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MASTER THESIS

THE IMPACT OF SALES APPROACHES ON PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES IN GREEN-LABELLED CONSUMER ELECTRONICS BUSINESSES

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic. In the world where we live, for as long as humans have existed, we have been buying and selling. Keating (2019) also named this interaction between involved parties as trade. And as our products become more sophisticated, our sales systems evolve in tandem – this is a never-ending process. Furthermore, client preferences change over time at the same rate as the methods that businesses might approach them. As a result, organizations must understand not only their customers' needs but also how to effectively communicate with them. In other terms, the better the interaction, the faster you will be able to sell the product; the more you sell, the more profit you have. Although it is not as simple as it seems. Nowadays, corporations consider earnings to be just one factor in determining their success, not the only one. In addition to financial outcomes, operational and sustainability outcomes play an increasingly critical role in assessing organizational performance. The growing emphasis on these outcomes reflects a shift towards more sustainable and socially responsible business practices, recognizing that long-term success extends beyond purely financial performance. Moreover, one key sector illustrating this complexity is consumer electronics, a major driver of the economy, is deeply involved in innovation and research but is also one of the most environmentally damaging. According to the WHO (2023), electronic waste is the fastest-growing solid waste stream globally. In 2019, an estimated 53.6 million tonnes of e-waste were produced worldwide, yet only 17.4% was formally collected and recycled. In response to government, customer, industry demands, many electronics companies are increasingly focusing on becoming "greener" and ecologically aware. Moreover, eager to satisfy the needs of the new market segments, firms have allocated substantial resources to environmental management, social accountability, corporate citizenship, occupational health and safety. (Pedersen and Neergaard, 2006) According to Majeed et al. (2022), environmental concerns have become integral to a company's commitment to responsible and sustainable business practices. Consequently, modern corporations must balance profitability with sustainability and customer satisfaction to ensure long-term success.

The level of exploration of the topic and research gap. While there is substantial literature on the sales strategies, benefits of green labeling on consumer behavior and company performance, few studies have specifically examined the intersection of these areas within the consumer electronics industry. Most existing research tends to focus on either the effectiveness of various sales approaches in conventional business settings or the influence of green labeling on consumer preferences and brand loyalty. However, the unique dynamics of how tailored sales strategies affect performance outcomes in businesses that market green-labeled electronics remain

underexplored. This research gap presents an opportunity to investigate how specific sales approaches can be optimized to enhance performance metrics like financial returns, environmental outcomes and customer satisfaction in the green-labeled consumer electronics sector. Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights for both academia and industry, contributing to the development of more effective sales strategies that align with sustainability goals.

Novelty of the Master thesis. The novelty of the topic lies in its interdisciplinary focus, bridging sales strategies, environmental sustainability, and the consumer electronics industry. While green labeling and sustainable practices became popular since the 1990s and have been thoroughly studied, this research examines how specific sales approaches, influence the performance outcomes of companies committed to sustainability. By targeting the rapidly evolving consumer electronics sector, the study explores a range of performance metrics, including financial results, customer satisfaction, and environmental impact. Moreover, selected research method, the case study approach, is particularly suited for analyzing the intricate relationship between sales approaches and performance outcomes. This approach offers a unique perspective by allowing for an in-depth exploration within real-life contexts, capturing the complexity and nuances of how various sales strategies impact performance.

The research question of the Master thesis. How do different sales approaches affect the performance outcomes of businesses that prioritize environmental sustainability?

The aim of the Master thesis. To investigate the impact of various sales approaches on the performance outcomes of environmentally sustainable consumer electronics businesses.

The objectives of the Master thesis:

1. To analyze the theoretical concepts of sales approaches, performance outcomes, and green labeling, and to investigate their interrelationships.
2. To define environmentally-centered (green selling) and non-environmentally-centered sales approaches through a case study of selected green-labeled consumer electronics businesses.
3. To assess the impact of environmentally-centered and non-environmentally-centered sales approaches on performance outcomes in selected green-labeled consumer electronics businesses.

Object of research. To analyse and compare environmentally-centered and non-environmentally-centered sales approaches and their performance outcomes in green-labelled consumer electronics businesses operating within the European Union.

The methods deployed by the Master thesis. The scientific literature analysis method involved a systematic and comparative review of 58 academic articles. The research was conducted using various databases, including the Vilnius University Library Catalog, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, and Emerald Insight. Both forward and backward citation searches were employed, with the search parameters based on language (English), subject area (business and management), business sector (general and consumer electronics), publication period (primarily within the last 10 years), and type of literature (primarily academic articles and papers), without restrictions on geographic scope. Regarding the methodological and empirical parts, this master's thesis utilizes a comparative multiple-case study approach with embedded units of analysis to explore how different sales approaches impact the performance outcomes of environmentally sustainable consumer electronics businesses. The research aims to clarify the effects of sales approaches by examining two companies with green labeling certifications, representing broader trends and societal tendencies. The research uses the mix of qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis. Adhering to a constructivism philosophy, the methodology incorporates both inductive and deductive reasoning to facilitate generalizable conclusions. The research model indicates that green labeling certifications determine the adoption of both environmentally-focused and traditional sales approaches. These approaches, in turn, are predictors of various performance outcomes. This comprehensive method provides insights into how green certifications influence sales approaches and overall performance outcomes.

Work structure of the Master thesis. This master's thesis is a continuous work and consists of three main chapters: literature review, research methodology, and research results. The literature review is structured into four key sections, each addressing a component of Objective 1 of the master's thesis: theoretical analysis of sales approaches, an overview of performance outcomes, the concept of green labelling in consumer electronics industry, and the relationship between sales approaches and performance outcomes. The research methodology chapter focuses on the case study approach, and detailing data collection and analysis methods. Finally, the research results chapter fulfilling Objective 2 and Objective 3 by defining environmentally-centered (green selling) and non-environmentally-centered sales approaches as well as presenting

the findings assessing the impact of both types of sales approaches on performance outcomes, and highlighting the influence of green sales practices on business success.

Scientific and methodological challenges. Regarding the literature review, accessing articles and publications that were exclusively available through subscription or purchase was one of the main barriers. Moreover, this literature review composition was hampered by the articles' subjective evaluations and their level of comprehension. Another challenge involved the ambiguous definitions of key concepts such as sales approaches and performance outcomes, as these terms are often context dependent. For example, sales strategies are typically tailored to the unique needs of firms and shaped by factors such as corporate culture, technological advancements, and strategic priorities. Firms often define performance outcomes based on their specific goals, leading to variations in how these outcomes are measured and reported across different organizations. Additionally, discrepancies in green labeling within the consumer electronics sector create difficulties in comparing certifications, as each tends to prioritize distinct environmental criteria. Finally, the lack of empirical research linking specific sales approaches to company performance underscores the need for further investigation in this area. On the methodology and empirical research parts, challenges include ensuring the comparability of selected companies despite differences in their operational contexts and market environments and addressing potential biases in qualitative data collection. Methodologically, integrating and reconciling diverse data sources presents complexities that require careful management to maintain validity and reliability.

Key words: sales approaches, business performance, performance outcomes, consumer electronics, sustainability, green, eco-labelling, green labelling.

Research dissemination. Part of this work was included in a peer-reviewed abstract and presented at the 15th International Scientific Conference “Business and Management 2025” in the session of “Business Technologies and Sustainable Entrepreneurship”, held on May 15-16, 2025, at Vilnius Tech, Vilnius, Lithuania (https://vilniustech.lt/international-scientific-conference-business-and-management/agenda-2025/363885). The presentation, authored by Yeva Shchudlak (presenter), Aurelija Ulbinaitė and Yannick Le Moullec, was titled “Sales approaches and performance outcomes in green-labelled consumer electronics businesses”.

1. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF SALES APPROACHES AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

1.1. The concept of sales approaches in contemporary business

It is common knowledge that a company thrives by selling products or services for profit. In other words, sales as such play a crucial role in generating revenue and ensuring business success. In its essence, as Chi (2023) puts it, “sales is a process of serving and helping customers to give them what they want.” Chi (2023), with the reference to Comer (2005), provides another definition: "Selling is a process in which the seller discovers, creates and satisfies the needs or desires of the buyer to meet the satisfactory, long-term interests of both parties." In order to increase sales, businesses perform sales activities, which focus on selling products or services to customers outside the company via their sales force. Such activities are driven by specific tactics and detailed instructions for sales staff on how to approach and make contact with customers, ensuring that sales goals are met. (Chi, 2023) According to Keating (2019), sales systems generally carry out certain functions to enable the transfer of ownership from seller to buyer, regardless of the type of transaction - a corporation buying machinery or an individual buying a laptop online. (Keating, 2019). In support of this argument, Chi (2023) stated that the primary function of sales is to transfer goods from companies to customers, fulfilling their needs. As a result, different sales approaches are utilized based on the purpose and effectiveness of the circulation process.

1.1.1. An overview of sales forms

Sales can be categorized into different forms depending on the method of selling and the nature of the transaction. Direct selling, according to Ridgway et. al. (1989) is defined as “personal contact between a salesperson and a consumer away from a fixed business location such as a retail store.” In other words, direct sales involve selling products directly to consumers without intermediaries, such as through company-owned stores, online platforms, or sales representatives. According to the DSA (2024), direct selling is a retail approach used to market a wide range of products directly to consumers, allowing entrepreneurial individuals to build businesses with minimal start-up costs. Unlike traditional retail, direct selling emphasizes personal relationships and face-to-face interactions, offering flexibility and work-life balance for part-time consultants who may also build their own networks of sellers. (DSA, 2024) Moreover, Ridgway et. al. (1989) mentioned that major modes of direct selling, including individual sales interactions conducted in a consumer’s home or workplace, as well as sales parties held at a consumer’s home, workplace, church, or other venues.

Another form, indirect sales, on the other hand, involve selling products through intermediaries such as wholesalers, distributors, or retailers. The business relies on these partners to reach the end consumer. (Anderson and Narus, 1990) Despite the fact that this way adds sufficient value, in the research done by Chennamaneni et. al. (2017) it was stated that "an intermediary can influence profits positively (by filling more capacity and/or increasing average price) and the service provider may prefer the indirect channel over selling directly to consumers." However, the analysis also showed that the profitability of indirect sales depends on when the intermediary sells the product, that is whether the intermediary fills capacity in the advance period or the spot period. (Chennamaneni et. al., 2017)

Another type, online sales which involve selling products through e-commerce platforms, either directly through a company's website or via third-party marketplaces. (Turban et. al., 2015) According to Xianghua and Xia (2014), direct online sales occur when consumers are drawn to a seller's webpage through a specific advertisement and purchase the advertised product directly from the landing page. In contrast, indirect online sales occur when consumers are drawn to a seller's site by an advertisement for a specific product but ultimately purchase other related products instead of the advertised item. (Xianghua and Xia, 2014) Here we observe the following phenomenon: when consumers purchase main products, they often need accompanying accessories and tend to buy them together. As a result, the direct sales of main products are likely to generate indirect sales of accessory items. Conversely, direct sales of accessory products are less likely to lead to indirect sales of the main products. (Xianghua and Xia, 2014) Online sales also utilize social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, or Pinterest, which involve user-generated content such as text, images, audio, and videos delivered through Web 2.0 tools and platforms. (Turban et. al., 2015)

In addition, a hybrid sales form is one that incorporates direct and indirect sales techniques together and/or combines both offline and online strategies. (Chennamaneni et. al., 2017) For instance, established companies in various major industries have adapted to the growing significance of Internet sales by introducing virtual stores as a direct distribution channel, in addition to their existing indirect retail channels. (Seifert et. al., 2006) Generally, with this type we can determine the situations when the advantages of utilizing an intermediary can outweigh the drawbacks of additional expenses resulting from various markups. (Chennamaneni et. al., 2017) From a supply chain perspective, combining direct and indirect sales channels is appealing because it offers the potential for substantial profit increases, reduced inventory levels, and enhanced customer service (Seifert et al., 2006, referencing Seifert, 2000).

Sales can be further divided into retail, which sells goods and services to individual consumers for personal use, and wholesale, which caters to the needs of business or institutional customers. (Chi, 2023) According to Turban et al. (2015), a retailer acts as an intermediary between manufacturers and consumers. Another definition comes from Levy and Weitz (2012), that retail sales occur through physical stores or factory outlets, where individual consumers can see and interact with the products before purchasing. One of the primary advantages of retailers is their ability to reach a broad and geographically dispersed customer base. (Turban et al., 2015) Sales promotion is a critical component in retail, serving to generate incentives that drive consumer purchasing behavior. It often involves personal interactions that significantly influence the final decision-making process. (Levy and Weitz, 2012) On the other side, wholesale sales encompass bulk transactions primarily conducted between businesses or non-end-user entities, facilitating cost efficiencies and the expansion of distribution networks (Nakamura, 2008).

