120). There are debates about the merits of segmentation between many practitioner and academic publications. Research on segmentation success is still at an early stage. While the quantitative measuring methods of segmentation are still pretty much missing, many qualitative advantages can be found. (Dibb, 1998, 396, 405) Dibb and Simkin (1997, 52) claim that “perhaps the most widely cited benefit is that segmentation leads to a better understanding of customers’ needs and characteristics”.

1.5.2 Sales force automation (SFA)

Research in the SFA field started in the early to mid-1980s (e.g. Wedell and Hempeck 1987; Collins 1984; Klompmaker 1980-1981) (Buttle et al. 2006, 216). Early research focused on issues surrounding the adoption and diffusion of technology followed by research concerned to the impact of sales technology on salespeople’s individual performance (Boujena et al. 2009, 137). In the mid-1990s Bush and Grant (1994) were still reporting that little SFA research has been conducted (Buttle et al. 2006, 216). More recently Park et al. (2010, 1129) called a need for more research to examine the SFA usage-salesperson performance link and the impact of SFA usage on salesperson-customer relationship quality.

Based on the findings of Buttle et al. (2006, 216-217) SFA research have attempted to answer to just four research questions: (1) why organizations adopt SFA, (2) what are the organizational impacts of SFA, (3) what accounts for the success or failure of SFA projects and (4) what accounts for variance in salesperson adoption of SFA. Examples of early studies of measuring benefits of SFA are by Cronin and Davenport (1990) and Kramer and Danziger (1990). Cronin and Davenport conducted a before and after study in a single manufacturing company. They found hard outcomes, such as enhanced quality of customer communication, better time management and improved knowledge management, and soft outcomes, that they divided to structural (rationalization of order processing, development of a ‘virtual office’ held on laptops), to motivational (lower sales force attrition, improved image, better stress control) and to cultural (the creation of an extended ‘invisible college’ of salespeople). Kramer and Danziger reported that SFA implementations have both task and non-task outcomes. Task-related outcomes include productivity effects, and non-task outcomes include effects on job enhancement and social interactions. (Buttle et al. 2006, 217, 218) Keillor, Bashaw and Pettijohn (1997, 209) studied salespersons' attitudes toward the use of technology applications prior to their being implemented and relationships between these attitudes and salespeople's experience and perceived productivity. They found that technology can increase salesperson productivity and may aid the less experienced sales personnel to become more productive faster (Park et al. 2010, 1128; Ibid., 218). After the millennium benefits of SFA technology has been studied more. Ahearne and Schillewaert (2001) found that use of SFA was associated with improvements in reps' performance, as well as selling skills and knowledge. They found also a positive correlation between SFA implementation and sales reps' market knowledge, targeting skills, adaptive selling and call productivity (Buttle et al. 2006, 218). Rogers et al. (2008, 223-224) listed improved sales revenues, better sales productivity, better customer satisfaction - leading to retention, better process accuracy, customer knowledge/understanding, lower costs, enhanced reputation and better resource allocation to successful results of salespeople's use of CRM/SFA technology.

There is mixed results to be found in the literature about the performances. Early articles (e.g. Moriarty & Swartz 1989) were optimistic reporting generally positive results according efficiency and return of investment (ROI). (Park et al. 2010, 1128; Buttle et al. 2006, 217; Honeycutt Jr. et al. 2005, 313) More recent studies (e.g. Morgan & Inks 2001; Rivers & Dart 1999; Schafer 1997; Block et al. 1996), however, has shown that as much as 55-80% of all SFA projects fail (Buttle et al. 2006, 216; Honeycutt Jr. et al. 2005, 313; Speier & Venkatesh 2002, 98). "Several notable studies have sought to explain these mixed results by positioning the problem as chiefly one of failed or incomplete adoption of the technology by the sales force" (Park et al. 2010, 1128).

Boujena et al. (2009) were first to study aspects of SFA from the customer perspective. They found that customers perceive benefits on four main dimensions of their interaction with salespersons – salespeople's professionalism, customer interaction frequency, salesperson responsiveness, and salesperson–customer relationship quality. (Boujena et al. 2009, 137)

1.6 Research methodology

Since the aim of this study was to examine qualitative benefits of the use of sales force automation tool, qualitative case study research was seen as an appropriate method. Features of case study suited well to this kind of study where the purpose was to collect detailed information from a small amount of individuals in their working environment. This study used only one source of evidence, the interview, as the data collection method. Available methods were limited to one due to resources of the researcher, such as time. Data was collected in two phases by interviewing selected individuals working in sales and close interactions with customers of the case company. This study used a non-probability type of sampling plan. The participants of the pilot team formed the sample of this study. The sample was selected internally in the case business, so researcher did not have the opportunity to affect the composition of the sample. Thematic analysis was chosen as the data analysis technique of the collected qualitative data. More detailed description of used methodology is presented in chapter 5 “Methodology”.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

As this study is made for a case company, the goal has been that the thesis provides practical value to the company. The target was to reveal qualitative perceived benefits of customer segmentation that was conducted using sales force automation. These two themes, segmentation and sales force automation, formed the base for the theory. Perceived qualitative benefits were examined in industrial service business environment, thus this study does not reveal quantitative benefits or focus on consumer domain.

It is acknowledged that for a company and its salespeople to achieve benefits and business objectives from sales force automation and from customer segmentation, elements such as senior management sponsorship, training of employees, time to learn the innovation and project management can play a big part. However this study examined only the training of employees and other element are excluded due to the resources.

It is also understood that the attitude towards sales force automation technology, possible prior experiences of other deployment projects and persons own characteristics, such as age or learning orientation, can affect the perceived benefits of the use of the tool and the willingness to use it. However only the attitude towards technology and age of interviewees are examined in this study.

Customer relationship management and sales force automation are in practice usually integrated. These two systems have some separate and some overlapping functions. However, this study is concerned only of the sales force automation, which in this study refers to a software tool that is used only in the case company.

Benefits of segmentation found from the prior academic literature are generally described for an organization that adopts a segmentation approach rather than for a sales force of a company. Also no prior academic literature concerning the benefits of segmentation from the customer perspective was found. These fore-mentioned facts complicated the formation of a strong theory base. As this study aimed to examine the benefits of business segmentation from salespeople and customer point of view the theory of those benefits had to be gathered by drawing conclusions from the organizational benefits.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven main chapters. This can be viewed from the table 1. More detailed structure can be viewed from the table of contents found in the beginning of this report.

Table 1. Structure of the thesis

1	• INTRODUCTION
2	• BUSINESS MARKET SEGMENTATION
3	• SALES FORCE AUTOMATION
4	• CASE: ABB SERVICE
5	• METHODOLOGY
6	• RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS
7	• SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction explains the background of the study, defines the research gap and the research questions, introduces the conceptual framework and the key concepts of the study and presents literature review and methods of the research. The delimitations and the structure of the thesis are also presented in the first chapter.

The following two chapters provide the theoretical framework of the study and are based on the prior academic literature of business market segmentation and sales force automation. The themes are examined a bit wider than it would probably be necessary referred to the topic, but wider introduction to the concepts are done deliberately taking the wishes of the case company into account.

Chapter four begins with introduction of the case company following an introduction to ABB Service customer segmentation.

Chapter five presents the methodology used in this cross-sectional study consisting of the research strategy, research approach method, data collection method, selection of participants and data analysis technique. Also the research ethics is discussed.

The purpose of the chapter six is to describe the key findings from the interviews by analyzing and presenting the research results.

The final chapter contains the summary of the findings and presents the limitations of the study and gives proposals for further research.

2 BUSINESS MARKET SEGMENTATION

This chapter presents the first of two main themes of this study, the market segmentation concept. Although all the information provided in the sub chapter "2.1 Introduction to market segmentation concept" is not directly related to the research topic, researcher sees that it is beneficial to the case company as representatives of the company have clearly stated that a deeper view would be desirable. After the introduction of the concept the benefits of business segmentation are examined from the salespeople and customer perspective.

2.1 Introduction to market segmentation concept

The segmentation concept was first put forward by Smith (1956) (McKechnie 2006, 119) and has developed from the key premise that markets are heterogeneous (Goller et al. 2002, 252, 256) and can be divided into homogenous groups of customers having similar and identifiable characteristics (McKechnie 2006, 119). "In principle, segmentation is about identifying and targeting customer groups through their needs and wants, as well as determine which customers and needs will be addressed and with what manner and intensity" (Freytag & Clarke 2001, 473).

Today market segmentation is a key marketing concept (McKechnie 2006, 119). Referred to Stines (2003) segmentation was rated the most critical concept out of the pool of 153 marketing issues evaluated by leading marketing practitioners (cited in Weinstein 2011, 672).

According to Dibb et al. (2002, 113) one reason for the widespread acceptance of the approach is the belief that organizations cannot normally serve all of the customers in a market. As customer needs in the market are becoming increasingly diverse and can no longer be satisfied by mass marketing, segmentation is central to the development and managing successful marketing or business strategy within business-to-consumer or in industrial/business-to-business settings (Clarke & Freytag 2008, 1023; McKechnie 2006, 119; Dibb 1998, 394). By recognizing heterogeneity in demand marketing managers can develop and market products or services that meet the needs of particular groups or segments, thereby, increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their marketing efforts (McKechnie 2006, 119). Thus, businesses from all industry sectors use market segmentation in their marketing and strategic planning (Dibb 1998, 394).

The segmentation process begins after a company has decided to segment its market. It is important to understand that there are many possible ways to segment business markets (Weinstein 2004, 5, 39, 77). “There are no scientific procedures for selecting segmentation variables” (Goyat 2011, 46). Going from the segmentation design phase to the execution stage can be viewed as a process (Weinstein 2011, 681). Literature provides different process models (see for example four-step model by Weinstein (2011, 681) and six-stage model by Simkin (2008, 466, 468-470)). According to Goller et al. (2002, 257) business segmentation process consists of four phases that are 1) segmentation analysis, 2) segmentation evaluation, 3) implementation of segmentation, and 4) control of segmentation (see figure 2).

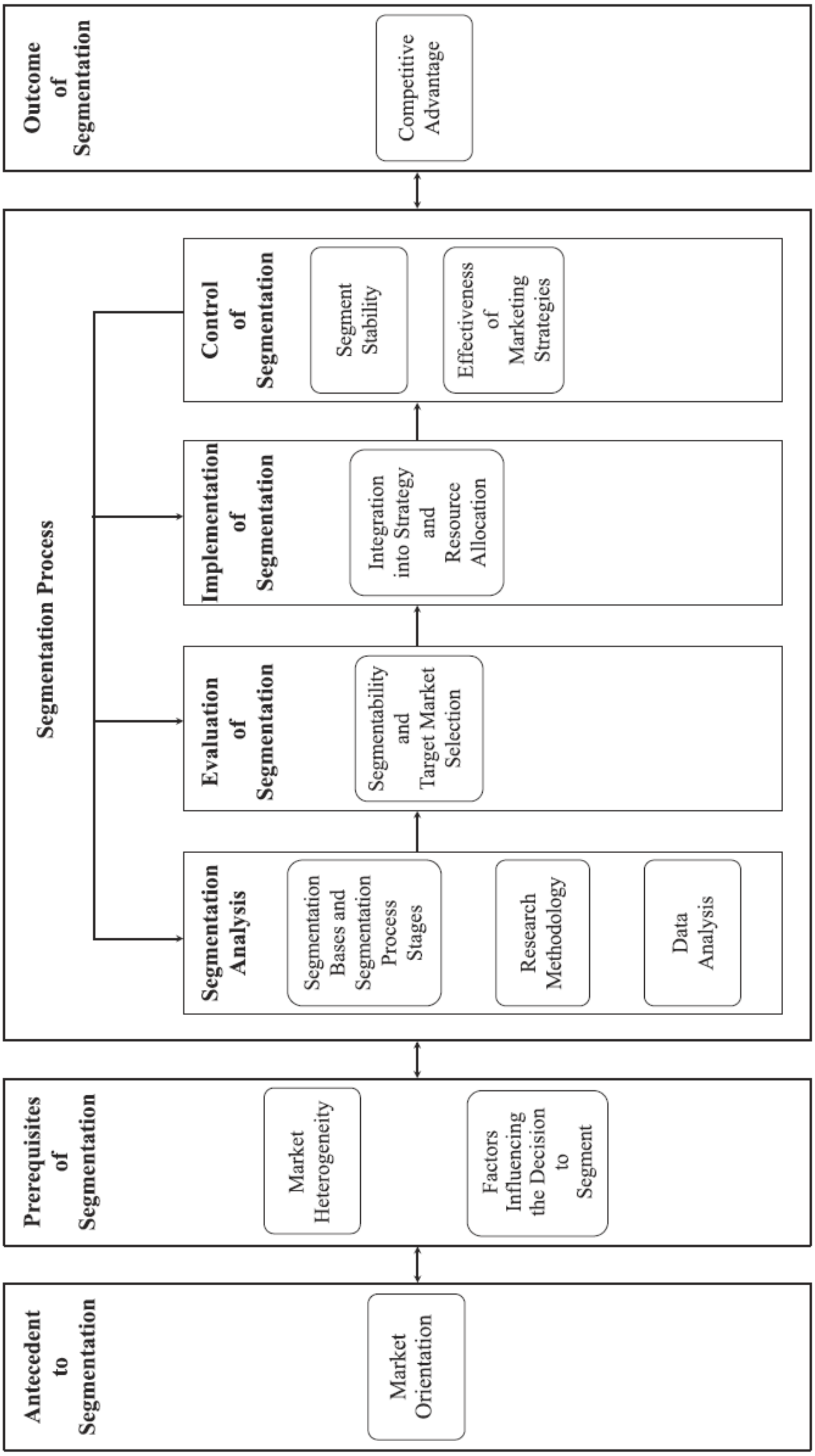

Figure 2. An integrating framework of business segmentation (Goller et al. 2002, 254)

Next will follow a deeper examination of each phase of the segmentation process (1-4):

1) The segmentation analysis consists of all activities involved in dividing a heterogeneous market into homogenous sub-markets. Analysis consists of three elements: 1) segmentation bases and segmentation process stages, 2) research methodologies, and 3) data analysis. (Goller et al. 2002, 257)

Segmentation bases are divided into two categories, to macro variables (also called priori, traditional, identifiable/accessible) and to micro variables (also called posteriori, cluster-driven, benefit and need based segmentation approach) (Powers & Sterling, 2008, 170,171; Albert 2003, 281; Goller et al. 2002, 257; Rao & Wang 1995, 58-60).

There are three approaches for organizing industrial segmentation bases (also called as segmentation variables and segmentation base variables) that are: 1) a single segmentation dimension, 2) a two-step, and 3) a multistep approach (Weinstein 2011, 674; Weinstein 2004, 116; Goller et al. 2002, 257).

In a single segmentation dimension (also called as individual segmentation base, unordered base selection or single-stage model) the entire market is segmented by using one segmentation base. A single dimension is chosen with no specific reasoning for how it is selected. The emphasis is on the managerial usefulness of the resulting segments (Weinstein 2011, 674; Goller et al. 2002, 257; Dibb & Simkin 1996, 20). An example of a two-step approach (also called as two-stage model) is perhaps the most well-known macro-micro model advocated by Wind and Cardoza (1974) (Weinstein 2004, 61; Dibb & Simkin 1996, 20). Two-stage models provides a structured, hierarchical approach to segmentation where first macro variables are identified and if they don´t provide sufficient information, then second step is to examine micro variables (Powers & Sterling 2008, 171; Goller et al. 2002, 257, 258). Table 2 demonstrates this approach.

Table 2. A two-step segmentation approach (Wind and Cardoza, 1974)

Two-stage segmentation approach	
Single-stage segmentation approach	
Macro-segments	Micro-segments
Size of the buying firm	Benefits
Industry of the buying firm	Organizational psychographics
Geographic location of the buying firm	Purchasing criteria
Usage factors	

An example of multistep approach (also called as multi-stage model) is the Bonoma and Shapiro's nested model. Although this model was developed in 1985 it is still valid today for the use of industrial segmentation. (Weinstein 2004, 116, 119). Multistep approaches consist of three or more process stages and requires funnel procedure like the two-stage models (Goller et al. 2002, 258). Figure 3 below demonstrates this approach.

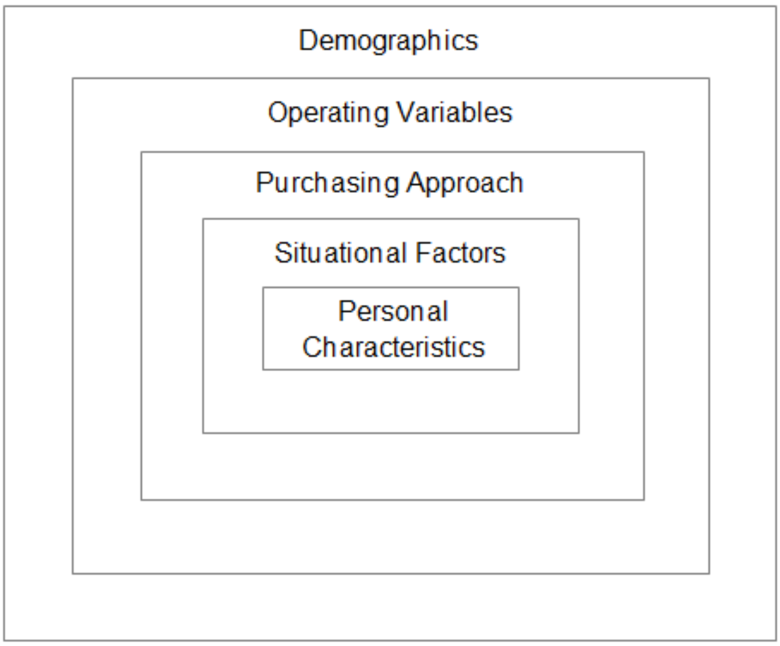

Figure 3. Nested approach (Bonoma & Shapiro 1985, 10)

The five nests (bases) and related segmentation variables are presented next:

- **Demographics** (also called business demographics or firmographics) give a broad description of the company: industry, company size and location (can refer to purchasing location, receiving location or usage location). These variables are externally observable, easiest to use and low-cost.
- **Operating Variables** includes technology, user-nonuser status (product, brand) and customer capabilities (operating, technical, financial).
- **Purchasing approach** includes purchasing function organization, power structures, buyer-seller relationships, general purchasing policies and criteria. Collection of data at this level must be gathered directly from the personnel of the customer.
- **Situational factors** include for example product application, type (for example urgency) and size of purchase, environmental situation (raw-material shortages, regulatory climate, general inflation or interest rates and industry structure) and situational buying risk (risk-reduction and risk-sharing processes at the group level). The situational variables and the following personal variables change more frequently than other variables.
- **Buyers' personal characteristics** refer to decision makers in companies, to people. "Purchasing decisions are made by people, not by companies" (Bonoma & Shapiro 1985, 18). Personal characteristics include for example buyer-seller similarity, buyer motivation, individual perceptions and attitudes towards risk (at individual level). Situational factors and personal variables are often the most useful and powerful approaches of these five approaches however segmentation on psychological grounds is difficult and only a well-trained sales force can gather necessary data. This level is most like consumer-goods marketing because it involves individuals. (Bonoma & Shapiro 1985, 7-88)

In both models, in Wind and Cardozo's two-step macro-micro model and in Shapiro and Bonoma's multiple step, nested approach, segmentation variables are first defined from a descriptive/demographic perspective, and then variables are based on specific customer needs or behaviors (Powers & Sterling 2008, 170). Generally models should be used systematically from the outer nests to the inner nests, which means that bases are been breaking-down until segments pass certain tests (see “evaluation of segmentation” from below to read more about tests). Nested model can however be used using a build-up approach. For example using a build-up approach in turbulent industrial markets is considered as more suitable than breakdown approach (Freytag & Clarke 2001, 475, 477). The inner nests (situational and personal variables) are often considered more useful (Weinstein 2011, 675; Weinstein 2004, 117) than outer nests. “Two inner most rings play the most important role in nested segmentation in the twenty-first century. It must be noted that segmentation is much harder to do today than ever before”. (Ben Shapiro’s thought cited by Cates, 2002 cited in Weinstein, 2011, 675) Haley (1995, 60) claims that at least on the consumer domain micro approach has shown that benefits sought by consumers determine their behavior much more accurately than do demographic characteristics or volume of consumption. Although the micro approach has been recognized as strategically superior, traditional macro segmentation is favored by many industrial marketers for its simplicity, accessibility, and actionability (Rao & Wang 1995, 58-60). Three most common variables used to segment industrial markets are: geographic (87,5%), demographic (62,5%), and how often the product is used (62%) (Freytag & Clarke 2001, 475). According to Powers and Sterling (2008, 171) an ideal business-to-business segmentation method would combine low cost and ease of access of the demographic (macro) approach with the knowledge of specific customer needs (micro).

Data requirements and choice of appropriate research methodologies vary according to the bases and models used for segmentation. Secondary data sources are generally sufficient for macro-segmentation bases whereas micro-segmentation bases require primary data sources. Macro-variables do not necessarily require the use of statistical tools whereas micro-variables require some statistical analysis for data analysis. (Goller et al. 2002, 259, 260)

After data has been collected the result of analysis is generally between three and seven segments (Haley 1995, 60).

2) Evaluation of segmentation refers to assessment of suitability before the implementation phase. Two evaluation types are 1) segmentability and 2) target market selection.

Goller et al. (2002, 261) have said that "segmentability refers to the effectiveness of a segmentation scheme". A successful plan must produce segments that past certain tests. Even though there are differences in the number and types of tests many authors agree that segments should be accessible, measurable, substantial (Freytag & Clarke 2001, 475) and stable (Goyat 2011, 48; Dibb & Simkin 1996, 15). Target market selection refers to factors such as segment size and growth, expected market shares, compatibility with company objectives and resources as well as structural segment attractiveness (Goller et al. 2002, 261).

3) Implementation of segmentation can be separated to two levels, to 1) strategic segmentation and to 2) operational segmentation (Clarke & Freytag 2008, 1028; Goller et al. 2002, 263).

4) Control of segmentation follows the implementation phase of the segmentation. Control is necessary to ensure that intended goals are realized. Control of segmentation can be divided to 1) monitoring of segmentation in terms of segment stability and to 2) monitoring the market effectiveness in the various segments. (Goller et al. 2002, 264-265)

Every company undertaking segmentation approach has expectations for its outcomes. Next benefits of segmentation are examined from the salespeople and the customer perspective.

2.2 Benefits of the business market segmentation

This section summarizes the benefits of market segmentation found on the academic literature. The quantitative benefits are harder to present due to problems such as measurement and control, but many qualitative benefits are cited in the literature (Dibb 1998, 405). Benefits found are generally described for an organization that adopts a segmentation approach rather than for a sales force of a company. It seems that there is no research on customer benefits. As this study aims to examine the benefits of business segmentation from salespeople and customer point of view the theory of those benefits is gathered by drawing conclusions from the organizational benefits.

Practical benefits found in the literature of segmentation can be summarized to eight main points as follows:

Table 3. Benefits of segmentation (Main points of the table below are adopted from Simkin 2008, 465 and further modified by author of this study)

1. Focusing on customers' needs	
Based on several studies the greatest benefit of market segmentation is that it leads to a better understanding of customers (Dibb et al. 2002, 118; Dibb 1998, 405) in sense of their needs, characteristics (Dibb & Simkin 1997, 52), wants (Dibb 1998, 394) and their decision criteria and approach (Croft 1994, 4). Segmentation guides organizations in becoming customer driven (Wind 2001, cited in McKechnie 2006, 119).	
Benefit for salespeople	Benefit for customer
Segmentation guides seller in becoming more customer driven. A better understanding of customers enable seller to offer the right kind of products or services from the company's offering portfolio the right way and targeted to the right person. A skillful seller can utilize adaptive selling behavior as the customer knowledge improves.	It can only be seen as very positive when segmentation guides providing organization as well as their sales force in becoming more customer driven from the customer perspective. Customers in selected segments receive higher value from developed marketing mix that addresses their specific needs and concerns (Goyat, 2011, 49). A well-tailored offering and pricing will save customer's resources, such as time and money. Customer don´t need to spend time looking for a better match elsewhere.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">2. Building relationships with the most attractive customers</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Segmentation can identify most profitable customers (Goyat 2011, 50). It is recommended to build strong relationships with such customers that are the most profitable at the moment and are likely to be so also in the future. Strong relationships increase brand loyalty and decrease brand switching. “Finding, understanding and focusing on the needs of your best customers can make you a market leader”. (Goyat 2011, 50)</td></tr>
<tr><th>Benefit for salespeople</th><th>Benefit for customer</th></tr>
<tr><td>Resources (such as time) are saved when salespeople know which customers are profitable and to whom their working time should be pointed at. Good relationships enhance trust and commitment and makes future business relations easier and communication more open.</td><td>Those customers in those segments that are seen as most potential should after segmentation get better service than before, because important customers should be treated accordingly. Some customers can be shifted to more valuable segments and therefore their service can be proved. When customer feel that provider truly listens and develops offering based on the needs of the customer it can strengthen the relationship and result in satisfaction of customer towards the individual seller but also towards the whole providing organization.</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>3. Creating barriers for the competitors</th></tr>
<tr><td>One justification for segmentation is that when used effectively it helps in finding, developing and maintaining the competitive advantage, an edge over rivals (Dibb 1998, 394; Dibb & Simkin 1997, 52). McBurnie and Clutterbuck (1988) advice</td></tr>
</table>

“until competitors copy or segment your segmentation, you have a competitive edge, even if you serve the segment with a standard product or service. If the product or service is specific to the segment then your competitive advantage is multiplied” (cited in Dibb 1998, 394).	
Benefit for salespeople	Benefit for customer
Competitor barriers make it easier to do the business and help in avoiding price wars. Fewer competitors mean more opportunities and power over situations.	Low number of providers may ease the customer’s decision making, as there are less providers and their products, services and prices to compare.

4. Delivering focused product and service propositions, differentiated from the rivals’ propositions	
By selecting and focusing on the most responsive segments, marketing can be created to more effectively fit the customers (Goyat 2011, 50). After gaining a deeper understanding of customers, company is able to manage and tailor its products and marketing programs according to the needs of each segment (Jobber & Lancaster 2009, 18; Dibb & Simkin 1997, 52). “Segmentation can clarify marketing planning by highlighting the marketing programme requirements of particular customer groups” (Dibb 1998, 394). Increased understanding helps in pricing, distribution and advertising decisions (Croft 1994, 4). This in turn leads to a situation where segments will respond more favorably, in terms of sales (Jobber & Lancaster 2009, 18).	
Benefit for salespeople	Benefit for customer
Sales and marketing function is commonly connected to each other. When marketing produce tailored programs to selected segments and such messages that stand out from the crowd it helps the sales function in	Tailored marketing program should be eye-catching and interesting. Pricing of products and services appealing. As the segmentation leads to the management and development of product offering guided by the needs and wants of the

general but also individual sellers in their job - carefully planned and targeted marketing supports the sales activities and should be reflected in the sales outcomes of company’s sellers.	customers the result will be more customer driven and closely to their needs tailored products and services.

5. Increasing revenues from targeted customers	
Thru segmentation analysis companies can discover new business growth opportunities and gaps in the market (Jobber & Lancaster 2009, 18). By focusing on one or more smaller segments of the overall market a company is more able to meet the needs of those sub groups and gain higher market share and profit margins as well as enjoy of reduced competitive pressure. It is vital to find such markets where company can increase its prices. Pricing should be refined to maximize revenues. Small businesses, in particular, may find market segmentation to be a key in enabling them to compete with larger firms. (Goyat 2011, 48, 50)	
Benefit for salespeople	Benefit for customer
The purpose of selling is to get something sold profitably. When Salespersons reach their sales targets that will most likely have positive outcomes for example in the form of their salary, stress levels and job satisfaction. When existing clients provide enough income salespeople are not so forced to find new profitable customers, which is always a harder job than to work with already existing customers.	Increased customer understanding guide the pricing of offering. When offering is right according to the requirements of the customer and pricing is fixed based on the segments, customers will get more precise products and services (not packages with several features that they don´t even need or use) costing amount that is competitive and appealing. However, when the offering suites exactly to the needs of the customer the price does not play so important part. A customer

	who receives product or service that is close to its needs will be a pleased customer, prepared to pay a higher price, less inclined to look elsewhere (Croft 1994, 4) and more apt to purchase from the seller (Albert 2003, 281).