In general, sales and purchases can occur either between businesses and individual consumers (B2C) or between businesses (B2B), such as when a company sells products to another company for resale or use in its operations. However, there are other forms such as business-to-business-to-consumer (B2B2C), consumer-to-business (C2B), Business-to-Employees (B2E), etc. (Turban et. al., 2015) B2B sales are generally more complex, involve multiple players, and take longer than B2C sales, often generating larger revenues and focusing on long-term relationships rather than one-time purchases. A major difference between B2B and B2C sales lies in their approach to buyers: while B2C sales focus on branding, pricing, and establishing an emotional bond with customers, B2B sales are more focused on logistics, negotiation, and the relationship between the buyer and seller. (Turban et. al., 2015)

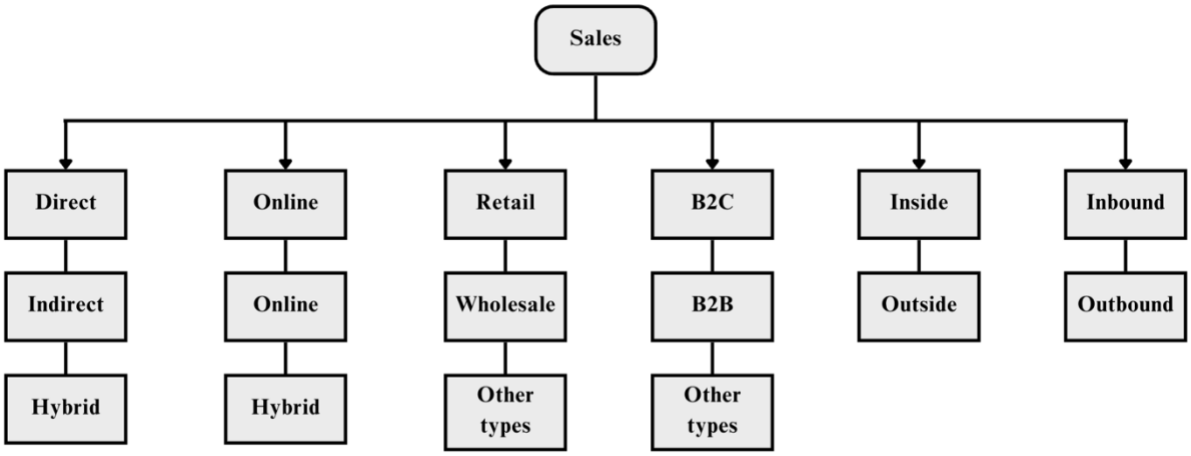
Sleep et. al. (2020) investigated another sales type known as inside sales, where sales representatives operate from an office and typically engage with potential customers through phone calls or emails. In contrast, outside sales involve representatives who work away from the office, meeting potential clients in person. Sleep et. al. (2020) referencing Krogue (2013), stated that “inside sales are professional sales conducted remotely, while outside sales are accomplished primarily face-to-face.” Inside sales offer significant financial benefits, with research indicating that firms can achieve a 40-90% cost reduction compared to using outside sales form. (Sleep et. al., 2020 with the reference to Zoltners et al., 2013). Nevertheless, outside sales are often more complex and require strategic management, thereby attaching significant importance for enterprises for the development and maintaining reliable relations with customers. (Sleep et. al., 2020)

Lastly, as stated in the article of Syihab et. al. (2023), inbound sales centers on interacting with and engaging potential customers who have already expressed interest in a product or service. This interest is often indicated by inquiries, website visits, or interactions with marketing content. Inbound sales representatives focus on understanding these potential customers' needs and preferences, offering tailored assistance and information to guide them toward making informed decisions. (Syihab et. al., 2023) As a result, inbound sales strategies build trust, enhance brand value, and increase business opportunities by influencing customer perceptions. This approach also accelerates the sales process, leading to more closed deals. (Syihab et. al., 2023) Outbound sales, involves proactively reaching out to potential customers who have not yet expressed interest. This approach requires sales representatives to initiate contact through methods such as cold calling, email campaigns, or targeted advertisements. As Syihab et. al. (2023) demonstrated, outbound sales strategies often demand greater persuasion and convincing efforts, as the recipients may not be actively looking for the product or service being offered. Additionally, various tools and technologies play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of outbound sales efforts. (Syihab et. al., 2023)

In addition, Figure 1 summarizes the types of the sales discussed above.

Figure 1

Sales forms



Source: compiled by the author and based on Anderson and Narus (1990), Chennamaneni et. al. (2017), Chi (2023), DSA (2024), Levy and Weitz (2012), Nakamura (2008), Ridgway et. al. (1989), Seifert et. al. (2006), Sleep et. al. (2020), Syihab et. al. (2023), Turban et. al. (2015), and Xianghua and Xia (2014).

1.1.2. Classification of sales approaches and their characteristics

More specifically, with regards to the sales approaches, Wood et. al. (2014) propose that personal selling efforts can be categorized into three broad categories: product-based, solution-based and provocation-based. The product-based sales approaches include face-to-face interactions and demonstrations of features, functionality, and warranties in a generic manner. Because of the emphasis on quick information sharing, the authors make it clear that this strategy is not ideal for businesses with a broad client base and a wide range of products. (Wood et. al., 2014) However, Giacobbe et al. (2006) noted, citing Jolson (1973, 1975), that in some situations, certain sellers prefer these "canned" presentations that concentrate on the product features, and they might even be more successful than other selling approaches. In addition, salespeople should be aware that in any sales scenario, the characteristics and benefits of a product or service must be presented properly. Failure to do so will hinder the relationship and prevent the sale from progressing. (Wood et. al., 2014) An alternative strategy is the solution-based approach, which asks customers questions and strives to identify their present concerns. Finding a business issue that the salesperson's product or service can address is the aim of this strategy. This approach is especially useful for giving the buyer the idea that the salesperson is listening, putting effort and knowledge into resolving the customer's issues. (Wood et. al., 2014) Finally, provocation-based sales techniques give clients a fresh perspective on competitive obstacles and emphasize the urgency of solving unpleasant issues. When discussing this method, Wood et. al. (2014) cited Lay et. al. (2009) and stated that salespeople using this strategy focus on strategic problems and identify problems that clients may not even be aware of but are willing to address once they do. However, authors mention the risk of implementing this approach as it increases conflict and decreases perceptions of trustworthiness. (Wood et. al., 2014)

Oemig (2014) described the Conceptual Selling approach created by Miller Heiman, a leading company in sales performance. This approach is designed for individual sales sessions and aims to uncover the customer's underlying needs and objectives before presenting a specific product or service. The method emphasizes active listening over speaking and requires understanding the customer's reasons for buying and identifying key buying influencers. (Oemig, 2014) A sales session in Conceptual Selling involves three main components: "Getting information" (using a framework of questioning types to understand the customer’s concept), "Giving information" (linking the product to the customer’s needs), and "Getting commitment" (securing customer agreement and ensuring a mutually beneficial outcome). The Green Sheet tool aids in preparing and structuring these sessions effectively. (Oemig, 2014)

The SPIN Selling approach, developed by Neil Rackham, is a well-established sales methodology that focuses on enhancing the effectiveness of sales interactions through a structured questioning process. (Rackham, 2016) SPIN is an acronym representing four types of questions designed to uncover and address customer needs: situation, problem, implication, need-payoff questions. The SPIN Selling approach emphasizes the importance of a consultative and problem-solving attitude in sales, where the salesperson's role is to facilitate the customer's realization of their needs and the value of the proposed solution. (Rackham, 2016)

Moreover, Giacobbe et. al. (2006), with regards to Weitz and colleagues, thoroughly described the Adaptive Selling Behavior (ASB) approach which involves adjusting sales behaviors based on the specifics of the selling situation, particular type of customer, and feedback received. Spiro and Weitz (1990) with the reference to Weitz et. al. (1986) defined the practice of adaptive selling as "altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation." According to Spiro and Weitz (1990), the five facets of adaptive selling include recognizing the need for varied sales approaches for different customers, having confidence in using and modifying these approaches, collecting relevant information for adaptation, and effectively implementing diverse strategies based on the context. As mentioned previously, this approach involves modifying selling strategies, tactics, social style, communication, and appearance based on the seller's perception of the customer or situation, and this enhances the buyer's likelihood of making a purchase. According to this notion, increased flexibility among salespeople should improve sales success. (Giacobbe et. al., 2006) However, this association ignores the added expenses and effort involved with adaptive selling. Thus, sales performance depends on the trade-off between the benefits of tailored presentations and the higher associated costs and time, which can vary from positive to negative depending on the situation. (Giacobbe et. al., 2006) Regardless, this particular sales approach is especially useful where needs are highly variable, the buying unit and offerings are complex, and each customer affords significant long-term profit potential.

Peattie and Crane (2005) critique the "green selling" approach, where environmental features are retrospectively identified and communicated to customers in existing products, often as a short-term tactic to capitalize on consumer environmental concerns. This approach is typically sales-oriented, with environmental considerations confined to promotional activities rather than influencing product development. In this approach, green, eco-friendly, or sustainable packaging is crucial, as it significantly influences consumer perception and decision-making at the initial point of product evaluation. (Majeed et. al., 2022) In other words, the same products are produced, but green themes are superficially added to marketing campaigns to appeal to eco-conscious

consumers. (Peattie and Crane, 2005) Marketing managers may search for any aspect of their products that could be marketed as environmentally beneficial, or at least less harmful. This practice in the early 1990s led to the widespread use of vague and unsubstantiated green claims, which contributed to a rise in consumer skepticism and concerns about greenwashing. (Peattie and Crane, 2005) Peattie and Crane (2005) also highlighted that the reluctance to transition from a purely sales-driven approach to a more integrated marketing strategy has caused many businesses to regard "green" initiatives as ineffective, despite the real environmental benefits their products may provide. However, Mukonza and Swarts (2019) stated that if the green marketing strategy is implemented honestly, it contributes to the firms' profitability and competitive advantage and encourages a greener pattern of consumption among consumers.

Figure 2 below provides a summary of the sales approaches discussed in this section, including an analysis of their respective advantages and disadvantages when implemented within a firm. It is important to note, however, that this list is not exhaustive. Due to the extensive range of sales approaches defined within various industries, it is challenging to account for all of them comprehensively.

Figure 2

Sales approaches

Sales approach	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
Product-based	Face-to-face interactions and demonstrations of features, functionality, and warranties in a generic manner.	• Clear value proposition • Enhanced differentiation • Customer education	• Lack of customization • Limited customer engagement
Solution-based	Asks customers questions and strives to identify their present concerns.	• Enhanced problem-solving • Increased customer satisfaction	• Higher costs • Time-consuming • Increased complexity
Provocation-based	A fresh perspective on competitive obstacles and emphasize the urgency of solving unpleasant issues.	• Insightful dialogue • Reveals hidden needs	• Potential for negative reactions, or conflict • Risk of alienation:
Conceptual Selling	Uncovers the customer's underlying needs and objectives before presenting a specific product or service.	• Customized solutions • Higher efficiency rate • Builds strong relationships	• Lengthy sales cycle • Investment in research • Complexity in execution
SPIN Selling	Structured questioning designed to uncover and address customer needs: situation, problem, implication, need-payoff.	• Deep understanding of needs • Enhanced problem-solving • Structured sales process	• Time-consuming • Advanced skills needed
Adaptive Selling Behavior (ASB)	Adjusts sales behaviors based on the specifics of the selling situation, particular type of customer, and feedback.	• Increased flexibility among salespeople • Increased customer satisfaction • Increased sales effectiveness	• Higher resource demands • Increased complexity • Higher costs
Green Selling	Environmental features are retrospectively identified and communicated to customers in existing products.	• Enhanced differentiation • Increased consumer trust and loyalty • Compliance with regulations	• Complex messaging • Higher costs • Limited market appeal

Source: compiled by the author and based on Giacobbe et. al. (2006), Oemig (2014), Peattie and Crane (2005), Rackham (2016), Spiro and Weitz (1990), Wood et. al. (2014)

1.1.3. The role of the salesforce in implementing sales approaches

The role of salespeople in the use of sales approaches is another important aspect to consider. Chi (2023) claimed that the salesperson, despite having different titles, is someone who interacts with consumers and is directly accountable for selling company's products or services. Such employees are responsible for proactively searching, discovering, consulting, stimulating, and addressing customer needs. The sales team is critical to the organization's success since they are heavily involved in the sales process, including approaching, product presentation, addressing objections, closing, and follow-up steps. (Chi, 2023) Keating (2019) also identified, that when it comes to higher-value products, such as consumer electronics products, salespeople is that layer of personnel whose sole responsibility is to facilitate additional sales contracts and convince potential consumers to become actual customers. According to Wood et. al. (2014), with reference to Ramsey and Sohi (1997), consumers' impressions of salespeople's interpersonal behaviors have a significant impact on relationship outcomes like satisfaction and intentions for further encounters. The importance of first impressions was also emphasized by Giacobbe et. al. (2006), because the focus is primarily on the salesperson, his specific abilities and behaviors during the sales interaction, as well as the nature of the sales situation and sales strategy. According to the authors, relationship development for salespeople involves striking a balance between maximizing positive interactions, like trustworthiness evaluations, and reducing bad ones, like disagreement. (Wood et. al., 2014) On the other hand, with regards to multiple references, Bocconcelli et al. (2017) stated that "salespeople should be able to increase the proximity to the customer and develop an interactive communication with the customer and this is determined by different perceptions regarding both customer information technology expectations and relationship-building performance."