6. Determining who not to chase for business	
Like segmentation can identify most profitable customers it can also identify the least profitable customers. By identifying the least profitable customers, company can avoid unprofitable markets. (Goyat 2011, 50)	
Benefit for salespeople	Benefit for customer
When salespeople know which customers are the least profitable, they can avoid wasting time to them. This brings time savings that can be directed towards more profitable customers and actions.	Naturally such segments that do not fit to the most attractive ones will get less attention in the future. Some customers in such segments might even be relieved when sales person's contacts reduces if their time is saved from for example fruitless meetings.

7. Prioritizing resource allocation and marketing spend on the most worthwhile opportunities
Segmentation leads to more efficient resource allocation in the company (Dibb 1998, 405; Dibb & Simkin 1997, 52) with greater chance of success (Goyat 2011, 50). By focusing of marketing and sales efforts on the most attractive areas of the market, segmentation encourages businesses to play to their strengths (Jobber & Lancaster 2009, 18; Dibb et al. 2002, 113).

Benefit for salespeople	Benefit for customer
Resources, such as employees and their time, are limited. When a sales function has the right amount of employees whose working time is allocated to the right profitable segments the individual sellers should notice that they have a greater success in selling the company offering.	Resource allocation, such as shifting the marketing and sales efforts, to those customers or segments that has the most potential to flourish also in the future will ensure good service and offering to those customers belonging in those attractive groups.

8. Establishing commitment and single-mindedness within the organization – one vision, one voice, harmonized messages	
According to Dibb (1998, 397) brands such as Rolex, Gucci and Rolls Royce have certainly adopted a segmentation approach. These companies have chosen to focus their resources on certain sub-groups of the overall markets and targeted the customers of chosen segments with clear messages in a consistent manner. As a results the customers, potential customers and competitors are left in no doubt about what these brands stand for.	
Benefit for salespeople	Benefit for customer
When sellers themselves as well as customers have a clear image of company and of its offering it is easier for a seller to sell the products and services.	It is easier for the customer to understand what are the products and services sold by the providing firm when the messages received are well planned and coherent. Mixed messages can confuse the customer.

However to gain benefits listed above, organizations' must adopt segmentation effectively (Simkin 2008, 465) and any benefits need to be weighed against the costs (e.g. research and development, marketing and inventory costs) of achieving them (McKechnie 2006, 119; Dibb & Wensley 2002, 232).

3 SALES FORCE AUTOMATION

This chapter presents the second main theme of this study, the sales force automation (SFA) concept, and after that its benefits are examined from the salespeople and customer point of view based on the existing academic literature.

3.1 Introduction to sales force automation

A number of definitions have been proposed in the academic literature for sales force automation, but a unified seems to be missing (Buttle et al. 2006, 213; Widmier et al. 2002, 189; Erffmeyer & Johnson 2001, 168). Buttle et al. (2006, 214) defines SFA as the application of information technology to support the sales function. Sales force has been using SFA applications since the 1980s.Today SFA is widely adopted in business-to-business environments. (Buttle et al. 2006, 213)

SFA applications are designed to improve salesperson’s ability to gather, analyze, store and distribute product, customer and competitor related data (Boujena et al. 2009, 138; Buttle et al. 2006, 214-215; Pullig et al. 2002, 401; Morgan & Inks 2001, 463). Through information acquisition, sales personnel are able to adapt to the unique needs and concerns of their prospects and customers (Park et al. 2009, 1131) and improve productivity (Boujena et al. 2009, 137) and customer relationships (Buttle et al. 2006, 215; Morgan & Inks 2001, 464).

SFA applications vary in complexity, as they can be standardized software programs or customized systems created for individual organizations (Morgan & Inks 2001, 464), and in degree of integration into other systems in organization (Speier & Venkatesh 2002, 99). Many firms have integrated SFA into enterprise-wide data management systems (Morgan & Inks 2001, 464).

SFA can be applied to diverse tasks like for example segment customers, send email messages, forecasting, documenting, manage customer interactions (Honeycutt Jr. 2005, 301), manage sales pipelines, track contacts, configure products (Buttle et al. 2006, 213), scheduling, creating sales plans, prospecting and making sales presentations (Honeycutt Jr. et al. 2005, 313). Widmier et al. (2002, 189) structured sales force technology to six categories of sales functions;

1) organizing, 2) presenting, 3) reporting, 4) informing, 5) supporting and 6) processing transaction and communicating. Erffmeyer and Johnson (2001, 170) found efficiency improvement as the main motivation for the implementation of SFA (see table 4 below).

Table 4. Motivations for implementing SFA (Erffmeyer & Johnson 2001, 170)

Motivation	% of sample reporting
Improve efficiencies	72
Improve customer contact	44
Increase sales	33
Reduce costs	26
Improve accuracy	21

The adoption of SFA systems involves two stages. First, an organizational-level decision has to be made to adopt an SFA system. Second, the individual salespeople within the organization have to adopt the system. (Parthasarathy & Sohi 1997, 197). Successful implementation and realization of rewards of SFA depends on acceptance and proper usage of SFA by the real end-users – the sales force (Pullig et al. 2002, 402; Morgan & Inks 2001, 465, 470). Sales force resistance can be a major stumbling block that prevents successful implementation of SFA (Morgan & Inks 2001, 465). Salespeople may resist implementation of SFA for a variety of reasons, including fear of technology, fear of management interference, loss of power and resistance of change (Morgan & Inks 2001, 471) Resist may be reduced with for example special training programs (Parthasarathy & Sohi 1997, 202). See this and other factors related to successful sales force automation in figure 4.

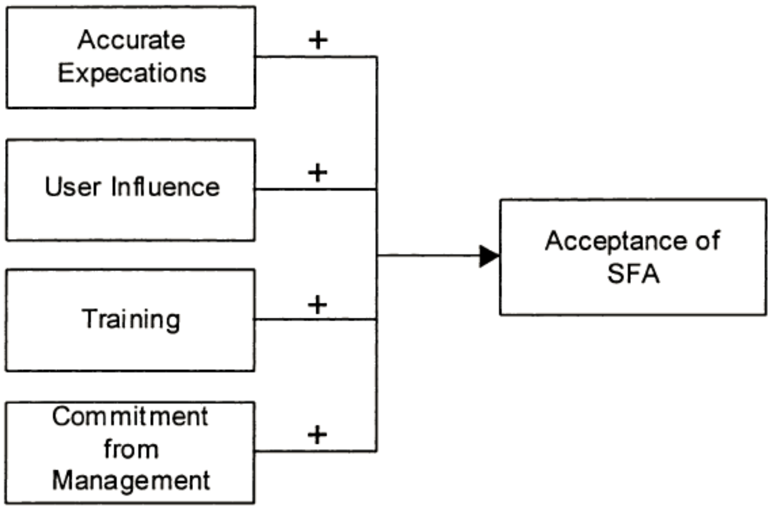

Figure 4. Factors related to successful implementation of sales force automation (Morgan & Inks 2001, 466)

Pullig et al. (2001, 409) presents an exploratory model of SFA implementation (see figure 5 below).

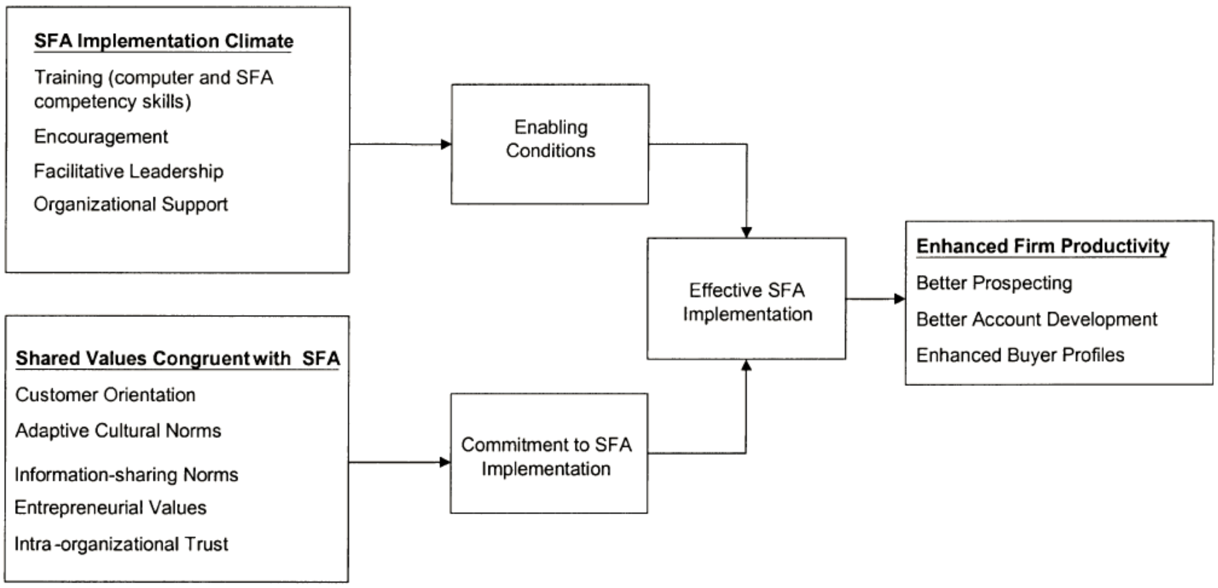

Figure 5. SFA implementation model (Pullig et al. 2001, 409)

3.2 Benefits of sales force automation to salespeople

Assuming an appropriate customer orientation-technology fit and a successful implementation process the benefits of SFA should follow (Speier & Venkatesh 2002, 99). Parthasarathy and Sohi (1997, 199) present that SFA will benefit certain firms more than others depending on the industry and the environment that firms competes in. A number of benefits can be found from the SFA literature. SFA implementations have both task and non-task outcomes. As Buttle et al. (2006, 218) put it: “Task-related outcomes include productivity effects, and non-task outcomes include effects on job enhancement and social interactions”. According to Boujena et al. (2009) SFA affects the sales function on five main levels that are: 1) salesperson productivity, 2) information processing, 3) communication effectiveness, 4) salesperson competence and 5) customer relationship quality. The levels (1-5) listed above are examined more closely next:

1) Salesperson productivity

Keillor et al. (1997, 218) found that the use of SFA can be a way for a less experienced sales representative to become productive faster. According to Pullig et al. (2002, 409) effective implementation of SFA can lead to enhanced productivity through better customer prospecting, better account development and account profiling. Rogers et al. (2008, 223) present that SFA is assumed to make salespeople more efficient, both in how they allocate time to customers and in how they use that time. Park et al. (2009, 1135) suggest that the major benefit of SFA may lie in its ability to help sales personnel learn and ultimately shape the manner in which they sell.

2) Information processing

SFA applications should improve salesperson’s ability to gather, analyze and share product, customer and competitor information and also help to shift through data and focus on critical information (Boujena et al. 2009, 138-139).

3) Communication effectiveness

SFA can aid salespeople communicate clearly and rapidly with customers and contacts and share contact information across company's various customer service functions (Boujena et al. 2009, 139).

4) **Salesperson competence**

Salesperson's use of technology can increase customer's perception of salesperson's professionalism and competence (Boujena et al. 2009, 139). Keillor et al. (1997, 211) define competence, as the buyer's perception that the salesperson is knowledgeable in important areas such as specific customer needs, product knowledge, industry trends and competing products.

5) **Customer relationship quality**

Customer relationship quality consists of two dimensions (Crosby et al. 1990, 70) that are:

1) Buyer's trust in a salesperson

In a selling context, SFA facilitates the development of buyer-seller relationship through its impact on trust drivers (customer orientation, competency, honesty, dependability and likability) and enhances the buyer's trust in the salesperson (Boujena et al. 2009, 139; Keillor et al. 1997, 210). Keillor et al. (1997, 210) point out that trust is the key determinant for the development of a long-term sales relationship.

2) Buyer's satisfaction with the salesperson

SFA might contribute to customer satisfaction by enhancing the salesperson's ability to meet customer expectations (Boujena et al. 2009, 140).

3.3 Benefits of sales force automation to customers

SFA research mainly concentrates on the benefits of SFA for managers or salespeople. The study of Boujena et al. (2009) were first and only to be found to investigate SFA benefits to customer (Boujena et al. 2009, 137), so this paragraph of the study leans heavily on their findings on the subject matter.

Boujena et al. (2009, 143) uncovered four major SFA perceived benefits from the buyers' perspective that are 1) salesperson professionalism, 2) customer interaction frequency, 3) responsiveness and 4) customer-salesperson relationship quality. Next will follow a more detailed review of each:

1) Salesperson professionalism

Boujena et al. found that professionalism was the most frequently perceived SFA benefit from the buyer's perspective. Professionalism is based on salesperson's behavior, image and appearance. "SFA tools give the salesperson the means to demonstrate his or her know-how in a sales context". In sales interactions SFA can aid sales force in the development and presentation of high-quality sales presentations, in message tailoring (adaptive selling) and in choosing the right product or service to present to the customer from the company's product portfolio. This kind of approach is customer oriented selling. SFA can affect positively to the image of salesperson and to the image of the selling company and its brands. (Boujena et al. 2009, 143-144)

2) Customer interaction frequency (CIF)

CIF can be defined as a means of communication that reinforces the coordination between partners by diffusing critical information and thereby leads to relationship success. SFA facilitates the process of information collection, analysis and sharing. Salespeople represent a valuable source and bridge of information for buyers in various areas, including product, market, promotion, customer behavior, and competitor information. The more information the seller is able to offer to the buyer the more likely the seller can reduce the perceived risks or uncertainty of the buyer and aid buyer in making an effective decision. (Boujena et al. 2009, 145)

3) Salesperson responsiveness

Responsiveness is defined as the willingness to help customers and provide prompt service (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 6). Boujena et al. (2009, 145) found that it is important for buyers to be able to reach the salesperson whenever needed, which highlights the concept of availability, or the presence of the salesperson for problem solving during the business cycle.

4) Customer-salesperson relationship quality

Impact of SFA on customer-salesperson relationship quality is indirect. It follows from the enhancement of salesperson's behaviors and competences. SFA tools that help sales force better meet customer expectations likely influence customer satisfaction as well. A satisfied buyer is more likely to recommend the seller to other purchasers. (Boujena et al. 2009, 145-146)

4 CASE: ABB SERVICE

This chapter begins with an introduction of the case company following an introduction to ABB Service customer segmentation.

4.1 Introduction to ABB

This study is made for ABB Service. Next will follow an introduction to the ABB group, to the operations in Finland and to the case business ABB Service.

ABB Group

Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) was established in 1988 by merging a Swiss and a Swedish engineering company (BBC and ASEA) (ABB 2014a). Today ABB is a global leader in power and automation technologies headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland. ABB employs about 150,000 people in approximately 100 countries. ABB's core business is organized into five divisions, which are 1) Power Products, 2) Power Systems, 3) Discrete Automation and Motion, 4) Low Voltage Products and 5) Process Automation. Shares are traded on the stock exchanges of Zurich, Stockholm and New York. (ABB 2014b) Group revenue in 2013 was 41,848 MUSD (ABB 2014c).

ABB in Finland

In Finland, ABB Oy is among the largest providers of industrial maintenance services and one of the largest industrial employer (largest in the metropolitan area) with approximately EUR 2,3 billion turnover. Research and development expenses are around EUR 190 million annually. (ABB, 2014d) ABB has a strong research collaboration between business, educational institutions and research organizations. The company is co-operating with Lappeenranta, Aalto, Tampere and Vaasa universities. (ABB, 2014e) In Finland, ABB employs about 5,300 people and operates in 25 locations. Factories are in Helsinki, Vaasa and Porvoo. (see figure 6.) (ABB Oy 2014a)

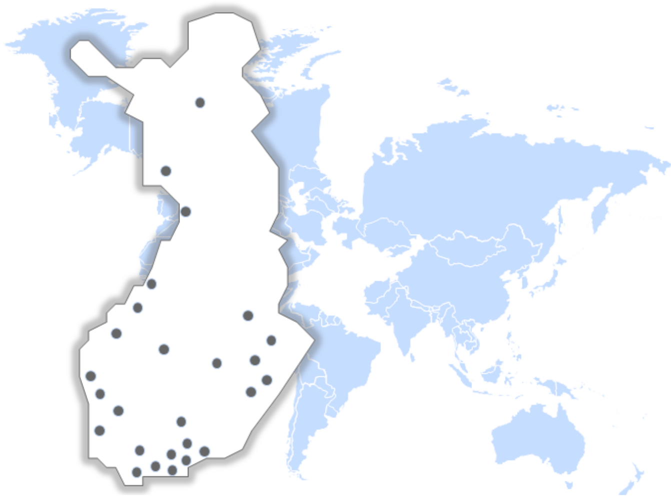

Figure 6. ABB operates in 25 locations in Finland (ABB Oy 2014b)

ABB Service – the case business

ABB Service is leader in the industrial maintenance service business in Finland. The services are based on ABB's electric power and automation technologies and products. Maintenance service offering extends from the maintenance of single devices to the production and operation maintenance of entire plants. ABB Service's maintenance, production efficiency and life cycle services improve its customers' efficiency of their production, energy efficiency of their processes and competitiveness of their operations. ABB Service's customers are companies that operate for example in the mining, metal, forest, paper, technology and energy industry. (ABB 2014f) Organizationally service business is located in divisions and in local business units. The product and system service units are part of the local product groups. Service business is supported by the country level service function, whose task is to guide the implementation of the group strategy as well as to develop a common service environment. (Aho 2014) ABB Service business employs about 620 people in Finland (Nyberg 2014).

4.2 ABB Service - Service Customer Segmentation

As mentioned in the section “1.1 background of the study”, in 2011 a new global strategy was presented in the group. The strategy includes 13 common service approached – the “How to Win” initiatives. One initiative concerns service customer segmentation, which is the focus of this study. Next will follow an introduction to the background of the initiative as well as to its local piloting.

Background of the global service customer segmentation initiative

Company had decided to segment its service customers using a needs-based segmentation approach, because understanding customer’s needs was found to be the best way to predict what the customer is willing to buy. A global team representing all divisions of the company developed a questionnaire and conducted more than 300 interviews with customers for a statistical analysis of customers needs. Results were analyzed in Ohio State University in the United States and developed into six customer segments (see figure 7) along with core messages, believes and values.

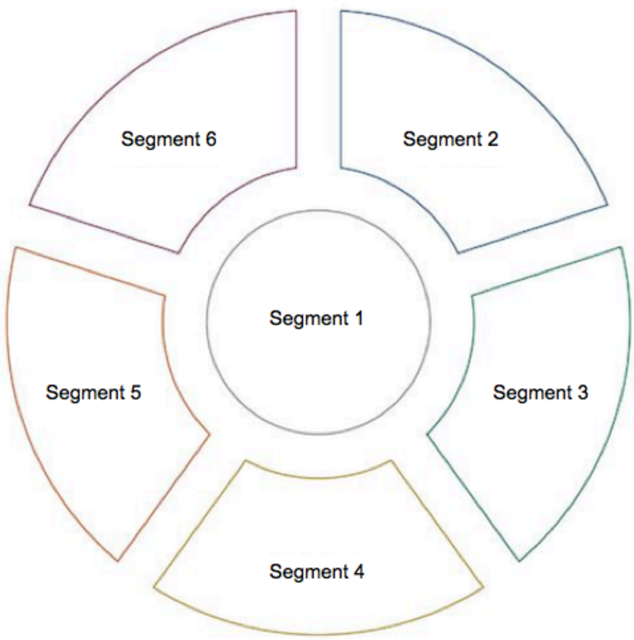

Figure 7. The six customer segments (ABB 2013b, the original segment names removed as company confidential and replaced with numbers 1-6 by researcher of this study)

Values Identifier software tool was developed to aid salespeople in identifying the segment that best fit to each customer. The tool is used directly with customers. Tool loads onto PC and help seller to lead customers through a series of questions about their supplier values. Answers are used to identify their values and segment. The Values Identifier is built on a statistical algorithm and is designed to identify segment in six or fewer questions. The data are refined until the most accurate values are identified. (ABB 2013b)

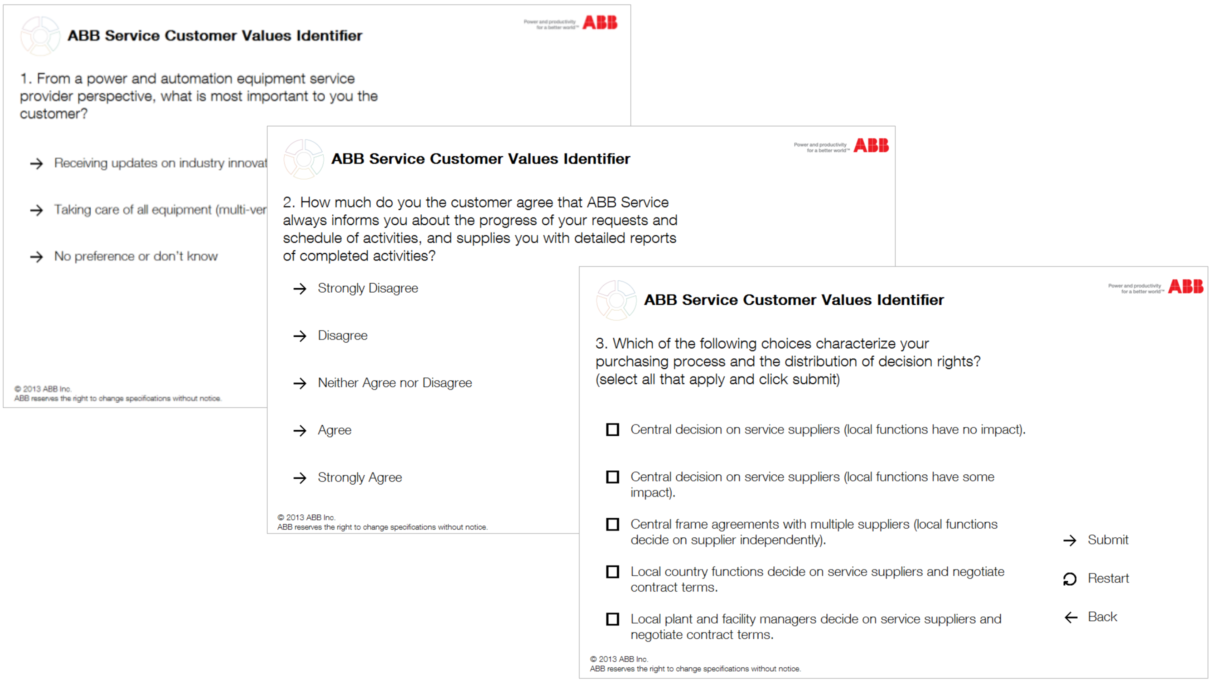

Figure 8. Views of the Values Identifier software tool (ABB Inc. 2013)

The Values Identifier produces a chart of values (see the left side of the figure 9), ranked from most to least important, that reflects customer's segment. The segment name assigned to each customer interviewed is saved into a file on the salesperson's PC for later use (for the development of targeted messages, value propositions, customer care actions and account plans). (ABB 2013b)

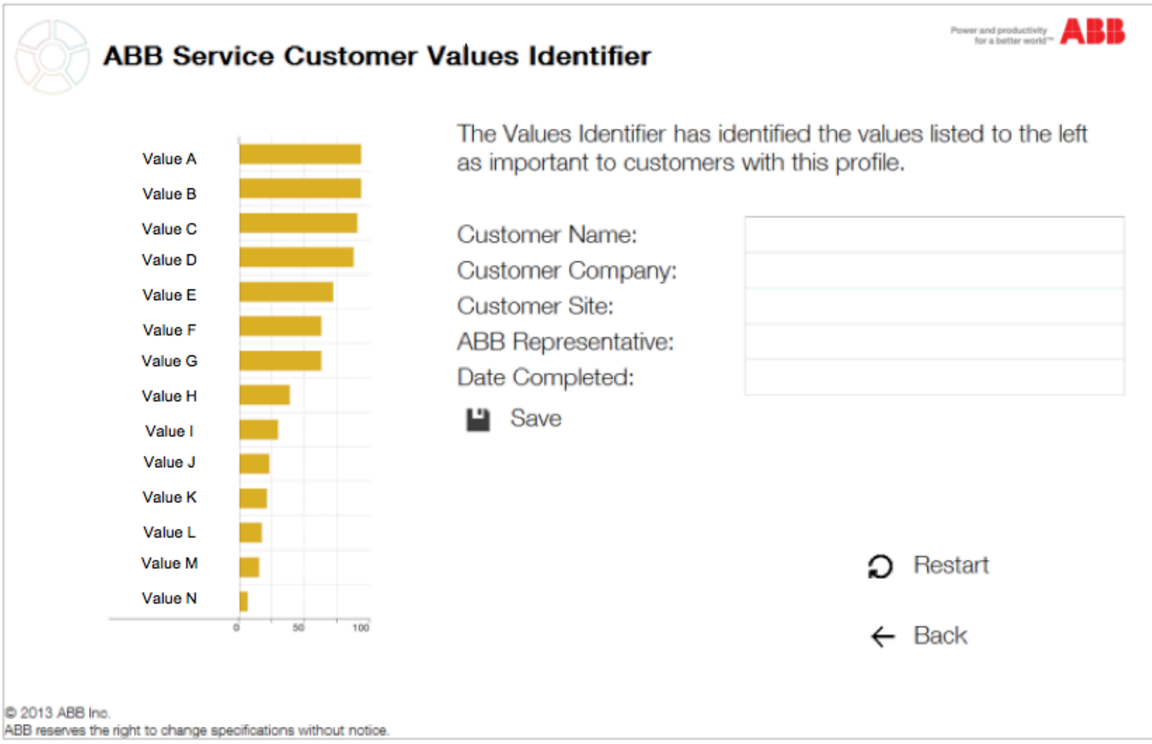

Figure 9. A View of the results from the Values Identifier software tool (ABB Inc. 2013 the original values removed as company confidential and replaced with letters A-N by the researcher of this study)

Service customer segmentation pilot in Finland

Group selected pilot countries for the implementation of the initiative. Finland was not one of the selected pilot countries. However for the sake of this study ABB Service (in Finland), formed an unofficial local pilot team to segment selected customers of a selected business unit using the Values Identifier software tool. The local pilot team consisted of six professionals with comprehensive business sales experience in selling of products and services to industrial customers. This group of people formed the sample of this study, though the final amount became four due to changes along the way that are discussed in the methodology part "5.4 Selection of participants". The members of the team had access to download the Values Identifier software tool and could self-study all the material concerning initiative in the company intranet. However it should be noted that the local pilot team did not receive a proper training given by a professional trainer unlike the members of the official pilot countries. The local pilot team organized an own training session that researcher participated. Researcher felt that education session was not very successful as some of the participants had not done their homework and the situation suffered from technical difficulties. After training it became each salesperson's own task to study the material available in the company intranet as well as to familiarize oneself to the Values Identifier software tool. It became also salespeople's task to arrange the customer visits. The purpose was that each seller interview at least one representative from the customer side. All the sellers reached this target. The customer visits were carried out during January – May 2014. The composition in the customer visits varied both from the ABB Service side as well as from the customer side. Some visits were carried out by one-to-one approach and some involved two representatives from ABB Service side or a group of people from the customer side. The language of the software at the time of the interviews was English. Sales representative translated the interview questions for the customer/customers into Finnish during the use of the software at the customer visit. All the sales representatives were capable to translate the questions. This feature might still be affecting the attitudes or experiences of salespeople's and customers' towards the tool as well as the usability and the image of the seller and the selling company in the eyes of the customers'. By the time of official wider local implementation of the initiative takes place in Finland the software is supposed to be in Finnish so the use will be more user-friendly and likely smoother than during this unofficial pilot. The team organized a couple of follow-up meetings during the spring 2014 to share and discuss of the experiences and results of visits and the use of the tool.

5 METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology used in this cross-sectional study consisting of the research strategy, research approach method, data collection method, selection of participants and data analysis technique. Finally, the research ethics is discussed.

5.1 Research strategy

Research strategies are typically divided into three main categories that are: experimental research, survey research and case study (Hirsjärvi et al. 2005, 125-126). Each strategy has advantages and disadvantages depending on conditions such as the type of research question, the control investigator has over events and is the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena (Yin 2003, 1).

This study was carried out as a case study, a form of qualitative research. Case study refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, drawing conclusions only about that participant or group and only in that specific context (Colorado State University 2014a). Case study can be seen as a preferred strategy when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within real-life context. As a research strategy, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge for example of individual, group and organizational related phenomena. The method allows investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as organizational and managerial processes. (Yin 2003, 1-2, 5) A case study was perceived as suitable strategy because its features suited well to this kind of study where the purpose was to collect detailed information from a small amount of individuals in their working environment.