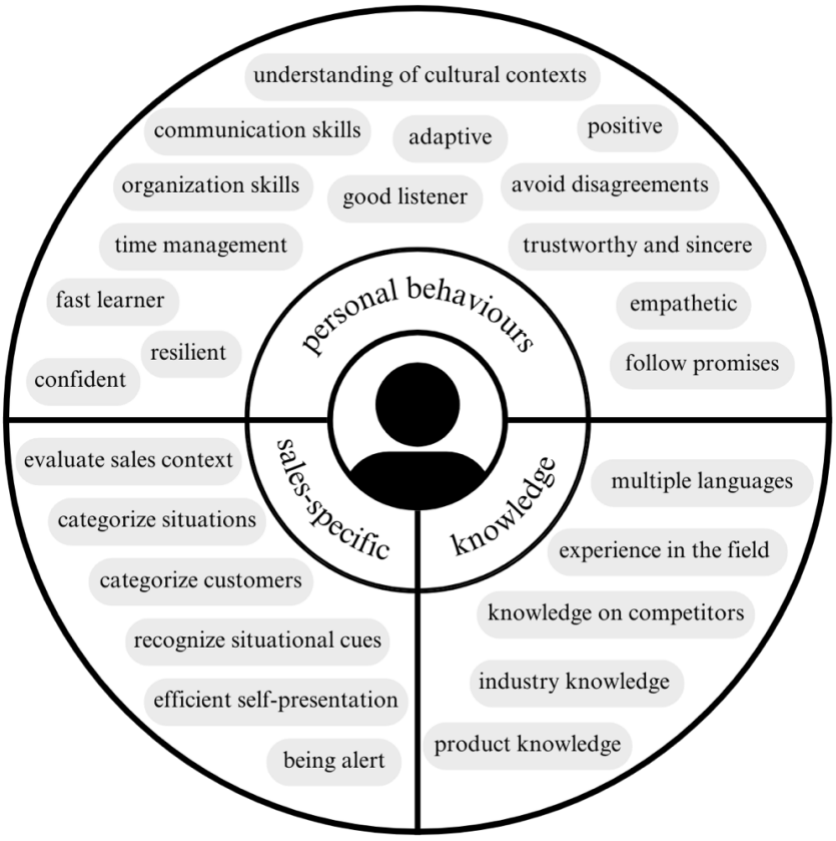
According to Bocconcelli et al. (2017), to communicate productively, salespeople must embrace particular behaviors and skills in addition to making efficient use of various languages and cultural contexts to attain certain business outcomes. It is occasionally necessary for sales representatives to be available to answer consumer inquiries around-the-clock, meaning that they have to be alert at all times. (Bocconcelli et al., 2017) Giacobbe et al. (2006) assert that successful sales require empathy, with salespeople adopting their customers' perspectives to genuinely understand and care about their needs. By psychologically and emotionally placing themselves in the customers' position, sellers gain unique insights and gain buyers' trust, allowing them to better appreciate customer needs and tailor their sales presentations accordingly. (Giacobbe et al., 2006) According to Giacobbe et al. (2006), during the process, sellers should be able to recognize relevant situational cues, both verbal and nonverbal, adapt how they present themselves, and

generally seem more sincere to the client. In relation to the salespeople primary function, they must thoroughly understand the product to effectively communicate its value to customers. (Chi, 2023) Furthermore, the key to modern selling is that salespeople need to be strategic experts who not only have a deep understanding of their own goods and benefits but also of the industries their customers operate in and the crucial problems these companies face. (Wood et. al., 2014, referring to Dandridge, 2009). Salespeople must be great organizers and administrators, dedicating time to enhancing task-specific behaviors, such as time management, expanding product and competitor knowledge, planning sales call sequences, adhering to schedules, and consistently following through on promises. (Noonan, 1998; Giacobbe et al., 2006) Likewise, Chi (2023) and Noonan (1998) highlighted the key skills for the sales staff, including communication, sense of leadership, team-work, persuasion, planning, and customer service. Giacobbe et al. (2006) emphasized that salespeople must continually learn from the results of different selling approaches used in various contexts. This ongoing learning improves their efficiency and effectiveness in adaptation, as their ability to categorize customers and situations, understand sales context, and enhance sales presentations improves as their procedural knowledge grows. (Giacobbe et al., 2006) Furthermore, Wood et. al. (2014), referring to Meyers-Levy and Maheswaran (1991) also emphasized that in today's environment, salespeople cannot continue to rely on status quo sales tactics since emerging purchasers will judge them differently.

The Figure 3 presented below summarizes salespeople traits that collectively contribute to their ability to efficiently build relationships, understand customer needs, and ultimately close sales successfully.

Figure 3

Skills and traits of effective salespeople



Source: compiled by the author and based on Bocconcelli et. al. (2017), Chi (2023), Giacobbe et. al. (2006), Wood et. al. (2014)

To sum up, in this part of literature review emphasizes the pivotal role of sales in achieving business success, examining a range of sales methodologies. Sales activities encompass various forms, including direct, indirect, online, hybrid, retail, wholesale, business-to-business (B2B), business-to-consumer (B2C), inside, outside, inbound, and outbound selling. Each method serves to facilitate the transfer of products from sellers to buyers. Different sales approaches are characterized by their focus: product-based methods concentrate on product attributes, solution-based methods aim to resolve customer issues, and provocation-based methods address competitive challenges. The Conceptual Selling approach prioritizes understanding customer needs before presenting solutions, whereas SPIN Selling employs a structured questioning framework to uncover customer requirements. Adaptive Selling Behavior involves tailoring sales tactics according to the specifics of the customer and the situation. The review also critiques the green selling approach, noting its tendency to serve as a superficial marketing strategy. Additionally, the review underscores the importance of a skilled salesforce, highlighting the necessity for strong communication, empathy, and strategic planning skills to effectively engage

customers and achieve business objectives. Continuous learning and adaptation are identified as essential for sustaining sales effectiveness in a dynamic market environment. The main challenge for this section was that the list for sales approaches is not exhaustive, as they vary across different industries, which makes it difficult to capture all approaches comprehensively. Moreover, sales approaches are often tailored to the specific needs, market dynamics, and competitive environments of individual organizations, leading to a continuous evolution of new techniques and adaptations. Additionally, internal factors such as corporate culture, technological advancements, and customer behavior further influence the development of unique sales approaches, making it difficult to develop a framework that is universally applicable.

1.2. An overview of performance outcomes

Taherdangkoo et. al. (2017), referring to Walker and Ruekert (1987), defined performance as “a multi-functional concept and includes effectiveness and being affected and compatibility dimensions.” Loch et al. (1996) defined a firm’s business performance as its ability to succeed in the market, serving as an overall indicator of the firm's success. Performance outcomes refer to the measurable results or impacts of various actions, strategies, or interventions within an organization or sector. (Majeed et. al., 2022) Loch et al. (1996) highlighted that despite the increasing importance of measuring firm’s performance, there is no single, universally accepted set of performance measures. Hu and Shieh (2015) stated that in practice, organizations predominantly focus on financial metrics, as profitability is central to sustainable operations. Consequently, finacial indicators are frequently utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of corporate management, reflecting the ultmate goal of profit maximization. However, Majeed et al. (2022) noted that "customers see businesses as more than just profit seekers, they see them as organizations that are concerned about the well-being of their societies." As a result, they question the adequacy of relying on a single performance indicator, such as financial metrics.

Hu and Shieh (2015) then added that performance can be assessed using both financial and non-financial indicators. Financial indicators include metrics such as return on assets (ROA), return on sales (ROS), return on equity (ROE), sales growth rate, return on investment (ROI), gross profit rate, cash flow rate, earnings per share, earnings growth rate, net marginal profit, overall competitive status, and general earning power. (Hu and Shieh, 2015) Supporting this definition, Hasan and Ali (2015) noted that financial performance indicates a firm’s business performance in terms of return on investment (ROI), internal rate of return and market share.

Non-financial, or operational, performance is evaluated through indices like market share, customer satisfaction, new product release or reaching rate of strategic objective, employee

productivity, R&D of product process, new product introductions, production quality, and value-added creation. (Hasan and Ali, 2015) It is also referred to as intangible performance, which denotes aspects of performance that are not easily quantified or justified; this includes elements such as corporate image as perceived by the public and customer satisfaction. (Foo et. al., 2021 with reference to multiple authors) On the other side, Bourne et al. (2013), along with multiple co-authors, defined a firm's performance in terms of several key dimensions: operational performance (including factors such as design, flexibility, delivery, cost efficiency, workforce productivity, error rates, and inventory turnover), customer performance, market performance, and financial outcomes. Chavez et al. (2016) also identified key performance outcomes, including operational performance - encompassing dimensions such as flexibility, delivery, quality, cost; and customer satisfaction, with particular emphasis on product quality and delivery performance. In this case, operational performance is used an indicator of a firms' performance whether the firms utilize its resources effectively in order to achieve objectives. (Hasan and Ali, 2015)

In the view of Hasan and Ali (2015), with reference to multiple authors mentioned that to measure overall performance, organizational performance (aspects that relate to the improvement of process or method efficiency such as product quality), environmental performance, economic performance (financial returns, market share, and sales growth) and intangible performance (or marketing performance) were taken into account. Mukonza and Swarts (2019) argued that firms' performance is simply based on the economic performance (their financial returns, market share, and sales growth) and operational performance. Rehman et. al. (2016) in their research highlighted operational performance, environmental (or green), market (or competitive advantage) and financial. On the other hand, Richard et al. (2009) defined organizational performance as comprising three key dimensions of firm outcomes: (a) financial performance, such as profits, return on assets, and return on investment; (b) performance in the product market, including sales and market share; and (c) shareholder returns, such as total shareholder return and economic value added. Therefore, all these metrics collectively gauge technical efficiency and strategic achievement. (Hu and Shieh, 2015)

More specifically, market performance refers to the results of investment, high rate of customers, growth of returns on sales, market share in the target export markets, whereas financial performance refers to the financial results, benefits and costs in the performance of investment market with regard to the investment returns. (Taherdangkoo et. al., 2017 citing Morgan et al., 2004) Additionally, when it comes to the new product development, performance can be evaluated through various metrics, including market performance, financial indicators, customer acceptance,

product-specific measures, and timing factors. (Hasan and Ali, 2015 referring to Ledwith and O'Dwyer, 2009)

Although there are many metrics for measuring efficiency-related performance in a company, Sodhi and Lee (2006) suggested to look into risk exposure and risk performance. Loch et al. (1996) outlined another performance measure called R&D performance, which considers factors such as engineering productivity, time to market, total product quality, R&D return (profits from R&D over investment), R&D productivity (internal capabilities), R&D yield (external profit potential from innovations).

Environmental performance metrics, which emphasize on low-cost operations, reducing energy consumption, and utilizing recycling processes to help preserve and protect the environment. (Hasan and Ali, 2015; referring to Molla, 2013) Furthermore, environmental performance refers to a firm's ability to reduce material usage and decrease hazardous and toxic materials by implementing internal and external green initiatives on the natural environment. (Foo et. al., 2021 with reference to multiple authors) Corona et. al (2019) identified environmental performance indicators, including greenhouse gases emissions, energy consumption, water consumption, waste generation, use of renewable resources, recycling rates and pollution control.

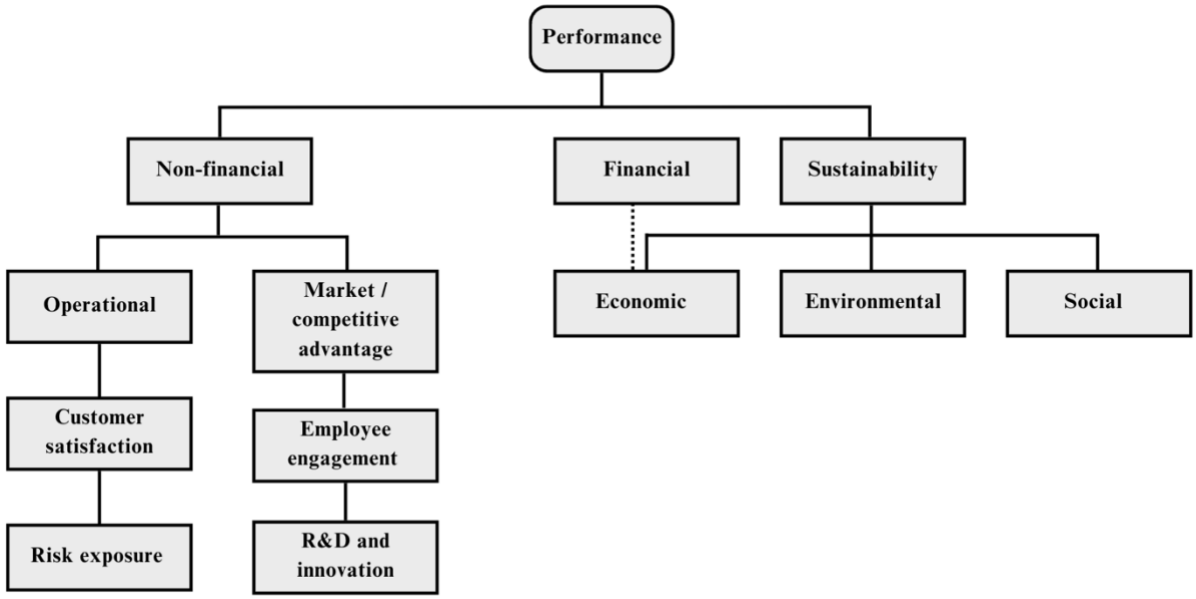
However, Mirčetić et al. (2022) emphasized that sustainable organizations should prioritize both financial and environmental performance. However, Imbrogiano (2023), drawing on multiple sources, elaborated that the concept of sustainability performance in business encompasses the wider social and environmental impacts and outcomes of corporate activities, extending beyond a sole focus on economic outcomes. For clarification, economic performance refers to the manufacturing firms' ability to reduce the costs related to the purchase of materials, energy consumption, waste treatment, and discharge, increase profitability and sales, market share and productivity. (Foo et. al., 2021 with reference to multiple authors) On the whole, Foo et. al. (2021), with the reference to De Giovanni (2010) stated the triple bottom line performance, that is the environmental, social, economic performance and competitive advantage. Also, Gadenne et al. (2012) focused on sustainability by examining triple bottom line performance outcomes, which include environmental performance, employee value performance, social responsibility performance, and financial performance. Nonetheless, sustainability performance in business organizations remains a relatively overlooked area of research. (Imbrogiano, 2023, citing Imbrogiano & Nichols, 2021)

Figure 4 below provides an overview of the performance outcomes discussed in this literature review. These outcomes are primarily categorized into three main groups: non-financial

performance, financial performance, and sustainability. However, due to the similarities between financial and economic performance outcomes, this study treats them as equivalent.