5.2 Research approach method

Research approach methods are divided into two categories, to quantitative and to qualitative. Since the selected research strategy became case study and the aim of this research was to examine qualitative benefits of the use of sales force automation tool, qualitative research was seen as an appropriate research approach method.

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2005, 155) qualitative research can be characterized as follows:

- Research is comprehensive acquisition of data and the data is collected in natural real-life situations
- Favoring a person as the instrument for data collection
- Use of inductive analysis
- Favoring the use of qualitative methods in the acquisition of data
- Selecting the target group appropriately, not by method of random sample
- Research plan takes shape as the research evolves
- Cases are treated as unique and are interpreted accordingly.

5.3 Data collection method

Data for case studies can come from many sources. Documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts are the ones most commonly used. All sources have strengths and weaknesses. A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many sources of evidence (data triangulation). (Yin 2003, 85, 97) However, this study used only one source of evidence, the interview, as the data collection method. Available methods were limited to one due to resources of the researcher, such as time.

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2005, 174) interview is a working method when researcher wants to find out what a person thinks, feels, experiences or believes. Interview is one kind of discussion. In a regular discussion both parties are usually equal in setting the questions and the responses. In an interview on the other hand, the interviewer has the control. Interview is a unique data collection method in the sense that researcher is directly and linguistically in interaction with the target person. Researcher can collect data flexibly according to situation, which is a great advantage of this method compared to other methods of data collection.

(Hirsjärvi et al. 2005, 193-194, 196; Eskola & Suoranta 2003, 85) Interviewer has the opportunity to repeat question, correct misunderstandings, clarify the terms and have conversation with the informant. Interviewer can also submit questions in order that he/she considers appropriate and record not only what is said but also how it is said. The weaknesses of interview method are that compared to for example survey, interview is an expensive and time-consuming data collection method. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 73-74) Interview has the advantage to usually get those persons involved who have been planned to be the respondents. Also the interviewees are possible to reach later if there is a need for example to supplement the collected data. It must be remembered that the interview data is always context and situation specific. This results in dilemma that the respondents could talk in one way in the interview situation and other way in some other situation. This can be taken into account when interpreting the results. For research purposes, the interview is to be understood as a form of systematic data collection, which aims to get the most reliable and valid information possible. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2005, 195, 196) In order to interview to be successful it is recommended that the data suppliers could explore the questions, themes or at least the subject of the interview in advance. In practice, this is achieved when the interview permit and date is agreed. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 73) The data suppliers of this study were given the opportunity to see the questions in advance and the agenda of interviews were discussed during the booking of date and before the interviews. The purpose of the study and the background of the researcher were presented in the first meeting and in the beginning of the first interview (see Appendix 2.a “The background information of the interviewer” in Finnish or Appendix 2.b “The background information of the interviewer” in English).

The interview types can be divided into four: to a structured, to a semi-structured, to a theme and to an open-ended interview (Eskola & Suoranta 2003, 86). The interview type of this study was a semi-structured interview. In semi-structured interview the questions are same for everyone, but the interviewees respond in their own words. (Ibid.)

The interview can be implemented in three ways: as an individual, as a pair or as a group interview. Different forms of interview can also be used as complementary. Individual interview is the most common form (Hirsjärvi et al. 2005, 199) and was also the form of this study. The data collection / interview process of this study is presented in the figure 10 below:

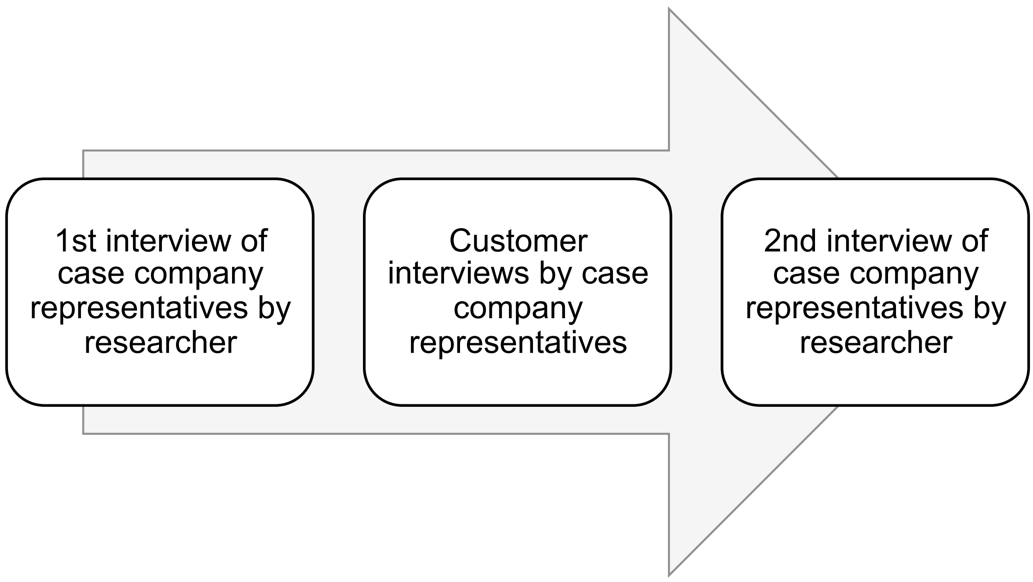

Figure 10. The interview process of the study

The interviews conducted by the researcher were carried out in two phases – once before and once after the customer interviews conducted by the case business sales representatives. Interviewing was done in Finnish language, as being native language for all the participants. Next will follow a deeper presentation of phases. First the interviews conducted by the researcher and then the customer interviews conducted by the sales representatives are been described.

The first and second interviews of case business representatives by researcher

The first interviews of case business representatives were conducted in January 2014. Three out of four second interviews of case business representatives were conducted in March 2014 and one in June 2014. The exact dates, formats, locations and durations of interviews are presented in Appendix 1 “Interviews”.

Researcher agreed the interview dates by calling each of the respondents separately. After the phone calls researcher booked the agreed time from the sales representatives electric calendar by using a Lotus Notes software application. The respondents accepted the interview invitations by using the same application. Application sent the confirmations to the researchers e-mail. Interview questions were attached to the invitations.

Three out of four first interviews were carried out via telephone and one interview was performed face-to-face in a meeting room in the ABB facilities in Helsinki. One of the phone interview respondents located at his home and two other at their workplaces.

Two out of four second interviews were carried out via telephone and two interviews were performed face-to-face in a meeting room in the ABB facilities, which of one in Vantaa and one in Helsinki. One of the phone interview respondents located in a car during the interview and one other at his workplace.

Related to telephone interviews the researcher was located in her home and used a mobile phone to reach the respondents one-by-one. All the interviews were recorded with a tape recorder. Researcher tested the use and functionality of the tape recorder prior to interviews. However there occurred some problems in the interviews, because the mobile phone caused some resonating sounds to the tape. Hence, sound quality of calls recorded was mainly good, but there were a few points were some words were left unclear. The use of tape recorder was explained to the respondents during setting the date for the interview and in the beginning of the interviews. The facilities of the interviewer and the interviewees at the times of the interviews were peaceful. There occurred one line break with the respondent who located in the car.

In the beginning of the first interview the researcher reminded the respondent of her background, the agenda of the interview and made sure that respondent knew what the research was all about. Before the actual questions the researcher gave also an opportunity for the respondents to ask her for further information if it was needed. No questions were asked, so researcher could draw a conclusion that she had carefully explained her case and respondents had understood in what kind of study they were participating.

The questions of the interviews were pre-tested with a person external to the pilot team. The person worked also for the company, ABB Service, in the management position and in daily interaction with the sales representatives of the company. The test person also visits the company customers on a regular basis and has a deep understanding of the case company, science of economics, different sales automation systems and applications to mention a few of his talents to assure he was suitable for a test person.

The purpose of the first interview was mainly to collect information about the background and attitude of the respondent ending with discussion about the date of the customer visit and next contact from the researcher (see Appendix 4.a “The follow up after the first interview” in Finnish or Appendix 4.b “The follow up after the first interview” in English). The purpose of the second interview was to gather information to be able to answers to the research questions of this study. The first interview questions are presented in the Appendix 3.a in Finnish and in the Appendix 3.b in English. The second interview questions are presented in the Appendix 5.a in Finnish and in the Appendix 5.b in English.

Customer interviews by case business representatives

Selected customers’ value and segment identification was conducted during customer visits in Q1-Q2/2014. The segmented customers represented companies that operate in three different industries in Finland and located in different parts of the country. Industries were metal, mining and oil and gas. All the companies were existing customers of the business unit were the sales representatives worked. The original intention was that sales representatives would interview two companies inside an industry and three individuals in a company. Prior to that salespeople needed to have a training about segmentation and how to use different tools (Values Identifier software, Value matrix, Account plan), map the customer organizations to identify key decision-makers and schedule a meeting with them to be able to conduct the interview. In the face-to- face meeting a sales person conducted the customer interview using the Values Identifier software. The questions presented to customers varied according to their answers. Questions came from the Values Identifier software (see “Figure 8. Views of the Values Identifier software tool” in sub-chapter 4.2). The software tool outlined which values customer appreciated and positioned customer to a specific segment based on the given answers. The results were saved on the PC of the operator of the tool. The segment was not to be revealed to the customer. It was advised that sales person show only the resulted values to the customer so that customer can verify that they were correct (see “Figure 9. A view of the results from the Values Identifier software tool” in sub-chapter 4.2). Addition to the tool’s max 6 questions sales representatives presented a claim ”the use of a software tool that identified customer’s values brought added value to the meeting”. The given customer response options were: 1) strongly disagree, 2) somewhat disagree, 3) do not know, 4) somewhat agree and 5) totally agree. After the meeting sales person was supposed to examine the results profoundly to be able to select the key value proposition messages for the customer using the Value Matrix and build a Service Account Development Plan.

5.4 Selection of participants

”Case studies can use one participant, or a small group of participants. However, it is important that the participant pool remain relatively small” (Colorado State University, 2014b). This study used non-probability type of sampling plan. In non-probability sampling samples are selected based on the subjective judgment, rather than random selection. The participants of the pilot team formed the sample of this study. The team was formed internally in the case business, so researcher did not have the opportunity to affect the composition of the team. Originally the team consisted of six individuals, but during the process one member resigned and one was opt-out because acting as a supervisor of this thesis. Hence, the final total number of interviewed participants became four. Participants were homogenous in terms of their gender and education and quite homogenous in terms of their age. The average respondent was 57 years old and 100% of respondents were male, all had engineer education. The average sales experience of respondents was 29,5 years and average sales experience of respondents was 20 years. See table 5 for more detailed information of the respondents. Due to confidentiality reasons names and titles of the persons interviewed have been left out. Interviewees' names are replaced with letters A-D.

Table 5. Background information of the respondents' of the study

Respondent	Gender	Age	Education	Sales experience (in years)	Sales experience at ABB (in years)
A	Male	54	Engineer	30	20
B	Male	54	Engineer (telecommunications)	29	24
C	Male	59	Engineer (electric)	32	30
D	Male	61	Engineer (electric)	27	6

5.5 Data analysis technique

The purpose of the qualitative data analysis is to create clarity to the collected material and thus produce new information of the topic of the study. The analysis aims to summarize the data without losing the information it includes. Eskola and Suoranta (2003, 137) say that the most problematic phase in qualitative research is the data analysis. Difficulty arises partly from the lack of clear working techniques and partly from the lightness of the education. The first task of qualitative analysis is the organization of the data after it has been collected and technically prepared. The structuring of the data and the interpretation take place in several phases. (Eskola & Suoranta 2003, 150, 151)

The analysis methods can be divided to quantitative, thematic, typology, content, discursive and discussion analysis techniques (Eskola & Suoranta 2003, 160). Thematic analysis was chosen for the technique of this study.

In thematic analysis the researcher can raise different themes from the collected data. This makes possible to compare the occurrence of certain themes in the data. The main topics can be picked from the data and be presented as a collection of different type of question settings. Researcher need to first find and then separate the relevant topics related to the research problem. Thematic analysis is recommended approach for solving practical problems. By using this technique researcher can raise a collection of different answers or results from the collected material to the presented questions. (Eskola & Suoranta 2003, 174, 178, 179)

As the interviews of this study were done in Finnish, so was also the transcripted version (total of 31 pages). Each interview transcript has been gone through focusing on the main themes emphasized. Quotations used in chapter 6 are translated to English by researcher. The original Finnish versions can be found in appendix (Appendix 6). Citations are used to enliven the text and to prove the opinions of the interviewees.

5.6 Research ethics

Detailed description of the implementation of the study enhances the reliability of a qualitative study. The conditions of the production of the data material should be clearly and truthfully informed. For example in the case of an interview study the circumstances and locations where the data was collected are to be described. Also time used, potential distractions, misinterpretations in interviews and the researcher’s own self-assessment of the situation should be presented. The researcher must inform the source of the interpretations. The use of direct quotations is useful in this. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2005, 217, 218) Researcher must inform the objectives, methods and potential risks of the study to the participants. The participant must also know what the research is all about and participate voluntarily. No harm should be caused to participants and all the research data collected from individuals should be kept confidential. All participants must remain anonymous unless they have given permission to reveal their identity. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 131) This study is made respecting the above-mentioned guidelines.

6 RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the key findings from the interviews by presenting and analyzing the research results. The preliminary results were presented in a meeting to the pilot team members in June 2014. Also the supervisor of this study from the company´s side and the Country Service Manager was present. All the members had the opportunity to hear and take part in the debate. Even though all the members did not participate and some were present only some of the time researcher sees that this increases the reliability of the research results.

This chapter begins with a description of the situation in the company and presentation of opinions and attitudes of the respondents before the customer interviews and the use of the sales force automation tool. Next salespeople capabilities of using the Values Identifier software tool during the customer visits and the resulting segments are discussed. This is followed by examining the benefits of segmentation from the salespeople and the customer perspective that answers to the research questions of this study.

Quotes used in this chapter are translated from Finnish to English by the researcher of this study. The English versions are written to a bit more readable form than the original Finnish versions by for example removing a same successively repeating word (for example if the word is said three times in a row it is only mentioned once), and also the sounds that refer to thinking (for example “öö” in Finnish) are removed. The original Finnish quotes in which the fore-mentioned are intact can be found in appendix 6.

6.1 Situation in the company before the use of the Values Identifier tool

Before tackling the actual research questions researcher asked some background information questions (see table 5 “Background information of the respondents of the study” in sub-chapter “5.4 Selection of participants”) as well as wanted to find out some background factors that might affect the responses of the interviewees’. First researcher wanted to ensure that customer orientation was valued among the respondents as according to Goller et al. (2002, 254) it is the antecedent to segmentation. This was examined by asking the interviewees to tell three most important factors in successful sales. After this researcher wanted to find out whether interviewees assess ABB Service salespeople's sales style in general more as product oriented or as customer oriented. This was followed by examining interviewees' attitudes and possible resistance towards the use of technology in work. Last background factor focused on finding out did the interviewees' use some kind of customer classification already and if what kind of benefits they felt like receiving from it. Following sub-chapters reveal the results and address these issues more.

6.1.1 Conditions for successful sales

Answers have been divided into features of salespeople and features of products and services. Data revealed that salespeople's customer orientation, competence and preparation for the customer encounters were seen as important factors of successful sales. Quality and price of offering were seen as important features of products and services sold.

Table 6. Features of successful sales

Features of salespeople	Features of products and services
Customer orientation (listening to the customer, achieving and maintaining trust)	Quality (working products)
Competence (technical know-how, professional approach, offering knowledge, problem-solving ability)	Price (Respondent did not specify. Researcher assumes he meant competitive pricing)
Advance preparation for the customer encounters	

6.1.2 Sales style

In features of successful sales the respondents raised customer orientation as one of the most important factor. How ever their overall assessment of the ABB Service sales force sales style was unanimously product-oriented. Although all the respondents of this study understood the importance of customer orientation there is a need to improve it among the ABB Service sellers in general.

“Service sellers’ common way is purely product-oriented”. (B)

“In recent years I have felt that this is strongly product-oriented. When I have talked to sellers’ and have seen the Service way of doing things…materials and other such, it is much about what we have to offer, not what is needed by customer.” (C)

One respondent reminded that things are not so black and white:

“We do have sellers who have a customer-oriented way of doing things, but then we clearly have salespeople who need to improve it”. (A)

6.1.3 Attitude towards the use of technology at work

The attitude towards the use of technology at work was mostly positive, which can be viewed from the table 7 below:

Table 7. Respondents’ attitudes towards the use of technologies in sales work

Respondent A	Respondent B	Respondent C	Respondent D
Positive	Very positive	Some reservations	Positive

“It’s basically a bit like mandatory and modernity”. (B)

“All the gadgets in the world that helps in doing the job are good”. (D)

Only one respondent had some reservations:

"I am probably a bit cautious. I see that these different systems here make it (customer encounter) too machine-like." (C)

As the attitude of majority was positive this result does not support previous research findings (Park et al. 2010, 1131) that more experienced salespeople are reluctant to accept, learn, use and benefit from the technology.

6.1.4 Prior unofficial classification/segmentation of customers

All the respondents used already some sort of customer classification in their work. Respondents practiced customer classification because they felt to receive a variety of benefits. Time management and prioritization were mentioned as most common perceived benefit.

Table 8. Respondents' classification of customers before the use of the pilot tool

Respondent	A	B	C	D
Classifies customers?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
How?	On the basis of customer potential	-	To A-customers and others	According to activity
Benefit?	Time management and prioritization -> achieving better results	Planning, prioritization	Time management	-

"Time is the ending resource in every work and one achieves better results by keeping the focus clearly in mind and do not value all (customers) as equal". (A)

6.2 Respondents' capabilities of using the Values Identifier software tool during customer visits and the results of the customers' interviews

Researcher investigated had the respondents adopted sufficient skills to use the Values Identifier by self-studying the material and self-learning the software tool or did they feel like some additional training or technical support would be needed. The findings to above-mentioned issues as well as the resulting segments of the customer visits are presented in following sub-chapters (6.2.1 and 6.2.2).

6.2.1 Need of additional training or technical support

None of the respondents experienced the need of additional training or technical support in the deployment of the tool.

"The tool works pretty well. There is no problem with its use. One is able to play with it just fine." (B)

However one respondent recommended face-to-face training instead of self-studying in a wider deployment:

"But as we together (pilot team members) found, if this (customer segmentation) were deployed to the sellers in general then there is a must to go through a training…and it is much better to have it (Values Identifier software) on computer and go through it face-to-face than as some e-learning period". (A)

Several respondents mentioned that they felt confidence because they had other person (later in the text referred as person X) with them who actually operated the tool. This method was also recommended:

"There was no need to practice it (software tool) so much, because person X was involved and kept the records. If it is done as solo, one must have a pretty good routine, because part of the questions must be slightly clarified to that person (customer)." (A)

"This is perhaps the best way, to take someone who has already done it (customer segmentation during a customer visit) and go together to the first interview". (C)

One respondent noted that if salespeople could use their mother tongue it would be easier to use the tool as solo at customer visits:

”If the Finnish language version existed, it would be easier for one person”. (A)

6.2.2 Resulting segments of customer interviews

All the customer interviews gave the same segment result, “Segment 3” (the original segment name is not to be revealed in this study). There was uncertainty among the team members in the meetings about proper operation of the tool. In June 2014, after all the customer interviews of this study had already been conducted, it was discovered that the global team had published a newer version of the tool. It remains unclear what updates had been done and would the results be different with the newer version. It is known that the newer version has produced also other segments than “Segment 3” as customer interview result (Heinonen 2014). This study deals only results obtained with the older software version.

Table 9. The resulting segments of customer interviews

Segment name	Amount
Segment 1	0
Segment 2	0
Segment 3	5
Segment 4	0
Segment 5	0
Segment 6	0

(The original segment names are removed as company confidential and replaced with numbers 1-6.)

Some customers seemed to fit well in the “Segment 3” according to evaluation of respondents:

”It is not a surprise. This segment fit to this customer”. (C)

But some respondents were suspicious about the accuracy of the segment result:

"With a somewhat larger sampling one could take a look how well that (segment result) holds true. In this case, this person is a plant manager in a big site and I experience that this "Segment 3" does not fit the way he acts, because at that level the pure money is a big factor. "Segment 3" is more of his internal operating model." (B)

6.3 Benefits for salespeople

According to Speier and Venkatesh (2002, 99) the benefits of SFA should follow when the customer orientation exist and the implementation process of SFA technology has been successful. The collected data of this study revealed several perceived qualitative benefits of customer segmentation for salespeople. Findings are collected under five themes below. Each theme is then described more detailed in following sub-chapters (6.3.1 – 6.3.5).

1. Growing customer knowledge
    a. Values
    b. Purchasing behavior
    c. Decision-making
2. Guidance of sales operations
    a. Offering and customer need
    b. Adaptive selling
3. Relationship building
    a. Trust
4. Time management
    a. Targeted activities
    b. Faster processing of offering
5. Growing performance
    a. Hit-rate
    b. Sales visits

6.3.1 Growing customer knowledge

This study supports the previous research findings that segmentation leads to a better understanding of customers needs. In addition salespeople are able to obtain important information for example about the key decision-makers, their buying behavior and about the whole decision-making process of a company that is been segmented.

”Well, the most important thing about it is the listening of the customer and important…values of the customer, we understand what they value. For the seller the value in that is that we get a greater awareness of what matters are important to them. Also, by using a top-down –method we get a very good image of the decision-making process of the company in to that particular segment that is been sold to. One understands whom all one should influence”. (A)

”You get picture from there about how it…what are the pain points of that person or that department, what the customer values the most, what the least. By discussing these issues there can be found things such as, for example, is it important that we are close, are able to serve fast or is it important that our products are available somewhere and they make themselves and that changes the way how you act…We get like…certain kind of overall view of what kind of buying behavior there is. Discussions raise issues that give information about the customer.” (B)

Segmentation was seen as beneficial in particular for the less experienced sellers. This finding supports the study of Keillor et al. (1997), which found that the use of SFA can be a way for a less experienced sales representative to become productive faster.

”’When new sellers, so to new people or to other stakeholders can be shown what the customer appreciate and where one need to invest. In particular when talking about a new seller who is only just learning the customer base, so if we have this type of documents the familiarization and sellers customer knowledge improves at that point”. (C)

But benefits were perceived also for the more experienced sellers:

In some cases also an older (or more experienced) seller can receive such benefit…as the thoughts and priorities of the customer may have changed and sometimes it can be good to shape up for a moment and think about it in a new way.” (C)

6.3.2 Guidance of sales operations

Segmentation helps seller in choosing the right products and services of the overall offering that fits to the needs of a certain customer.

”Our offering needs to match to their (customer) need”. (B)

In addition, the customer knowledge obtained by segmentation helps seller in adjusting his selling style (adaptive selling) in different selling situations. Park et al. (2009) have also suggested that the major benefit of SFA may lie in its ability to help sales personnel learn and ultimately shape the manner in which they sell.

”Affects to the manner in which we should go to different departments, or let´s say to the situation where we are selling something”. (B)

”It guides our way of argumentation, if we more clearly identify the important things. It shows in our way of argumentation. It can be used to create particular kind of systematic to the proposal or offer of the customer.” (C)

6.3.3 Relationship building

Simkin (2008) listed building relationships with the most attractive customers as one of the practical benefits of segmentation. According to Buttle’s et al. study (2006) one non-task outcome of SFA is effects on social interactions. In addition Boujena et al. (2009) found that SFA facilitates the development of buyer-seller relationship. Also this study found that customer segmentation implemented using SFA method reveals new information about the customer and thus opens up new topics for discussion. This way the seller-buyer/customer relationship has the opportunity to evolve to a new level.

”If it guides the conversation into new directions, so it probably brings the discussion of the customer and the seller to the same level…that is way to a much more in-depth discussion…” (C)

6.3.4 Time management

As a seller finds out the most profitable customers/segments and their real needs the seller is able to focus on right tasks and save his/her own and the customers’ time by presenting only those products and services that really interests and meets the needs of the customers’. There are several prior studies that had already noted this. For example Dibb (1998) and Dibb and Simkin (1997) found that segmentation leads to more efficient resource allocation in the company. Also Rogers et al. (2008) present that SFA is assumed to make salespeople more efficient, both in how they allocate time to customers and in how they use that time. The findings of this study are in line with above-mentioned studies.

”…There is no need to do such activities of which customer says: ”This is good but I don´t need this”, but rather do targeted actions”. (C)

6.3.5 Growing performance

Segmentation aims to better sales results, which are key indicators of a successful seller. A deep customer knowledge helps seller for example in pricing, distribution and advertising decisions. As Jobber and Lancaster (2009) found the right kind of choices in fore-mentioned tasks in turn leads to a situation where targeted segments and the customers’ in those segments will respond more favorably in terms of sales.

”A deeper level (with customer and in customer knowledge) generates sales…Seller’s hit-rate as well as the performance of sales visit improves. And that is what a seller should appreciate.” (C)

6.4 Benefits for customers

This chapter present the benefits of segmentation to customers based on the data collected by interviews. Unfortunately, it was not possible to ask customer perceived benefits directly from the customers. However it was possible to find out did they feel like segmentation added value to the customer meeting. If customers' felt segmentation as valuable it can be considered to be beneficial to the customer. The customer benefits presented below are salespeople's opinions excluding the added-value question, which result is presented next in conjunction with the customers' experience feedback.

Added-value and customer experience (customer perspective)

Customers answered in scale 1-5 to a claim: ”the use of a software tool that identified customer's values brought added value to the meeting”. (Customers were informed that their values were been examined. The use of the word “segmentation” was not used in the discussion with the customers. Due to previous factor the claim did not contain the word “segmentation”). The following table describes the results:

Table 10. Customer responses to the added-value question

The given customer response options	Amount of customer answers per option
1. Strongly disagree	0
2. Somewhat disagree	0
3. Do not know	0
4. Somewhat agree	5
5. Totally agree	0

All the interviewed customers felt that the tool somewhat added value to the meeting. Based on this result segmentation can be considered as beneficial to the customers. Customers' feedback of their experience was following:

"They (customer) saw that the outcome creates an image and based on that it is easy to discuss to what things really should be invested in. He saw it as a positive thing and felt also the way that it would be worthwhile to take it to the next level, that is to his subordinates at the operational level". (C)

"He (customer) said that it is good". (B)

"They (customer representatives) said, that the question repertoire is very short and concise and appropriate…they underlined that they think just like that about those things as the result gave and described. They found this very rational and felt even that responding to our NPS (Net Promoter Score) survey is totally desperate compared to this. They felt that the outcome described their values". (D)

Perceived benefits for customers (salespeople perspective)

Collected data revealed several perceived benefits of customer segmentation for customers. Findings are collected under four themes below. Each theme is then described more detailed in following sub-chapters (6.4.1 – 6.4.4).

1. Information transmission
    a. Wants, needs and opinions
    b. Communication
    c. Information about own organization
2. Improved customer service
    a. Problem solving
    b. Tailored service
    c. Targeted communication
3. Relationship building
    a. Customer relationship management
4. Development of operations
    a. Operations management
    b. Concept copying

6.4.1 Information transmission

In the same way as the seller benefits from the obtained segmentation data, it can be beneficial also for the customer. In Boujena's et al. (2009) ”The benefits of sales force automation: a customer perspective” study was found that salespeople represent a valuable source and bridge of information for buyers in various areas and the more information the seller is able to offer to the buyer the more likely the seller can reduce the perceived risks or uncertainty of the buyer and aid buyer in making an effective decision. This study found that the segmentation result can provide new information to the customer about himself or wider about his organization:

”Equally may be beneficial also to them to see what kind of differences they have there”. (B)

The customer may also get a new desired opportunity or more functional way of communicating his expectations and actual needs to the seller:

”Maybe this can help also the customer to better communicate their expectations to us…It forces the customer to think a little bit… and sometimes I think the customer may have a problem how to really tell us what they expect from us. When the discussion is not about a single case, but rather generally about what they (customer) expect from an equipment supplier, from a system supplier, from a service supplier, what kind of things? It can sometimes be hard for a customer to say ”I do not want any plan from you. When I need and have a problem, I ask you to come here”. Maybe at that point the customer then thinks and is more capable to say it or the other way around ”I would like to hear your vision of the future”.” (C)

The customer has a chance to be heard and to test the seller's listening comprehension and does the seller correspond to the customer's wishes in his future activities toward the customer.