Figure 4

Performance outcomes



Source: compiled by the author and based on Bourne et. al. (2013), Chavez et. al. (2016), Foo et. al. (2021), Gadenne et. al. (2012), Hasan and Ali (2015), Hu and Shieh (2015), Loch et. al. (1996), Majeed et. al. (2022), Mirčetić et. al. (2022), Mukonza and Swarts (2019), Rehman et. al. (2016), Richard et. al. (2009), Sodhi and Lee (2006), and Taherdangkoo et. al. (2017).

In conclusion, this section examines the various definitions and dimensions of performance outcomes, categorizing them into three primary groups: financial, non-financial, and sustainability performance. Non-financial performance encompasses operational, customer, employee engagement, market, risk exposure, and R&D performance. Sustainability performance includes environmental, social, and economic dimensions, yet remains a relatively underexplored topic in academic research. Due to the overlap between economic and financial aspects of organizational performance, this study treats them as equivalent. A significant challenge highlighted in the literature is the absence of a standardized framework for categorizing performance outcomes, as firms often define these outcomes based on their specific strategic priorities and industry contexts. This variability leads to inconsistencies in how performance is measured and reported. Furthermore, when selecting particular performance outcomes, such as financial metrics, there is a lack of clear guidelines or universally accepted criteria regarding which specific indicators should be included. This ambiguity complicates cross-industry comparisons and benchmarking,

as firms may prioritize different metrics depending on their operational focus, market conditions, and long-term objectives. The absence of a cohesive framework thus poses difficulties in achieving consistency, reliability, and transparency in performance evaluation.

1.3. The concept of green labeling in consumer electronics industry

Nowadays, firms are facing growing pressure to become greener, that is to reduce their negative impact on the environment. This responsibility, along with adherence to sustainable development goals, is now recognized as part of a company's broader "corporate social responsibility". (Ambec and Lanoie, 2008) Nonetheless, companies seem to find benefits with the improved environmental performance through greener products or services. Not only it enables companies to differentiate themselves by targeting environmentally conscious market segments, but firms can enhance their company's image and product's value, boost customer loyalty, and facilitate market access. (Ambec and Lanoie, 2008; D'Souza et. al., 2006; Majeed et. al., 2022) Moreover, D'Souza et al. (2006), building on Forte and Lamont (1998), suggested that adopting environmentally friendly practices is beneficial for businesses, as this approach tends to enhance profitability, and boost employee motivation and commitment. Referring to multiple sources, Pedersen and Neergaard (2006) mentioned that companies use eco-labels to legitimize their practices, shield themselves from regulatory scrutiny, and gain a competitive edge. According to authors, it can also improve relationships with external stakeholders, such as governments and ecological groups, reducing risks risk associated with these relations and potentially offering a strategic advantage by anticipating future regulations. (Ambec and Lanoie, 2008; Majeed et. al., 2022) Overall, improved environmental performance is often linked to better economic outcomes. However, with that being said, the market share of eco-labelled products remains relatively small. (Kopnina et. al., 2023)

Consumers are key drivers of environmental awareness through their purchasing decisions for eco-friendly products, considering both functional benefits and perceived social and environmental advantages. Majeed et al. (2022) emphasized that "green" advertising is widely considered an effective marketing strategy due to its strong association with environmental preservation, and it can be effectively utilized in promoting services, products, and business concepts. Osuagwu (2023) outlines strategies to mitigate the environmental impact of marketing practices by incorporating sustainable approaches into traditional marketing activities. These include environmentally conscious product design, production, packaging, labeling, promotion, distribution, and the consumption of goods and services that contribute positively to environmental well-being. (Stern and Ander, 2012) As a result, "green", "eco", "ecological", "biological",

“environmental”, “sustainable” labeling emerged to meet the growing consumer demand for sustainable products. (D'Souza et al., 2006; Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017; Kopnina et. al., 2023) In addition, Stern and Ander (2012) believe that products are considered green in many ways when described using terms such as “organic”, “natural” (comprising organic and/or non-toxic ingredients), “local”, “ethically sourced” (linked to fair trade), “environmentally friendly” (made with minimum or recycled packaging and low ecological impact), “minimal waste” (reusable), “carbon offset” (the product’s negative impact has been offset with credits) and “nontoxic materials” (natural or Earth friendly).

According to Guo et al. (2019), environmental labels are applied to products that adhere to specific environmental standards, typically indicated by a graphic affixed on the product’s packaging. These eco-labels, which often feature environmentally friendly signs, codes, symbols, messages or other publicly visible marks of quality, authenticity, and responsibility aim not only to inform customers about the product's safety attributes but also to help companies position themselves as environmentally responsible. (D'Souza et al., 2006) Additionally, Ambec and Lanoie (2008) mention that “eco-labeling can make information about the environmental features of a product or service more credible.” Pedersen and Neergaard (2006) wrote that for consumers, these labels help mitigate uncertainty regarding a product’s environmental impact and facilitate the selection of environmentally friendly options. Hence, environmental labeling is an effective method for conveying specific benefits and safety claims of products to customers at a critical decision-making stage. With that in mind, D'Souza et al. (2006) and Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017), referring to Chase and Smith (1992) claimed that 70 percent of respondents’ purchase decisions were at least sometimes influenced by environmental messages in advertising and product labeling. This is because when consumers compare similar products, eco-labels serve as an effective decision-making tool by verifying that a product has met comprehensive environmental performance criteria and various assessments. (Kopnina et. al., 2023)

Furthermore, according to D'Souza et al. (2006) with regards to (Iyer, 1999), in some instances, consumers lack awareness about environmental safety regulations and the standards that allow businesses to use specific labels on their products. For example, Peattie and Crane (2005) with reference to DEPA (2001) note that even in environmentally conscious countries like Denmark, consumer awareness of eco-labels is low, with only 16% of the population recognizing the EU Flower eco-label. This gap in understanding may contribute to general confusion regarding product safety claims, making it difficult to forecast product environmental quality. (D'Souza et al., 2006; Majeed et. al., 2022; Peattie and Crane, 2005) Additionally, Peattie and Crane (2005)

stress that this low recognition is compounded by widespread mistrust of green claims, leading many companies to avoid making such claims altogether to prevent alienating their customers.

European Commission (2024) and Osuagwu (2023) also highlight the issue of greenwashing, where consumers may be misled by companies that provide a false impression of their environmental impact or benefits. Stern and Ander (2012) define greenwashing as "the act of misleading consumers about an organization's environmentally friendly practices, products or services." According to the estimates, 53% of green claims are vague, misleading, or unfounded, 40% lack supporting evidence, and half of all green labels have weak or non-existent verification. (European Commission, 2024) Afterall, Pedersen and Neergaard (2006) stated that in the worst-case scenario, "greenwashing might erode the overall credibility of environmental labelling and make it impossible for well intentioned companies to promote environmentally friendly products." In addition, Kopnina et al. (2023) stated that, without the integration of more conventional marketing practices, there is a risk that potential new markets for green products may not be developed to the full extent.

Even though the central purpose of environmental labeling is to assist customers to make informed product choices, some research indicate that they often struggle to comprehend the information presented on product labels and may not even fully trust the details provided. (D'Souza et al., 2006) On the other hand, Stern and Ander (2012) emphasize that consumers are perceptive and likely to notice inconsistencies, particularly when marketing messages do not align with the actual customer experience. Therefore, Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017), referencing Cho (2015), suggest that combating greenwashing requires providing consumers with clear and accurate information at the point of purchase to foster environmentally conscious behavior. Eliminating vague and misleading claims can enhance the effectiveness of eco-labels, making them a valuable tool for attracting consumers who prioritize trust and reliability in their purchasing decisions. (Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017 citing Testa et al., 2015) In fact, from the consumers' side, Stern and Ander (2012) note that in response to growing concerns about deceptive environmental marketing, web-based watchdog initiatives such as Enviromedia have emerged to hold companies accountable. Enviromedia created the Greenwashing Index - an interactive platform that enables consumers to submit and assess advertisements based on predefined greenwashing criteria.

Considering all the aforementioned points, eco-labeling has indeed gained significant popularity, particularly in Europe. (Ambec and Lanoie, 2008; Majeed et. al., 2022) For example, the largest number of EU Ecolabel licences has been awarded in France, Italy, and Germany. (Kopnina et. al., 2023) Nevertheless, many manufacturers create their own labels and symbols, such as pine trees, seals, flowers, leaves, and water droplets, to enhance the green image of their

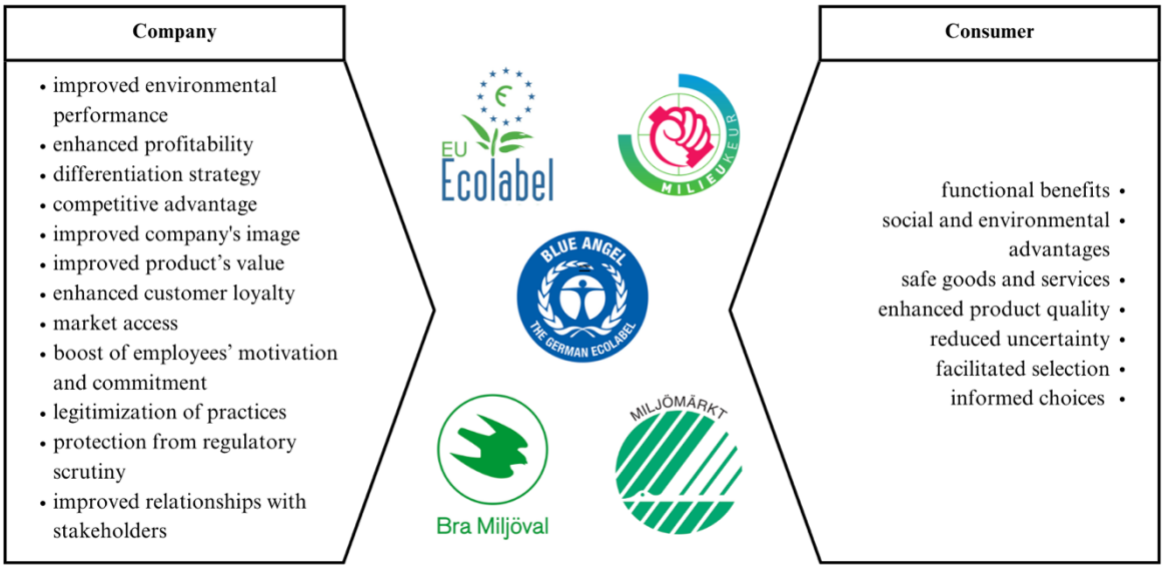
products and packaging. (Pedersen and Neergaard, 2006) Guo et al. (2019) observed that while firms may use either self-produced labels or those from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), self-labels often result in lower perceived value of the product, whereas NGO-endorsed eco-labels typically garner higher consumer trust. Additionally, with the rise of e-commerce, a new category of eco-labels known as SPE-labels has emerged. These labels, provided by sales platforms, signify that products have been verified as environmentally friendly. (Guo et al., 2019) Pedersen and Neergaard (2006) specified several prominent eco-labels:

- The EU Ecolabel, or the EU Flower, established by the European Commission in 1992. This voluntary certification complies with ISO 14024 standards and aims to reduce environmental impacts with criteria varying by product group (European Commission, 2024; Kopnina et. al., 2023). As of September 2023, the EU Ecolabel has been awarded to 88,921 products across 25 different product groups, although only three products in the consumer electronics category have received this label (European Commission, 2024).
- The Swan Label, established in 1989 by the Nordic Council of Ministers, is one of the most rigorous environmental certifications and is used across Nordic countries. (Nordic Swan Ecolabel, 2024)
- The Blue Angel, introduced by Germany in 1978, is the world's first environmental label. It currently certifies about 3,900 products and services from around 800 users globally. (Blue Angel, 2024; Kopnina et. al., 2023)
- Bra Miljöval, meaning "Good Environmental Choice," is the eco-label of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC). Launched in 1988, it initially covered laundry detergents and paper but now includes 13 product categories. (Bra Miljöval, 2024)
- Milieukeur is the Dutch national eco-label founded in 1992 by the Stichting Milieukeur (Ecolabel Foundation) and encompasses approximately 30 product categories. (Milieukeur, 2024)
- Additionally, various other eco-labels address social and environmental issues, including Krav (Swedish organic farming), Max Havelaar (fair trade certification), FSC (Forest Stewardship Council for sustainable forest management), EMAS (EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme), LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and ISO 14024 standard (eco-labelling principles). (Pedersen and Neergaard, 2006; Kopnina et. al., 2023)

Figure 5 summarizes the benefits of eco-label implementation for both companies and consumers.

Figure 5

Benefits of eco-label implementation



Source: compiled by the author and based on Ambec and Lanoie (2008), Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017), D'Souza et. al. (2006), Majeed et. al. (2022), Pedersen and Neergaard (2006)

Moving to the second part of this section we need to define the consumer electronics sector. Statista (2024a) established the notion on the consumer electronics (CE) as "the entire range of products containing electronic circuit boards intended for personal or non-commercial use", including " devices used for communication, entertainment, or information purposes." This industry offers an array of interconnected devices and services, such as computers, laptops, smartphones, TVs, tablets, smart speakers, gaming consoles, hearables, wearables, digital cameras, and VR (virtual reality) and AR (augmented reality) devices. (Statista, 2024a) These products are designed to improve personal productivity, communication, and entertainment. (Statista, 2024c) Loch et. al. (1996) also categorized three international electronics industries: consumer/small products, computers/communications, and industrial measurement/large systems. According to Statista (2024b) and Statista (2024c), the consumer electronics market is characterized by continuous innovation and transformation, and evolving consumer preferences, and a demand for affordable, user-friendly, high-performance devices. It is categorized into six segments: TV, Radio and Multimedia, TV Peripheral Devices, Drones, Telephony, Gaming Equipment, Computing. The leading companies in the consumer electronics sector, recognized for their innovative approach, strong brand reputation, and expansive distribution networks, include Apple, Samsung Electronics, Sony, LG Electronics, NVIDIA, Panasonic, Lenovo, Huawei, Dell, HP, Xiaomi. (Statista, 2024a; Statista, 2024c) These firms are among the most valuable and

influential brands globally in this industry. (Statista, 2024c) Overall, Consumer Electronics generated 950 billion US dollars in revenues worldwide in 2024, and by 2028, this is forecast to rise to 1177 billion US dollars. (Statista, 2024b; Statista, 2024c) Sodhi and Lee (2006) citing Datamonitor (2004), stated that the market is truly global, with the Asia-Pacific region holding a 35% share, Europe at 31.5%, the US at 23%, and the remaining share distributed among other regions. Moreover, around 8.3 billion units of consumer electronics were sold in 2023. (Statista, 2024c) It is projected that the market will experience an annual growth rate of 2.90% from 2024 to 2029. (Statista, 2024c)

However, Sodhi and Lee (2006) noted that the consumer electronics industry encounters several challenges, including fluctuating consumer preferences, supply chain disruptions, and production difficulties. Rapid technological advancements necessitate substantial investments, often without a guarantee of commensurate returns. To achieve economies of scale and mitigate investment risks, major industry players frequently operate in global markets and sometimes collaborate on standardization efforts. (Sodhi and Lee, 2006) Furthermore, Bozó et al. (2021) highlighted that the consumer electronics industry faces significant challenges due to the large amounts of problematic waste it generates, which can lead to environmental pollution, pose health risks, and cause socioeconomic issues. And the integration of green labeling in the consumer electronics industry reflects a broader trend towards sustainability and environmental responsibility. (Sodhi and Lee, 2006) This sector is increasingly focusing on eco-friendly practices and certifications as a response to growing consumer demand for environmentally responsible products and stringent regulatory standards. (Sodhi and Lee, 2006) Also consumers now expect corporations to contribute to overall quality of life, extending beyond just the value of their products or services. This shift in expectations, coupled with increased consumer awareness and activism, is driving new opportunities for companies to capture market share by aligning with broader societal values and responsibilities. (Ciocci & Pecht, 2006) To meet these requirements, consumer electronics businesses also began implementing corporate environmental policy, which sets the tone for how the company addresses environmental issues, as well as using the three "R" (remanufacture, reduce, and reuse/recycle) as the primary approach of green production. (Abdullahi and Young, 2016) The adoption of the ISO 14000 standard has become increasingly significant for such companies as customers and regulatory agencies often view this certification as evidence of a company's commitment to be “green”. (Abdullahi and Young, 2016) To further lessen their impact on the environment, more specific activities include cutting down on hazardous chemicals, such as lead and halogen, minimizing energy use, lowering emissions during product use, and designing devices with modular, interchangeable parts for easy disassembly. Businesses

also prioritize using recyclable and reusable parts, using clean manufacturing techniques, using eco-friendly packaging, and providing product take-back programs. (Abdullahi and Young, 2016; Ciocci and Pecht, 2006) In 2020, the European Commission presented the Circular Electronics Initiative, based on the New Circular Economy Action Plan, and focuses on sustainability, reducing waste, and promoting environmental responsibility within the electronics industry. (European Parliament, 2024) Key actions include implementing ecodesign regulations for electronics, enforcing the "right to repair" and updating outdated software, standardizing mobile phone chargers, enhancing waste collection, revising EU rules on restricting hazardous substances in electronic devices. (European Parliament, 2024) There is also the TCO Circular Electronics Initiative, led by TCO Certified, which aims to enhance sustainability and support the transition towards a more circular economy in the electronics sector. TCO Certified is a leading sustainability certification for IT products and is available across 12 categories, including displays, notebooks, tablets, smartphones, desktops, all-in-one PCs, projectors, headsets, imaging equipment, network equipment, data storage products, and servers. (TCO Certified, 2024) The certification aligns with ISO 14024 Ecolabel Type 1 and is approved by the Global Ecolabelling Network. It addresses several criteria areas, including the management of hazardous substances, circularity, socially responsible manufacturing, and environmentally responsible practices. (TCO Certified, 2024)

In brief, this part emphasizes the growing role of environmental responsibility in business, integrating it into corporate social responsibility. Adopting greener practices benefits companies by enhancing brand image, customer loyalty, and market access while potentially improving profitability and employee motivation. Eco-labels help legitimize environmental practices and manage regulatory risks but face challenges from greenwashing and consumer confusion. However, effective eco-labeling requires clear, accurate information to support informed consumer decisions and enhance trust. The review also discusses the consumer electronics sector, marked by rapid innovation and significant revenue, which also faces challenges including technological advancements and environmental. In response, companies are adopting eco-labelling certifications and green practices like ISO 14000, the Circular Electronics Initiative and TCO Certified to meet sustainability demands. The primary challenge in green labeling within the consumer electronics sector lies in the lack of standardization and consistency across eco-labeling schemes. Different certifications prioritize various environmental aspects, such as energy efficiency, recycling, hazardous material reduction, or carbon footprint, making it difficult for consumers and industry stakeholders to accurately compare products or companies. Additionally, there is often limited transparency regarding the criteria used for certification, leading to potential

confusion or skepticism about the true sustainability of a product. This inconsistency in labeling also poses difficulties for companies trying to align with multiple certification standards across global markets.

1.4. Relationship between sales approaches and performance outcomes

As Giacobbe et al. (2006) puts it, “sales performance refers to an index of effectiveness for a salesperson across a set of sales interactions”, and is measured through regional managers’ ratings, the company’s effectiveness rating used for internal management purposes, and sales representatives’ self-ratings. As Noonan (1998) puts it, sales performance measures should connect achievements to targets, plans, and budgets, providing rapid feedback to salespersons. These measures need to be detailed by territory and customer and ideally, compared against external industry or product benchmarks. Performance evaluations commonly include comparisons with established plans on various aspects: sales volumes and values by product and customer, profitability by product and customer, call coverage relative to scheduled or optimal levels, product distribution across territories or market sectors, and display achievements by product and territory when applicable to consumer goods. (Noonan, 1998)

Hasan and Ali (2015) observed that implementing ISO 14001 certification positively impacts a firm's performance across multiple dimensions, including perceived economic benefits, environmental improvements, and enhanced customer satisfaction. A key advantage for companies adopting green sales practices lies in achieving superior financial and market performance. Consequently, the success of green marketing and promotions plays a critical role in driving overall firm performance. (Hasan and Ali, 2015)

Moghareh and Haghighi (2009) highlight that selling strategies, particularly those involving adaptive selling, directly influence customer behavior by fostering strong, long-term relationships. The study emphasizes the importance of formulating and implementing effective approaches, which include competitive positioning and tailoring sales approaches to meet customer needs. These customer-centric strategies have been shown to positively impact a firm's overall performance, enabling managers to achieve goals such as customer satisfaction and relationship building. (Moghareh and Haghighi, 2009)

Moghareh and Haghighi (2009) also state that the performance and effectiveness of salespeople are critical to a company’s success, as they directly influence its future outcomes. In addition, Baldauf and Cravens (2002) emphasized the critical role of the salesforce in organizational success, particularly due to its position at the interface between the company and its external environment. Salespeople perform essential boundary-spanning functions that

influence both individual and organizational outcomes. Their skills and efforts directly impact sales volume, profits, and customer satisfaction, making them key to executing business and sales approaches. (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002) Giacobbe et al. (2006) highlighted that "sales experience is also expected to influence sales performance by increasing a salesperson's motivation to sell", and in return, "different factors combine to increase one's motivation to sell, thereby improving performance outcomes". Therefore, effective salespeople enhance customer value, ultimately improving organizational performance. (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002) It is crucial for sales management to identify and evaluate factors affecting salesforce performance, as better behavioral performance is often linked to improved outcomes. (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002)

Furthermore, Chi (2023) emphasizes that understanding the various factors influencing sales performance across industries is crucial for developing effective sales approaches and ensuring sustainable growth. PESTEL analysis highlights key macro factors such the legal and political environment which encompasses government policies, regulations, trade agreements, compliance requirements, and industry standards, all of which significantly impact sales performance. (Chi, 2023) Economic factors such as economic growth, inflation, interest rates, exchange rates, and consumer spending habits influence purchasing power and market demand. (Chi, 2023) Additionally, Chi (2023) stressed on the importance of the physical environment, encompassing economic infrastructure like transportation networks, human resources, and financial services, along with natural factors. Social factors, including cultural trends, demographics, lifestyle changes, and consumer attitudes, shape market preferences and buying decisions, impacting business sales activities. (Chi, 2023) Technological advancements in innovation, automation, digitalization, and their effects on product development, distribution channels, and customer engagement are also pivotal. Environmental considerations, such as regulations, sustainability practices, and consumer awareness of eco-friendly products, further influence sales approaches. (Chi, 2023)

On the other side, micro factors influencing sales performance include the financial potential of an enterprise, including its ability to mobilize and manage capital effectively. (Chi, 2023) Human potential, through strategic human resource development, ensures the enterprise can grow, innovate, and adapt to market changes. (Chi, 2023) Effective management organization across departments enhances overall performance and strength within the business. Geographic location plays a crucial role, with favorable locations enhancing accessibility and customer traffic. (Chi, 2023) And lastly, brand popularity attracts and retains customers, while efficient payment methods contribute to customer satisfaction and sales performance. (Chi, 2023)

Lastly, it is important to note that few studies have explored the relationship between specific sales approaches and their impact on sales and overall company performance. (Moghareh and Haghighi, 2009) Moreover, Baldauf and Cravens (2002), also stated that only a few studies have examined the sales approaches and organization performance relationship. Therefore, authors recommend that future research expand the scope by conducting larger surveys across various industries and selling contexts to enhance the generalizability of their findings. (Moghareh and Haghighi, 2009)

Overall, this section of the literature review emphasizes the definition and significance of key factors influencing sales performance. The review highlights the positive effects of implementing green sales practices, which contribute to enhanced economic, environmental, and customer outcomes, aligning with sustainability objectives. Moreover, customer-centric strategies, which tailor approaches to customer needs, are shown to strengthen customer relationships and improve firm performance. Salespeople are identified as critical drivers of these outcomes, given their boundary-spanning role between the firm and its market. However, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the specific relationship between distinct sales approaches and overall company performance. Few studies have systematically explored this connection, indicating a need for further empirical research across diverse industries and contexts to better understand the influence of sales strategies on organizational success.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR RESEARCHING EFFECTS OF SALES APPROACHES ON PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

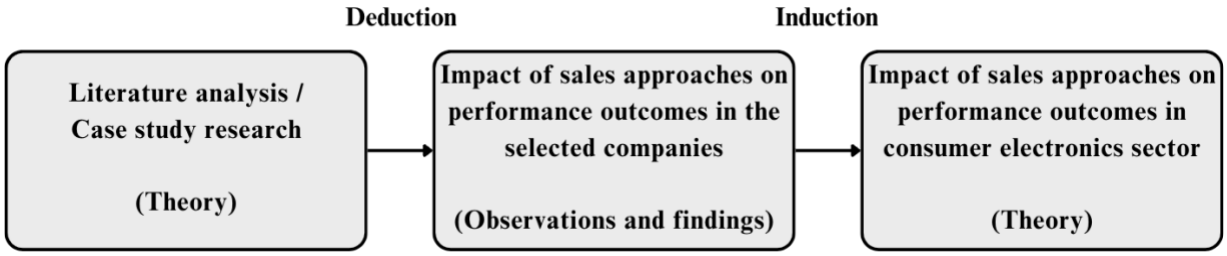
To achieve the aim of this master's thesis, which is to examine the impact of different sales approaches on the performance outcomes of environmentally sustainable consumer electronics businesses, a case study approach was selected as the research method. Despite the existing literature on the relationship between sales approaches and performance outcomes, there is a notable absence of in-depth research that examines this complex social phenomenon in such a context.