”For the first time they (customer) are asked what they consider important and are listened to. Own (seller's) mindset is not fed to them, but the other way around, they (customer) are been asked what they consider important…they get to

express their opinions and they certainly assume that we start to act in such way that their values and wishes will be taken into account." (D)

6.4.2 Improved customer service

The identification of customers' needs and focusing on them guides the providing organization's operations as well as its salespeople's actions towards the customer oriented approach. A customer driven style appears for customers in sales interactions for example as sales tailored to the exact needs of the customers' (meaning for example carefully thought out sales presentations and messages or/and demonstration of selected products and services from the product portfolio). As Goyat (2011, 49) put it customers in selected segments receive higher value from developed marketing mix that addresses their specific needs and concerns. A well-tailored offering and pricing will save customer's resources, such as time and money.

"This will help to shift to the consultative selling, where the focus is more in finding a solution than in making a mechanical offer to a tender inquiry and after that compete in technical and commercial terms…this helps in tailoring. And when we have a lot of service products, there are some many products, that if you send some person to tell about them, no one is able to listen to all of them and by understanding what they (customer) consider important we can think the first ones (service products) and thinks about what we should introduce to them." (A)

6.4.3 Relationship building

There are many pieces of SFA and segmentation that together improve customer service and thus the overall customer satisfaction leading to trust and to strong and long-term relationships. Boujena et al. (2009) found that customer-salesperson relationship quality follows from the enhancement of salesperson's behaviors and competences. This study found that segmentation takes the seller-customer relationship forward, to a new level. It improves the functions of the seller in every level at the customer organization where the segmentation is completed. By observing problems and making corrective actions customer satisfaction towards seller or/and selling organization and image of both in general may be improved. Also Simkin (2008) listed building relationships with the most attractive customers as one of the practical benefits of segmentation.

”This helps to…I see that this is absolutely essential to customer relationship management of our existing customers. This will help us to focus our operations on all levels. That is, when we interview people at different levels, we will see the problem areas. That way we can actually take the customer relationship forward.” (A)

6.4.4 Development of operations

In this case, where the results of the segmentation is presented to the customer, the customer can obtain new information of its own organization and if that information is utilized it may affect on some functions of the customer´s business operations. When a customer receives value from the segmentation carried out by a seller of a providing company, the customer may want something similar to be performed to their own customers. The need for a launch of somewhat similar project at the customer’s organization may arise.

”Equally may be beneficial also to them (customer) to see what kind of differences they have there. In their own way they can lead their operations there. This customer (the one that respondent interviewed) has a bit similar concept, customer orientation, going on to their own customers and they may have some interest about what kind of results this gives. Perhaps they want to use something similar.” (B)

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine what kind of benefits ABB Service sales employees as well as their customers perceive to receive from the sales employees' use of sales force automation. Sales force automation in this study referred to the segment and value identifier software tool, Values Identifier, developed by ABB. Purpose of the tool is to define the key values of customer and identify segment that best fit to customer. Case company uses six (6) segments. Due to limited resources, such as time frame and the nature of business in the industrial field, this study focused only on perceived qualitative benefits that were mainly examined from the salespeople's point of view. This study was carried out as a case study, a form of qualitative research, as the purpose was to collect detailed information from a small amount of individuals in their working environment. Information was collected using semi-structured individual interview method that allowed the interviewees to respond in their own words. Data was collected in two phases by interviewing selected individuals working in sales and close interactions with customers of the selling company. The purpose of the first interview was mainly to collect information about the background and attitude of the respondents. The purpose of the second interview was to gather information to be able to answers to the research questions of this study. The main research question was "*What kind of benefits sales force automation can bring to company's salespeople and to their customers?"* Followed by the sub research questions "*What kind of benefits the use of sales force automation in segmenting the customers can bring to sales employees?" and "What kind of benefits the use of sales force automation by salespeople of a providing company can bring to its customers?".* This study used non-probability type of sampling plan. The participants of the pilot team formed the sample of this study. The sample was selected internally in the ABB Service, so researcher did not have the opportunity to affect the composition of the sample. The final total number of interviewed participants was four. Thematic analysis was chosen for the data analysis technique of this study.

The concluding chapter of this study provides a summary on the findings and exploitation of results. This is followed by research limitations and proposals for future research.

7.1 Summary of the findings

This sub-chapter answers to the research questions of this study based on the empirical findings. The findings are mirrored against the theory seeking for similarities between the two. In the empirical part, some elements that did not give answers to the research questions were studied. Such elements were for example the attitudes and opinions of interviewed persons. These elements have been deliberately studied. Their purpose has been to be control questions to the actual questions solving the possible perceived benefits. Researcher did not want to limit those out of work, because they brought important information whether benefits could be expected. For example, if respondent's attitude towards technology would have been negative in the first place and he would not appreciate the customer orientation, or his understanding of customer classification/segmentation or capabilities of using the tool would have been poor it would have had an impact on whether the person could perceive any benefits from the use of the tool and of the customer segmentation in general or not. However, the summary of these issues is excluded from this summary, but these results can be reviewed from sub-chapters 6.1-6.2.2. The focus here is on those results that are equivalent to the research questions of this study.

Since by answering to the sub-research questions answer to the main research question is given. The main research question is "*What kind of benefits sales force automation can bring to company's salespeople and to their customers?",* the sub-questions are repeated and answered below. Answers are based on the empirical findings. Also the compatibility of the theory and the findings is examined. Finally, the potentiality of exploitation of results is discussed.

SRQ1: "*What kind of benefits the use of sales force automation in segmenting the customers can bring to sales employees?"*

Based on the empirical data the use of the sales force automation in segmenting the customers can bring following benefits to the sales employees:

- Growing customer knowledge
- Guidance of sales operations
- Relationship building
- Time management and
- Growing performance.

All the findings of this study had already pretty much been found in previous studies, that was presented in previous chapter, so this study confirms the previous research findings on benefits of segmentation to salespeople.

SRQ2: *“What kind of benefits the use of sales force automation by salespeople of a providing company can bring to its customers?”*

Based on the empirical data the use of the sales force automation by salespeople of providing company can bring following benefits to its customers:

- Information transmission
- Improved customer service
- Relationship building and
- Development of operations.

Part of this study’s findings on customer perceived benefits are consistent with the findings of Boujena et al. (2009). A new found benefit was the development of operations, which in this case means that

- customer can obtain new information of its own organization and if that information is utilized it may affect on some functions of the customer´s business operations.
- the customer may want something similar to be performed to their own customers. The need for a launch of somewhat similar project at the customer’s organization may arise.

Exploitation of results

Since the study is a case study the results may not be generalized, but the results can be used in the future in the case company - locally and globally. The current research helps in understanding how SFA and segmentation may be beneficial from the salespeople's as well as from the customers' perspective. Researcher sees that this study was able to examine aspects of which the company or the global team would not otherwise have the resources or the possibility. The results can aid management for example to sell concept internally to the salespeople by providing and communicating the benefits of the pilot use of the tool. Detecting customer benefit can also be useful for marketing purposes and for salespeople in getting to customer visits. By communicating the benefits not from the supplier's side, but from buyer's side salespeople can more easily assure customers that by identifying their values and segment, customers can for example expect more customer driven sales approach from the providing company that may save for example customers' resources. Also this study has detected issues that should take into account during the wider deployment. It might be useful to prepare a summary of the key issues of this study that can be shared to other ABB units or countries and share information for example in the intranet of the case company.

7.2 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

Every study has its limitations and this research makes no exception. This study is submitted to multiple limitations, which are presented here. Also the suggestions for future research are given below.

The actual research approach of qualitative research as well as the chosen research strategy of case study brings certain limitations for the generalizability of the findings. Qualitative research by its nature can be difficult to generalize as it is highly case sensitive and often difficult to replicate with satisfying outcomes. Case study presents detailed information about a small sample and is able to draw conclusions only about that particular sample in a specific context.

Single source of data can be seen as a weakness of this study as using multiple sources of evidence to increase the reliability and validity of the data can be advantageous. Now the collected data was perception based soft, not hard, data. If resources and time had allowed, a quantitative research could have been conducted to verify the research results. This method of triangulation would have brought significant improvements to the reliability and validity of the results. Due to fore-mentioned facts it would be very interesting to use quantitative research approach in the future to examine this subject. In addition it would be interesting to know does the use of the Values Identifier software tool affect for example the sales results of sellers using it and does the customer segmentation have some influence to the customer satisfaction results (NPS)?

A limitation to understand when considering the data gathering is the fact that it was done at only one point in time. Examining how the opinions, values and segments develop over time could be useful. One unfortunate factor in the data gathering was that customer benefits could not be examined directly from the customers, but from the salespeople. Therefore there still remains a need to examine and/or verify the customer perceived benefits directly from the customers.

Another important point is the limited amount of interviews in this thesis. Of course larger the number would be, better the extent of the results. Also the sample included only Finnish respondents, internally selected salespeople of a selected business unit from a single organization in one country, Finland. The sample was very alike at least what comes to their gender, age and education. Thus the sample may not be representative of salespeople in general. A future study with a different sampling frame, for example people of different age, gender and experience, is recommended.

The software tool that was used by the sellers is developed and used only in this company. A newer version was also published during the study, but the interviews were already made with the older version giving the same segment result and the results could not be verified over again. Researcher suggests re-studying the benefits in the future when the tool is in a more permanent state, fully adopted and members using it more skillful and committed to the consistent use of the innovation.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Interviews

First interviews

Respondent	Date	Interview format	Location of the interviewer	Location of the interviewee	Duration in minutes
A	14.01.2014	Phone	Home	Home	36
B	15.01.2014	Phone	Home	Workplace	25
C	17.01.2014	Face-to-face	Case company meeting room	Case company meeting room	45
D	20.01.2014	Phone	Home	Workplace	41

Second interviews

Respondent	Date	Interview format	Location of the interviewer	Location of the interviewee	Duration in minutes
A	19.03.2014	Face-to-face	Case company meeting room	Case company meeting room	30
B	27.03.2014	Phone	Home	Workplace	35
C	02.06.2014	Face-to-face	Case company meeting room	Case company meeting room	38
D	31.03.2014	Phone	Home	Car	29

Appendix 2.a: The background information of the interviewer (FI)

(Esitetty suullisesti haastateltavalle ennen ensimmäistä haastattelua)

Teen opinnäytetyötä Lappeenrannan teknillisen yliopiston kauppatieteellisen tiedekunnan opiskelijana. Pääaineenani on International Marketing Management.

Suoritan opinnäytetyön yritystoimeksiantona ABB Servicelle Jarmo Heinosen ohjauksessa ja tarkoituksena on tutkia mitä hyötyä Values Identifier -ohjelmistotyökalu tuo myyjälle ja hänen asiakkailleen.

Tarkoitus on haastatella Sinut kahteen kertaan – kerran ennen asiakaskäyntiäsi ja kerran sen jälkeen. Nauhoitan haastattelut erillisellä nauhoittajalla ja haastatteluiden jälkeen kirjoitan ne auki tietokoneelleni.

Ensimmäinen haastattelu koostuu taustatietoja, mielipiteitäsi ja toimintatapojasi kartoittavista kysymyksistä. Voit vastata kysymyksiin täysin omin sanoin.

Haluatko kysyä vielä jotain vai voidaanko aloittaa haastattelu?

Appendix 2.b: The background information of the interviewer (EN)

(Presented orally to the respondent before the first interview)

I am doing this study as a Master in International Marketing Management student of Lappeenranta School of business, which is part of Lappeenranta University of Technology.

Research is carried out as a case study for ABB Service in the supervision of Jarmo Heinonen, Vice President of Business Development. The purpose is to investigate what kind of benefits sellers and their customers perceive to receive from the use of sales force automation tool, the Values Identifier software.

My intention is to interview participants twice – once before customer visit and once after the visit. The interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder and written open to my computer for further analysis.

The first interview consists of questions concerning your background information, opinions and selling approach. Questions can be answered with own words.

Is there something you would like to ask or do we start with the interview questions?

Appendix 3.a: Questions of the first interview (FI)

Haastattelukysymykset

Taustatiedot haastateltavasta:

1. Sukupuoli? (Ei kysytty, haastattelija sai tiedon nimen ja havaintonsa perusteella)
2. Ikä?
3. Koulutus?
4. Titteli?
5. Myyntikokemus vuosissa?
6. Myyntikokemus nykyisellä työnantajalla (ABB)?

Mielipiteitä ja toimintatapoja kartoittavat kysymykset:

7. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi kolme tärkeintä tekijää onnistuneessa myyntityössä?
8. Onko ABB Servicen myyjien myyntityyli mielestäsi enemmän tuote- vai asiakaslähtöinen?
9. Miten suhtaudut teknologioiden hyödyntämiseen työssäsi?
10. Luokitteletko tai segmentoitko asiakkaita tällä hetkellä jotenkin?
    a. Jos, niin miten?
    b. Jos, niin mitä hyötyä olet kokenut tämän tuovan?

Appendix 3.b: Questions of the first interview (EN)

The interview questions

Background information of the respondent:

1. Gender? (Not asked)
2. Age?
3. Education?
4. Title?
5. Sales experience in years?
6. Sales experience at ABB?

Questions exploring opinions and practices:

7. What do you think are the three most important factors in successful selling?
8. What is your opinion, is the selling style of ABB Service salespeople more product-oriented or customer-oriented?
9. How do you feel about the use of technologies at work?
10. Do you classify or segment customers at the moment somehow?
    a. If so, how?
    b. If so, what benefits have you experienced to receive from it?

Appendix 4.a: The follow-up after the first interview (FI)

(Esitetty suullisesti haastateltavalle ensimmäisen haastattelun päätteeksi)

Ensimmäisen haastattelun jälkeen Sinun on tarkoitus tehdä asiakaskäynti ja käyttää Values Identifier -ohjelmistoa asiakkaan arvojen ja segmentin määrittämiseen.

Toinen haastattelu suoritetaan asiakaskäyntisi jälkeen. Milloin sinun on tarkoitus suorittaa tämä?

Eli koska voin soittaa sopiakseni seuraavaa haastattelua?

Kiitos vastauksista ja hyvää päivän jatkoa!

Appendix 4.b: The follow-up after the first interview (EN)

(Presented orally to the respondent after the first interview)

After this first interview you are supposed to visit the customer and use Values Identifier software tool to identify the values and the segment of the customer.

The second interview will be conducted after the customer visit. When are you planned to visit the customer?

When can I call to set the date for the next interview?

Thank you for your answers and have a nice day!