2.1. Research philosophy and conceptual research model

This research methodology follows the philosophy of constructivism, using both inductive and deductive reasoning to generalize findings. (Creswell, 2017) Moreover, to incorporate this reasoning the sample for the research was chosen: two companies in the consumer electronics sector that have green labelling certifications. As it can be seen from the Figure 6, the deduction method is valid because new conclusions will be formulated (impact on performance outcomes in the companies) from the information obtained (from a sample using qualitative research tools); and induction on observations will generalize the new theory (impact in the sector).

Figure 6

Deductive and inductive reasoning in the research

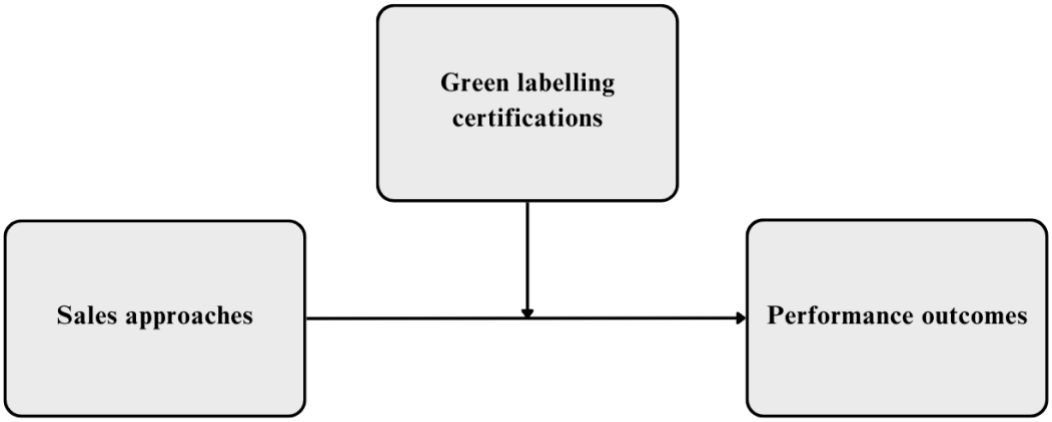


Source: compiled by the author

The simplified version of the conceptual research model, depicted in Figure 7, illustrates the relationship between sales approaches, green labelling certifications, and performance outcomes within green-labelled consumer electronics businesses. In this framework, sales approaches serve as the primary driver, directly influencing performance outcomes, whereas green labelling certifications are positioned as a moderating or conditional factor that affects the strength or direction of the relationship between sales approaches and performance outcomes.

Figure 7

Conceptual research model (simplified)



Source: compiled by the author

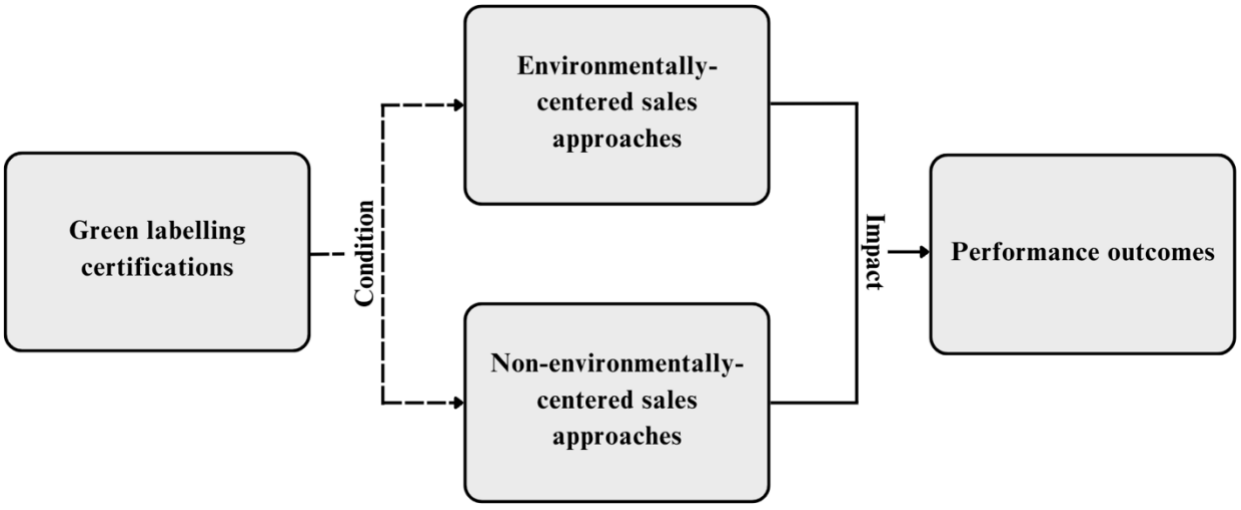
Moreover, the conceptual research model depicted in Figure 8, shows that green labeling certifications serve as predictors of (or is a condition for) both environmentally-centered and non-environmentally-centered sales approaches in this study. These sales approaches, in turn, act as predictors of (or have an impact on) performance outcomes. Therefore, building on this reasoning, the independent variable in this study are the sales approaches, which are categorized into environmentally-centered and non-environmentally-centered approaches. The dependent variables are performance outcomes encompassing financial performance, environmental performance, and customer satisfaction. This selection was made to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the triple bottom line influence, offering a holistic view of organizational performance that is consistent with sustainability principles. By integrating these dimensions, the model captures the multifaceted effects of sales approaches on overall business success and sustainability.

The sales approaches are classified in this manner because the criteria for obtaining green certifications vary among certifying organizations, leading to differing interpretations across companies and sectors. For instance, one certification may focus on waste management, while another emphasizes the exclusion of hazardous materials from products. Consequently, a certification focused on waste management may primarily reflect a company's corporate social responsibility efforts, which are often detailed in annual sustainability reports but have limited impact on the company's sales approaches. In contrast, a certification that addresses hazardous materials is likely to have a more direct effect on sales strategies, potentially prompting a shift toward more sustainable practices.

Although the study attempts to explain the impact of sales approaches on the performance of firms, it is hypothesized that green labeling certifications influence the selection and implementation of sales approaches by the company, given the external validation provided by such certifications. This suggests that the effectiveness of a given sales approach on performance outcomes may depend on how the product leverages credible green certification. In other words, green labeling may reinforce or validate the impact of sales approaches by signaling environmental credibility to consumers, thereby potentially influencing market response and business results. In addition, based on the literature analysis, it is anticipated that companies that adopt environmentally-centered sales approaches will experience higher customer satisfaction, given that consumers are environmentally-conscious, compared to those using non-environmentally-centered sales approaches. Moreover, the use of green labels in sales approaches will positively affect the market positioning and brand image of companies in the consumer electronics sector. The study also assumes a positive correlation between the use of green labels in sales approaches and the financial performance outcomes of consumer electronics companies, including increased sales revenue, market share, and profitability. Additionally, the final hypothesis posits that companies using environmentally-centered sales approaches demonstrate superior environmental performance compared to those using non-environmentally-centered approaches, as they are more likely to invest in and implement environmentally-friendly practices.

Figure 8

Conceptual research model (expanded)



Source: compiled by the author

2.2. Research approach, design and strategy

This study adopts a qualitative research approach aimed at exploring and understanding the meanings individuals or groups assign to social or human issues. Aligned with a constructivist worldview, it emphasizes the interpretation of subjective individual perspectives on their experiences and seeks to capture the complexity of the situation. In short, the study intends to make sense of the meanings others have about the world. (Creswell, 2017)

Also, this research incorporates phenomenography as a research design, following its application in the work of Imbrogiano (2023). Generally, phenomenography is grounded in the assumption that people hold qualitatively different conceptions of various phenomena. It aims to describe “phenomena, aspects of reality, experienced (or conceptualized) in a relatively limited number of qualitatively different ways". (Imbrogiano, 2023 citing Marton, 1981) By uncovering this variation, phenomenography facilitates the creation of new knowledge, revealing the diverse ways in which a phenomenon is experienced by members of an organization. (Imbrogiano, 2023) According to Imbrogiano (2023), prior research employing this design has demonstrated its relevance to the field of business sustainability, yielding insightful and practical findings that practitioners can reference for evidence-based guidance - without relying on 'hard' performance data from companies.

Given the vastness of the research topic, the strategy chosen to explore and to answer the research question is a case study approach. From the theoretical point of view, the case study method involves a detailed examination of a specific organization, industry, and scenario within its real-world context. (Bryman, 2012) Cooper and Schindler (2011) note that the flexibility of the case study method, combined with its focus on contextual understanding, enables richness of understanding often referred to as "thick description.” However, Yin (2014), argues that “doing the case study research would be the preferred method compared to the others, in situations when (1) the main research questions are "how" or "why" questions; (2) a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events; and (3) the focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon.” In other words, Yin (2014) defined the case study method as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context…”

Based on the research question previously introduced, this research has two main purposes: explorative and explanatory. According to Neuman (2014), exploratory research is designed to facilitate familiarity with basic facts, the research setting, and prevailing concerns; it helps to create a general mental picture of conditions and to formulate and refine questions for future investigation. In contrast, explanatory research is typically employed to test a theory’s predictions or principles, as well as to elaborate on and enrich the theoretical explanation. (Neuman, 2014)

Therefore, the study explores two types of sales approaches to obtain new insights and clarify the understanding of its impact on firms' performance - a relatively underexplored area of research. (Gorman et. al., 2005) Secondly, it attempts to explain the relationship between real-life sales approaches and performance outcomes within the consumer electronics sector. (Gorman et. al., 2005) All in all, these approaches were selected to uncover patterns, generate new perspectives, and contribute to theory development by identifying key variables. (Gorman et. al., 2005; Neuman, 2014) The case can also be classified as an exemplifying case study, because it serves as an example of broader societal trends and tendencies. (Bryman, 2012)

More specifically, as illustrated in Figure 9, this thesis was carried out, and followed the research strategy, of an embedded multiple-case study based on the comparative analysis of two companies and their respective products, focusing on how the usage of green labels, or in general incorporating an environmental aspect within their sales approaches influences performance outcomes. According to Yin (2014) and Bryman (2012), using multiple cases is typically seen as more compelling and contributes to a more robust study, as the analytic benefits of examining two or more cases can be substantial. Also, Imbrogiano (2023), referencing Halme et. al. (2016), emphasized that scholars aiming to address the complex questions surrounding sustainability performance in business organizations could benefit from employing more streamlined methodologies, such as multiple case study designs, as these may enhance research effectiveness.

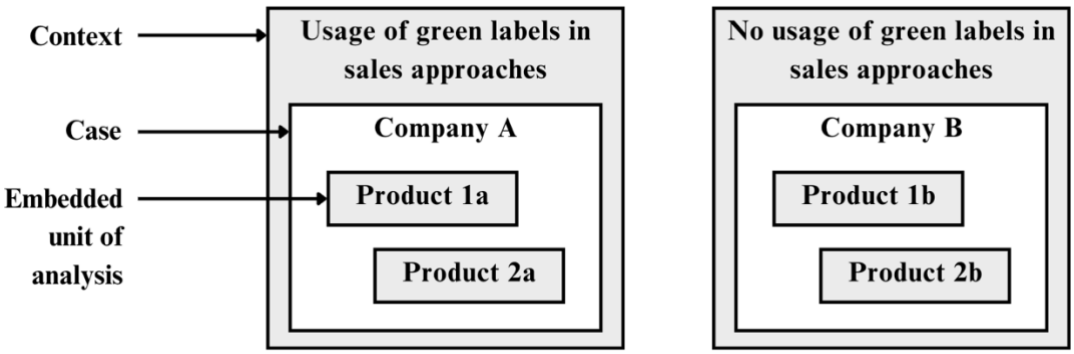
That being said, the multiple-case study can be classified as cross-sectional, as it examined two distinct companies at a single point in time - specifically, May 2025, treated as individual cases for comparative analysis. (Neuman, 2014) Company A was analyzed within the context of utilizing green labels in its sales approaches (or such sales approaches will be environmentally-centered), whereas Company B served as a contrast, as it does not incorporate such labels in its sales activities (or uses non-environmentally-centered sales approaches). It is important to note that while both companies use different eco-labels on selected products, the key distinction lies in how these labels are utilized within their respective marketing initiatives. This study characterizes the direct application of green labeling in sales approaches through the following activities: incorporating environmental certification into product packaging, promoting sustainability claims in product advertising and sales, incorporating environmental visuals into marketing materials, and similar tactics.

Specifically, to illustrate particular sales approaches, the study also focused on the embedded units of analysis, such individual units are Product 1a and Product 2a from different product categories of Company A, along with Product 1b and Product 2b of Company B. Cooper and Schindler (2011) explain that when multiple units of analysis are selected, it is typically due

to their potential to produce either similar outcomes for anticipated reasons (literal replication) or differing outcomes for anticipated reasons (theoretical replication). Although theoretical sampling is commonly employed, and is utilized in this research, a preferred range typically spans from a minimum of four to a maximum of fifteen cases; accordingly, this study analyzes four units. (Cooper and Schindler, 2011) Generally, this approach enables an investigation into how differing sales approaches (with or without the use of green labels in sales) across product categories influence company-level outcomes. Based on these outcomes and the subsequent comparative analysis of two companies in general, the study draws relevant conclusions.

Figure 9

Comparative multiple-case study with embedded units of analysis research strategy



Source: compiled by the author

Using the Statista (2025) source, companies were initially identified by reviewing industry statistics on the top global consumer electronics firms with a strong presence in the European market. The study focuses on the political region of Europe, specifically the European Union, due to the strong presence and widespread use of eco-labelling practices, as identified in the literature review. From this pool, the top 10 companies by global sales were further screened by analyzing their official websites and the latest annual sustainability reports to assess the extent to which their sales strategies incorporate environmental messaging and green labels. The final selection aimed to identify two companies with comparable global market share, product categories, and operational scale - ensuring a balanced comparative analysis. Based on these criteria, Apple Inc. was selected as the environmentally-centered case (or Company A), as it prominently features green labels and sustainability messaging in its sales and marketing approaches. In contrast, Samsung Electronics was selected as the non-environmentally-centered case (or Company B), as it places less visible emphasis on environmental messaging in its consumer-facing sales strategies, despite having strong internal sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, according to Statista (2024c), the most profitable product segments in the consumer electronics sector are the Telephony

segment, which includes smartphones, feature phones, and landline phones; and the Computing segment, which comprises laptops, desktops, tablets, and other computing devices. Hence, the embedded units of analysis in this study are be based on two key product categories: smartphones (referred to as category "a") and tablets (referred to as category "b"). In order to select the embedded units of analysis, the selected product categories, smartphones and tablets, and their latest models (released in 2024 or 2025) were thoroughly examined for both Apple and Samsung Electronics within the Lithuanian market, reflecting the broader European market context. To further differentiate the product categories, standard models were selected for the smartphone category: Product 1a is the iPhone 16, and Product 2a is the Samsung Galaxy S25. (Apple, 2025a; Samsung, 2025a) In contrast, for the tablet category, high-end models with advanced technical specifications were chosen to represent premium offerings: Product 1b is the iPad Pro 13-inch (M4 chip), and Product 2b is the Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra. (Apple, 2025b; Samsung, 2025b).

2.3. Data collection procedures

In the qualitative research, Cooper and Schindler (2011) mentioned that researchers gather data from various sources such as company brochures, annual reports, sales receipts, and articles in newspapers and magazines, as well as through direct observation in the participant's natural environment, and integrate this information with interview responses. According to Bryman (2012), the case study method explores complex issues through comprehensive data collection methods, including interviews, questionnaires, observations, document analysis, and company records. Imbrogiano (2023) stated that in the phenomenographic research, a mix of methods is applied in the study context to derive data from variations in experience. Cooper and Schindler (2011) emphasized that collecting data from diverse sources aims to capture multiple viewpoints of a particular organizational situation, event, or process, either at a specific moment or across a period of time. Moreover, Yin (2014) and Bryman (2012) affirmed that the case study research relies on multiple sources of evidence and the data must converge in a triangulated manner. As triangulation involves collecting information from multiple sources about the same event or behavior, it enhances the quality of the research by increasing the likelihood that the conclusions reached using different methods will be accurate and widely accepted. (Gorman et al., 2005) Therefore, this study employs data triangulation - utilizing both interviews and observations - to enhance the validity and robustness of the findings, while providing an in-depth and detailed examination of the cases. (Bryman, 2012; Neuman, 2014) Gorman et al. (2005) also suggest that participant observation and in-depth interviews are appropriate data collection techniques for exploratory research.

2.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

In this study, in line with the phenomenographic research design, interviews serve as the primary method of data collection, as they provide an in-depth exploration of individuals' lived experiences. (Imbrogiano, 2023; Creswell, 2017) Imbrogiano (2023) citing Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) stated that “interviews offer researchers the opportunity to uncover what is expressed between the lines and to allow research subjects to expand on what would otherwise remain unsaid”. In case study research, interview participants are invited to share their personal experiences, with selections made to include individuals from various organizational levels or with differing perspectives on the same situation or process, thereby to permit depth of perspective. (Cooper and Schindler, 2011) Imbrogiano (2023), drawing on the work of Tight (2016) and Sandberg (2000), noted that phenomenographic studies are typically conducted with around 20 participants, as prior research has demonstrated that conceptual variation tends to reach saturation within the first 20 research subjects. Although Seidman (2013) does not specify an exact number of required participants, he suggests that researchers may recognize the appropriate point to conclude interviews when no new insights are emerging and the process becomes laborious rather than enlightening. Hence, as shown in Table 10, nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sales personnel, marketing managers and other relevant experts from the selected companies, or related to them. This approach facilitated open-ended dialogue and allowed for a comprehensive exploration of themes related to sales approaches and performance outcomes.

Figure 10

Study participants

Participant	Company	Position	Years of expertise*
Expert No.1 (personal online communication)	Citrus (prominent electronics and gadgets retailer in Ukraine)	Chief Marketing Officer	15 years
Expert No.2 (personal online communication)	Tallinn University of Technology	Professor of Cognitive Electronics, Head of Research Laboratory for Cognitronics	22 years

Expert No.3 (personal online communication)	Tallinn University of Technology	Professor of Operations Management Head of Sustainable Value Chain Management research group	20 years
Expert No.4 (personal online communication)	Tallinn University of Technology	Professor, Director of the department of Electronics	25 years
Expert No.5 (personal online communication)	• Polipo • Viešiejai Pirkimai AI • Sali Sales (Lithuanian startups)	Sales Expert, Co-Founder and CEO	10 years
Expert No.6 (personal online communication)	*Requested that the company name remain anonymous* (leading provider of specialized medical equipment in the Baltic States)	Consumer Electronics Expert	6 years
Expert No.7 (personal online communication)	Samsung Electronics	Brand Ambassador	3 years
Expert No.8 (personal offline communication)	BITĖ (leading Lithuanian telecommunications and media company)	Senior Sales Consultant	5 years
Expert No.9 (personal offline communication)	Samsung Electronics	Sales Consultant	1 year

* Refers to an estimated number of years of professional experience in sales, marketing, and consumer electronics.
Source: compiled by the author

As noted by Creswell (2017), the interview guide plays a crucial role in facilitating smooth and effective interaction between the researcher and the participant. Accordingly, three distinct interview guides were developed to capture the unique perspectives of each interviewee group: sales personnel, marketing managers, and other relevant industry experts. This division was driven by the need to obtain diverse insights aligned with each group's specific role in the sales process. Each guide outlined the study's objective, detailed the procedures to be followed during and after the interview, and included a tailored set of questions designed to address the particular expertise and perspectives of each participant category. Moreover, the necessary pilot testing of the interview guide was conducted with the first interview participant, a Professor of Cognitive Electronics at Tallinn University of Technology, as well as with the thesis supervisor, Prof. Dr. Aurelija Ulbinaitė, through email communication, in order to identify any issues related to questions clarity or response feasibility.

Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with an interview guide outlining the themes to be discussed, rather than specific questions. They were informed that the thesis focuses on their personal opinions, perspectives, and experiences, and that there was no requirement to provide specific facts or company-sensitive data in order to avoid any risk of disclosing confidential information. Participants were also assured that they could skip any questions they did not feel comfortable answering or for which they had no response. Furthermore, they were informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any point without any consequences. To protect participants' privacy, they were informed that all data would be kept strictly confidential. However, permission was requested to include their job title, company name, and years of experience in the final thesis. Additionally, interviewees were asked for consent to audio-record the conversation for the purpose of full transcription and to support detailed analysis during later stages of the research. The Chief Marketing Officer at Citrus asked to review the interview transcript prior to its incorporation in the research, in order to verify that no sensitive information had been inadvertently included. Additianally, interviewees were assured that all recordings would be deleted from storage devices upon completion of the study. In this regard, only one participant, a Senior Sales Consultant at BITĖ, declined to be recorded. As a result, handwritten notes were taken during that interview and subsequently destroyed after their contents were integrated into the analysis. This, however, introduced challenges in capturing the nuances of the discussion and raised concerns about the reliability of the data, as it may have been influenced by the possible

researcher's subjective interpretation. Finally, all participants were informed that the information collected would be used solely for academic purposes and would not be shared with any third parties outside the scope of this research. Lastly, any suggestions or requests made by the interviewees were fully respected and taken into consideration. After the interview, participants were thanked for their contribution to the research and asked whether they would like to receive a summary of the research findings upon completion of the thesis.

Although a predefined set of questions was in place, as shown in Figure 11, spontaneous follow-up questions were incorporated during the interviews to facilitate a more natural and dynamic exchange of ideas. Generally, sales personnel, who act as the direct link between the company and its consumers and are instrumental in the implementation of sales approaches, were primarily asked about how these strategies are executed in practice. For both sales personnel and marketing managers affiliated with specific consumer electronics companies, the interviews included questions related to particular products to contextualize their responses. In contrast, while experts did not possess detailed knowledge of specific products, they along with marketing managers were asked broader questions about prevailing sales approaches within the companies and industry, and their performance implications. All participant categories were asked about the use of eco-labels in sales and their general impact on performance, however, the sales personnel and marketing managers were specifically questioned about their application to particular products. Collectively, these differentiated guides provided a well-rounded foundation for addressing the research question by integrating product and company-specific insights with industry-wide perspectives.

Figure 11

The main semi-structured interview questions

Participant category / Questions category	Sales personnel	Marketing managers	Other experts
Background		1. Could you please introduce yourself and briefly describe your professional background?	1. Could you please introduce yourself and briefly describe your professional background?
	1. What is your current position at [Apple / Samsung / other	2. What is your current position at [Apple / Samsung / other	2. What is your current position at [institution / university], and how

	company], and how long have you held this role?	company], and how long have you held this role?	long have you held this role?
			3. What is your experience in marketing, sales, or sustainability fields in consumer electronics industry?
Sales approaches	2. How would you describe your usual way of selling - do you focus more on the product features, solving customer problems, or something else?	3. How would you characterize your company's overall sales approach (e.g., product-oriented, solution-based, green selling, adaptive, etc.)?	4. How would you characterize overall sales approach (e.g., product-oriented, solution-based, green selling, adaptive, etc.) in cosumer electronics inductry?
	3. When you talk to customers, what is usually highlighted the most - things like product design, features, packaging, brand, or environmental aspects?	4. When promoting a product, what aspects are most emphasized: product features, packaging, logistics, brand values, or sustainability credentials?	5. When promoting a product, what aspects are most emphasized: product features, packaging, logistics, brand values, or sustainability credentials?
	4. Do you ever talk about sustainability or green features when selling products? If yes, what kind of things do you mention (e.g., recycled materials, low energy use)?	5. How are sustainability and environmental values integrated into sales or marketing messaging at your company? Is there a particular emphasis on environmental impact reduction (e.g., recyclable materials, carbon footprint, energy	6. How are sustainability and environmental values integrated into sales or marketing messaging in this industry? Is there a particular emphasis on environmental impact reduction (e.g., recyclable materials,

		efficiency) in product sales?	carbon footprint, energy efficiency) in product sales?
			7. When it comes to sales, could you say that [Apple / Samsung] is rather environmentally-centered or not so much?
Use of eco-labels	5. Are you aware of any eco-labels or certifications on the products you sell? Do customers ask about them or seem to care?	6. Does your company use eco-labels or sustainability certifications in its marketing or sales materials? If yes, which ones (e.g., TCO Certified, EU Ecolabel)?	8. Does this industry use eco-labels or sustainability certifications in its marketing or sales materials? If yes, which ones (e.g., TCO Certified, EU Ecolabel)?
		7. How are these eco-labels communicated to customers (e.g., packaging, in-store displays, online marketing, sales conversations)?	9. How are these eco-labels communicated to customers (e.g., packaging, in-store displays, online marketing, sales conversations)?
	6. From your experience, do green claims or eco-labels help influence customer decisions?	8. In your view, how credible or effective are these labels in influencing consumer decisions?	10. In your view, how credible or effective are these labels in influencing consumer decisions?
Product A - specific sales approaches	7. How do you usually present the [iPhone 16 / Samsung Galaxy S25] to customers?	9. How is the [iPhone 16 / Samsung Galaxy S25] presented to customers in terms of sales messaging?	