Appendix 5.a: Questions of the second interview (FI)

Haastattelun avulla tutkija pyrkii saamaan case-yrityksen edustajilta tietoja vastatakseen tutkimuskysymykseensä “millaisia hyötyjä myynnin automaatio -työväline tuo myyjille ja heidän asiakkailleen”.

Tässä tutkimuksessa myynnin automaatio -työvälineellä tarkoitetaan ABB:n Values Identifier –ohjelmistotyökalua.

Haastattelukysymykset

Taustatiedot asiakaskäynnistä:

1. Mitä yritystä haastattelit?
2. Millä alalla kyseinen yritys toimii?
3. Kuinka montaa henkilöä haastattelit yrityksestä?
4. Mikä oli haastateltavan/haastateltavien asema yrityksessä?
5. Mikä oli haastateltavan/haastateltavien arvio työkalun tuottamasta lisäarvosta asiakaskäynnillä asteikolla 1-5?
6. Mihin segmenttiin asiakas kuului?

Kontrollikysymykset:

7. Jäitkö kaipaamaan koulutusta tai teknistä tukea työkalun käyttöönotossa?

Myyjän kokema hyöty:

8. Millaisia hyötyjä työkalun käyttöönotto mielestäsi tuo myyjälle?

Asiakkaan kokema hyöty (myyjän näkemys asiakkaan hyödyistä)

9. Millaisia hyötyjä työkalun käyttöönotto mielestäsi tuo asiakkaalle?

Haastateltavan vapaat kommentit.

Appendix 5.b: Questions of the second interview (EN)

The purpose of this interview for the researcher is to collect information to be able to answer to the research question ”What kind of benefits sales force automation brings to salespeople and to their customers”.

Sales force automation in this study refers to the ABB Values Identifier software tool.

Interview questions

Background information of the customer visit:

1. The target company of the interview?
2. In which industry the company operates?
3. How many people were interviewed?
4. What was the position of the person/persons interviewed?
5. What was the customer’s assessment of the tool’s added value on the visit on scale of 1-5?
6. What was the customer segment result?

Control questions:

7. Did you feel like you would have needed additional training or technical support in the introduction of the tool?

Seller perceived benefits:

8. What kind of benefits do you think the use of the tool brings to the seller?

Customer perceived benefits (the seller’s view of the customer benefits)

9. What kind of benefits do you think the use of the tool brings to the customer?

Free comments of the respondent.

Appendix 6: Original Finnish quotes of those used in the chapter "6 RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS"

Sub-chapter 6.1.2 Sales style:

"Servicen myyjien yleinen tapa on kyllä hyvin puhtaasti tuotelähtöinen". (B)

"Kyllä mulle on viime vuosilta on tullut aika vahvasti semmoinen, että tää on aika vahvasti semmosta tuotelähtöistä. Kun mä olen tota mitä mä olen keskustellut näitten myyjien kanssa ja, ja nähnyt sit myöskin tämmöstä niinkun, niinkun tätä Servicen tätä, tätä tapaa…materiaaleja ja muuta tämmöstä, niin tota se lähtee aika pitkälti siitä mitä meillä on tarjota eikä siitä, että mitkä asiakkaalla on tarve." (C)

"No joo, kyl se…se, se nyt ei ole ihan noin mustavalkoinen se kysymys, eli, eli, eli, eli meillähän on hyvin myyjiä, jotka, jotka osaavat lähteä asiakaslähtöisesti liikkeelle, mut sit meillä on selvästi henkilöitä, joilla siinä on parannettavaa". (A)

Sub-chapter 6.1.3 Attitude towards the use of technology at work:

"…Se, sehän on, on periaatteessa vähän niinku pakollista ja nykyaikaa…". (B)

"Kaikki maailman vehkeet mitkä auttaa työn tekemisessä on hyvä". (D)

"Minä oon varmaan vähän varauksellinen, että minä kyllä näen sillä tavalla, että se keskustelu asiakkaan kanssa ja siihen liittyvät asiat, että nää erilaiset järjestelmät ja, ja systeemit täällä tekee liian konemaiseksi sen". (C)

Sub-chapter 6.1.4 Prior unofficial classification/segmentation of customers:

"Kaikissa töissähän aika on se loppuva luonnonvara ja sillä että pitää kirkkaana mielessä että mihin täytyy keskittyä eikä pidä kaikkia saman arvoisina sitä saavuttaa paremmin tuloksia". (A)

Sub-chapter 6.2.1 Need of training or technical support

"Kyllä se työkalu toimi ihan hyvin. Ei siinä käytössä oo mitään ongelmaa. Kyllä sen kanssa pystyy pelaamaan ihan hyvin." (B)

“Mutta kyllähän niinkuin me todettiin siinä yhdessä, jos tää jalkautettais myyjille yleisesti niin kyllä siit on koulutus silloin käytävä lävitse…ja se on paljon parempi, et se on siinä koneella ja käytäis face-to-face kuin et se olis joku e-learning jakso”. (A)

Tää on ehkä paras tapa, että joku joka on sen jo tehnyt, niin käydä se ensimmäinen haastattelu yhdessä”. (C)

”Ei tarvinnut kauheesti harjoitella sitä, koska, koska tuota henkilö X oli mukana tekemässä, pitämässä kirjanpitoa. Jos sen tekee yksin saa olla aika hyvä rutiini, koska osaa kysymyksistä pitää pikkusen selventää, avata vähän sille kyseiselle henkilölle.” (A)

”Jos suomenkieli-versio olisi olemassa se menisi yhdellä henkilöllä helpommin”. (A)

Sub-chapter 6.2.2 Resulting segments of customer interviews

”Ei se yllätys ole. Tälle asiakkaalle sopi tämä segmentti.” (C)

”Vähän isommalla otannalla vois kattoo, että kuinka hyvin tuo nyt sitten pitäis kutinsa siinä miten ite tuota ehkä suoraan niitä ihmisiä rankkaa millaisia he on. Tässä tapauksessa, jos tää henkilö on VP tommosessa isossa tehtaassa, elikkä tehtaanjohtajana isolla saitilla, niin tää “Segmentti 3” (tutkija on vaihtanut alkuperäisen yrityksen käytössä olevan segmenttinimen tässä kohtaa “Segmentti 3”:ksi) tai tämäntyyppinen toimintamalli niin kyllä mä näen, että ehkä se terminologia mitä tuo tarkoittais ei ehkä pidä siinä miten hän toimii, koska kuitenkin tuolla tasolla, niin se puhdas raha, raha on niinku se iso tekijä, että tätä enemmän käytetään, voi käyttää siinä hyödyksi, että hän haluaa, kuitenkin tuo “Segmentti 3” (tutkija on vaihtanut alkuperäisen yrityksen käytössä olevan segmenttinimen tässä kohtaa “Segmentti 3”:ksi) on ehkä enemmän hänen sisäistä toimintamallia, että semmosia ratkaisuja jotka saadaan yhdessä sovittua ja hyviksi, että sitä kautta.” (B)

Sub-chapter 6.3.1 Growing customer knowledge

"No tärkein asia siinä on se, että kuunnellaan asiakasta ja asiakkaalle tärkeitä…heidän arvojaan, meille sisäistyy niinkuin heidän arvot. Myyjälle siinä on se arvo, että me paremmin niinkuin tiedostetaan mitkä on heille tärkeitä asioita. Myös myyjälle sitten se, että näin tehtynä top-down –menetelmällä…niin…me saamme kyllä erittäin hyvän kuvan yrityksen päätöksentekokoneistosta siihen kyseiseen segmenttiin mitä kulloinkin myydään. Ymmärtää keihin kaikkiin pitää vaikuttaa." (A)

"Sinä saat sieltä kuvaa siitä miten se…mitkä on niinku sen henkilön tai osaston kipupisteitä, mitä asiakas arvottaa eniten, mitä vähiten. Niistä keskustellen sieltä löytyy asioita, kuten esimerkiksi onko tärkeää, että me ollaan lähellä, pystytään palvelemaan nopeasti vai onko tärkeää se, että meidän tuotteet saa jostakin ja tota he tekee itse ja se muuttaa sitä tapaa miten sä toimit…Saadaan se niinku tota…tämmönen tietynlainen kokonaisnäkemys laajemmalti millaista ostokäyttäytymistä siellä on. Keskusteluissa tulee esille asioita, mitkä antaa tietoa siitä asiakkaasta." (B)

"Silloin kun uusia myyjiä, niin uusille ihmisille tai muille sidosryhmille pystytään näyttämään mitä se asiakas arvostaa ja mihin pitää panostaa. Erityisesti silloin, kun puhutaan uudesta myyjästä, joka on vasta opettelemassa sitä asiakaskuntaa, niin jos meillä on tän tyyppisiä dokumentteja, niin se myyjän perehdyttäminen ja myyjän asiakastuntemus paranee siinä kohtaan. Jossain tapauksessa myöskin vanhalle myyjälle…asiakkaan ajatukset on saattanut muuttuu ja painotukset ja joskus vois olla ihan hyvä skarpata hetkeksi ja miettiä sitä uudella tavalla." (C)

Sub-chapter 6.3.2 Guidance of sales operations

"Meidän tarjoaman pitää kohdata se mitä he ovat tarvitsemassa". (B)

"Vaikuttaa millä tavalla meidän kannattaa mennä sinne eri osastoihin tai sanotaan että tilanteeseen, jossa me ollaan jotain myymässä". (B)

"Se ohjaa sitä meidän argumentiontitapaa, jos me selkeemmin tunnistetaan mitkä on ne tärkeät asiat. Se näkyy argumentointipatterissa. Sillä vois suoda tietynlaista systematiikkaa, tiettyä, sen kyseisen asiakkaan ehdotuksen tai tarjouksen rakentamiseen". (C)

Sub-chapter 6.3.3 Relationship building

”Jos se ohjaa keskustelua uusille urille, niin se varmaan tuo sen asiakkaan ja myyjän keskustelun samalle aaltopituudelle…niin päästään paljon syvällisempään keskusteluun…”. (C)

Sub-chapter 6.3.4 Time management

”…Eikä tarvi turhaan tehdä semmosia, josta asiakas sanoo: ”tää on ihan hyvä, mutta en mä tarvi tämmöstä”, vaan tehdään kohdennettuja asioita”. (C)

Sub-chapter 6.3.5 Growing performance

”Syvällisempi taso synnyttää kauppoja…Myyjän hit-rate paranee ja myyntikäynnin tuloksellisuus. Ja sitähän myyjän pitäisi arvostaa.” (C)

Sub-chapter 6.4 Benefits to customers

”He näki, että lopputulema luo kuvan, jonka pohjalta on helppo keskustella mihin oikeastaan pitäisi panostaa. Hän näki sen positiivisena asiana ja koki myöskin sillä tavalla, että se kannattaisi viedä seuraavalle tasolle, elikkä hänen alaisilleen sinne operatiiviselle tasolle”. (C)

”*Se sano, että se on hyvä”* (B)

”He sanoivat, että erittäin lyhyt ja ytimekäs ja asianmukainen se kysymysrepertuaari...he alleviivasivat, että he juuri ajattelevat noin niistä asioista kuin se tulos antoi ja kuvasi. He pitivät erittäin asiallisena tätä kysymystä ja pitivät jopa, että tämä meidän NPS kysymys on täysin epätoivoinen asiakkaan vastata verrattuna tähän. He kokivat, että lopputulos kuvasi heidän arvomaailmaansa.” (D)

Sub-chapter 6.4.1 Information transmission

”Yhtälailla voi olla heillekin hyötyä siinä, että näkee minkälaisia eroja heillä siellä on”. (B)

”Ehkä tää voi auttaa asiakastakin viestimään paremmin meille mitä he oikeesti odottaa…se pakottaa asiakkaankin miettimään vähän…ja joskus mä luulen asiakkaallakin voi olla ongelma miten ne oikeesti kertoo meille mitä ne meiltä

odottaa. Silloin kun ei puhuta yksittäisestä casesta, vaan noin yleisesti ottaen, mitä ne odottaa laitetoimittajalta, järjestelmätoimittajalta, palvelutoimittajalta, minkälaisia asioita? Asiakkaalle voi olla joskus vaikea sanoa "en mä halua teiltä mitään suunnitelmaa, silloin kun mä tarviin ja mul on vika, niin mä pyydän teidät tänne". Ehkä se tossa kohtaan sit miettii ja osaa sit paremmin sen sanoa tai toisinpäin "mä haluaisin teiltä vähän niinku näkemystä tulevaan"." (C)

Sub-chapter 6.4.2 Improved customer service

"Tää auttaa konsultoivaan myyntiin, jossa silloin enemmän siirrytään ratkaisun löytämiseen, kuin siihen että me mekaanisesti tehdään johonkin tarjouskyselyyn tarjous ja sen jälkeen kilpaillaan teknisin ja kaupallisin ehdoin…Tää auttaa siinä räätälöimisessä. Ja sitten kun meillä on paljon palvelutuotteita, tuotteita on niin paljon, että jos lähetät jonkun ihmisen kertomaan niist tuotteista, kukaan ei jaksa kuunnella niitä kaikkia ja ymmärtämällä heille tärkeät asiat me voidaan miettiä mitkä ne ensimmäiset ja mistä meidän kannattaisi lähteä heille puhumaan." (A)

Sub-chapter 6.4.3 Relationship building

"Tää auttaa…öö…mä nään tän ehdottoman tärkeänä meidän olemassa olevien asiakkaiden asiakassuhteen hoidon takia. Tämä auttaa meitä tarkentamaan kaikilla tasoilla meidän toimintaamme, eli kun me haastatellaan eri tasoilla olevia ihmisiä, silloin me nähdään ne ongelmakohdat. Sillä tavalla me saadaan konkretiaa viedä asiakassuhdetta eteenpäin." (A)

Sub-chapter 6.4.4 Development of operations

"Yhtälailla voi olla heillekin hyötyä siinä, että näkee minkälaisia eroja heillä siellä on. Omalla tavallaan voivat johtaa siellä sitä omaa toimintaansa. Tässä asiakkaassa, niin heillä on vähän samanlainen konsepti meneillään niinku heidän omille asiakkailleen, niinku asiakaslähtöisyys ja, ja toisaalta ehkä jonkin verran kiinnostusta heillä on siinä minkälaista tulosta tämmösestä tulee mitä se antaa, ehkä he itsekin haluavat käyttää jotain vastaavaa." (B)