Product A-specific use of eco-labels	8. Are any green or environmental features highlighted for this phone?	10. What product features related to sustainability are highlighted (e.g., recycled materials, packaging, energy use) in [iPhone 16 / Samsung Galaxy S25]?	
	9. Do you think that affects how customers respond to the phone?	11. Are there any eco-certifications used to promote [iPhone 16 / Samsung Galaxy S25]? If so, how do these influence the sales approach?	
Product B - specific sales approaches	10. How do you present the [iPad Pro M4 / Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra] to customers?	12. How is the [iPad Pro 13-inch M4 / Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra] presented to customers in terms of sales messaging?	
Product B-specific use of eco-labels	11. Are any green or environmental features highlighted for this tablet?	13. What product features related to sustainability are highlighted (e.g., recycled materials, packaging, energy use) in [iPad Pro 13-inch M4 / Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra]?	
	12. Do you think that affects how customers respond to the tablet?	14. Are there any eco-certifications used to promote [iPad Pro 13-inch M4 / Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra]? If so, how do	

		these influence the sales approach?	
Performance outcomes		15. From your perspective, how do specific sales approaches related to the aforementioned products as well as the company's overall strategy (e.g., green selling, adaptive selling) influence business performance? And which aspect of performance seem to be affected the most? • Financial outcomes? • Environmental outcomes? • Customer satisfaction or loyalty? • Market positioning and brand image?	11. From your perspective, how do specific sales approaches (e.g., green selling, adaptive selling) affect overall business performance in consumer electronics industry? Which aspect of performance seem to be affected the most? • Financial outcomes? • Environmental outcomes? • Customer satisfaction or loyalty? • Market positioning and brand image?
	13. From what you've seen, do products that focus more on being green or eco-friendly perform better or get more attention from customers?	16. Have you observed any changes in customer behavior or sales outcomes when eco-labels or other sustainability claims are included in the messaging?	12. Have you observed any changes in customer behavior or sales outcomes when green labels or sustainability claims are included in the messaging?
		17. Can you provide any examples where green messaging directly	

		impacted product success or sales performance?	
			13. Do you believe environmentally-centered sales strategies create a competitive advantage in the market? If yes, how?
			14. Based on your experience, do you find that companies that adopt environmentally-centered sales approaches tend to invest more in environmentally-friendly practices overall (e.g., cleaner production, eco-packaging, recycling programs)? If so, how does this translate into measurable environmental performance?

Source: compiled by the author

Generally, this study employed a purposive non-probability sampling technique designed to gain maximum diversity in recruitment, selecting participants strategically to ensure their relevance to the research question. (Seidman, 2013) Additionally, care was taken to include a range of participants who differ in key characteristics, allowing for greater variation and richer insights. (Bryman, 2012; Imbrogiano, 2023; Cooper and Schindler, 2011; Seidman, 2013) Firstly, to identify and recruit suitable respondents, the LinkedIn platform was utilized, leveraging the advanced search capabilities of the paid premium "Sales Navigator Core" subscription plan, which was obtained for a one-month period. This plan facilitates targeted outreach by allowing direct contact with up to 50 potential participants, thereby increasing the likelihood of securing the

required number of interviews. This method is advantageous due to its access to a professional network and the ability to filter candidates based on specific criteria, such as job role, company affiliation, and length of employment. In particular, the following filters were applied: current company - Apple or Samsung Electronics; function - sales or marketing; geography - Europe, including the Nordics, EMEA, Benelux, and DACH regions; and recent activity - job changes or recent posts on LinkedIn. LinkedIn generated a list of 116 potential interviewees. Another criterion for inclusion was that respondents must have been employed at their respective companies for no less than 1 year, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of current sales approaches and/or performance outcomes. After carefully reviewing each profile, all 50 available InMail credits were utilized to contact selected individuals. Nevertheless, the response rate during the one-month period was relatively low, while some individuals viewed my profile without responding to the invitation, only four replied, and of those, only one - a Brand Ambassador at Samsung Electronics, ultimately agreed to participate in the research. The main constraints to participation were capacity reasons, employment contract restrictions prohibiting involvement in such initiatives, information requested is commecrially sensitive, as well as personal judgments by potential participants who felt they were not suitable for the research.

Indeed, following a relatively unsuccessful attempt to recruit participants via LinkedIn, an alternative method - the snowball sampling approach was employed, which ultimately yielded the majority of the research participants. (Seidman, 2013; Babbie, 2007; Bryman, 2012) Networking proved to be particularly effective, as some initial LinkedIn contacts facilitated introductions to other potential participants. In addition, personal acquaintances also contributed to expanding the pool of respondents. Consequently, six out of the 15 individuals contacted through this method agreed to take part in the interviews.

In addition, sales staff participants were identified through direct outreach to retail locations in the Vilnius area, specifically in the Akropolis and Panorama shopping malls, where the majority of consumer electronics stores are concentrated. The following stores were visited at both locations: iDeal (a certified Apple retailer in Lithuania), Samsung Electronics (an official retail outlet), Topo Centras, BITĖ, Tele2, and Telia - all of which retail both Apple and Samsung products. As a result, only two sales consultants agreed to be interviewed: one representing BITĖ and the other from Samsung Electronics. The primary reasons for refusal to participate in the interviews also included employment contract restrictions that prohibited involvement in such initiatives, and language barriers, since many salespersons in Lithuania do not speak English fluently, and my own limited proficiency in Lithuanian, which made conducting interviews in that language unfeasible. To address this, two interviews were conducted in Russian: one with a Senior

Sales Consultant at BITĖ and another with the Chief Marketing Officer at Citrus. The analysis of these transcriptions and interview notes involved translation from Russian to English prior to analysis. While this process may have had some impact on the validity of the research findings, I believe the effect was minimal due to my fluency in both languages. Additionally, some sales consultants declined the invitation due to their unavailability and high engagement in sales activities, as participating in an interview was seen as a distraction from their core responsibilities.

Altogether, the individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in May 2025 and lasted approximately 30 minutes with marketing managers and experts, and around 15 minutes with sales personnel. Interview duration largely varied depending on the number of main questions included (13 for sales personnel, 17 for marketing managers, and 14 for experts), the depth of each participant's responses, and the inclusion of follow-up or clarification questions.

2.3.2. Observations and document analysis

In this study, the passive non-participant direct observation technique is a complementary method to counterbalance a rather subjective nature of interviews as representations of experiences. (Imbrogiano, 2023 reffering to Silverman, 2006; Cooper and Schindler, 2011) According to Cooper and Schindler (2011), observation is commonly used in exploratory research, because it helps to generate hypotheses due to the discovery-oriented nature of the study. On one hand, some authors argue that observation becomes a legitimate research method when it is purposefully designed to address the research question, carried out systematically, includes appropriate controls, and yields reliable and valid results. On the other hand, many scholars tend to undervalue observation, often treating it as a secondary tool for field data collection. (Cooper & Schindler, 2011)

Generally, direct observation involves the observer being physically present and personally monitor what takes place, offering flexibility to respond to subtle dynamics, shift focus of the observation and adapt to unexpected occurrences in real time. (Cooper and Schindler, 2011) Therefore, direct observations in aforementioned physical stores in Vilnius, along with an analysis of companies' websites, were conducted in May 2025, to examine the retail settings in which the products are displayed and sold, offering contextual insights into how sales approaches are implemented in practice.

On top of that, document analysis as a method was employed, focusing specifically on product-specific documents to further contextualize the integration of green labels within the companies' broader sustainability and marketing strategies.

2.4. Data analysis procedures

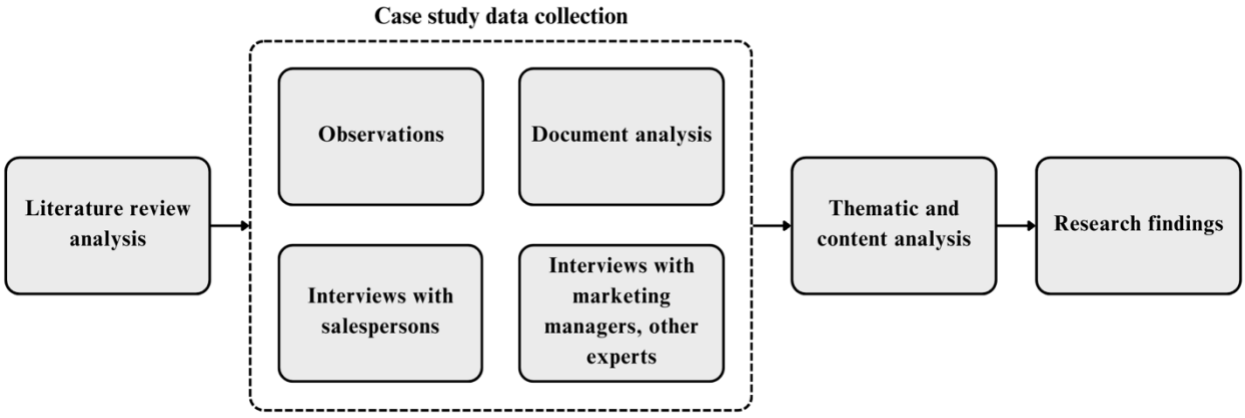
In this research, thematic analysis was conducted on interviews using MS Word for coding and organization of data. Bryman (2012), citing Ritchie et al. (2003), stated that thematic analysis is "a matrix-based method for ordering and synthesizing data." Therefore, the thematic analysis process began with creating the interview transcriptions and familiarization with the data, followed by applying preliminary codes by hand to relevant information. Babbie (2007) explained the coding process as "classifying or categorising individual pieces of data coupled with some kind of retrieval system." Seidman (2013) mentioned that the coding process begins by labelling the passages that the researcher finds interesting. Some commentators regard the sorting and calling as an entirely intuitive process, but it is an important to form and articulate the criteria for the winnowing and sorting process. (Seidman, 2013) Thus, patterns and threats were then identified and reviewed through classification process of relevant codes, which involved systematically reading through all data and organizing interview transcripts, thus resulting in themes. (Creswell, 2017; Seidman, 2013; Babbie, 2007) Seidman (2013) recommended to select passages that can connect to other passages in the file, in this way "quantity starts to interact with quality." In this regard, "the repetition of an aspect of experience that was already mentioned in other passages take some weight and calls attention to itself." (Seidman, 2013) So in this research, the extracts of data were also evaluated to identify any inconsistencies or overlaps between themes. Interpreting the meaning of the themes facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the data and strengthened the reliability of the findings. (Creswell, 2017)

On the other side, content analysis was applied to observations and document analysis. Based on Bryman (2012), the content analysis focuses on quantifying and categorizing specific elements within the data, such as the frequency of certain words, phrases, or concepts. The content analysis also involves coding the data into predefined categories or themes, resulting in the summary of the data in terms of what is present and how often. (Bryman, 2012)

To summarize all the methods used in this research, including both data collection and analysis, Figure 12 below is provided.

Figure 12

Research methodology framework



Source: compiled by the author

It is worth mentioning that this section faces several challenges, including the overall execution of the multiple-case study strategy in the research, ensuring the comparability of selected companies despite their inherent differences, accurately defining sales approaches and performance outcomes relevant to the sector, addressing potential biases in data collection and interpretation, especially in effectively integrating diverse data sources. Another significant challenge noted by Imbrogiano (2023) was finding an effective way to motivate 9 interviewees within their respective companies to participate in a research project focused on their internal experiences, while also ensuring maximum variation in those experiences. As mentioned by According to Cooper and Schindler (2011), this research encountered a limitation in data collection due to the extended time required, as not all desired participants were available or accessible.

To ensure the external reliability of this research - that is, to obtain consistent results if the study were replicated - all procedures were thoroughly documented. (Cooper & Schindler, 2011; Neuman, 2014; Bryman, 2012) For internal reliability, the interview guide and overall methodological processes were reviewed and discussed with an expert and the thesis supervisor. (Bryman, 2012) To achieve external validity - the truthfulness and generalizability of the findings - this study examined both product-specific sales and performance, as well as company and industry-wide characteristics. (Cooper & Schindler, 2011; Neuman, 2014; Bryman, 2012) Additionally, data triangulation was employed to enhance internal validity, by collecting and analyzing data from multiple sources. (Gorman et al., 2005; Bryman, 2012) While recognizing that complete objectivity is unattainable in social research, the researcher, Yeva Shchudlak, strived to act in good faith, avoiding the undue influence of personal bias or theoretical preferences on the research process and findings. (Bryman, 2012; Gorman et al., 2005)

3. RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS OF SALES APPROACHES AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES IN GREEN-LABELLED CONSUMER ELECTRONICS BUSINESSES

This study set out to define environmentally-centered (similar to green selling) and non-environmentally-centered sales approaches and assess their impact on performance within green-labeled consumer electronics businesses. Specifically, it examined the direct use of green labeling in sales strategies - such as incorporating environmental certifications on product packaging, making sustainability claims in advertising and promotions, and employing eco-themed visuals in marketing materials. While document analysis confirmed that major brands like Apple and Samsung Electronics utilize green labels, observational findings and expert interviews reveal a nuanced reality: traditional sales methodologies continue to predominate, and green selling remains marginal in shaping sales strategies and consumer behavior. Consequently, the study rejects its initial assumption that a significant difference exists between the two selected firms regarding the adoption of distinctly environmentally-centered sales approaches.

3.1. Sales approaches within retail environment, findings from document analysis and observations

The analysis of the iPhone 16 reveals that, while the device is officially labeled as green, this environmental aspect is not prominently communicated to consumers. According to Apple's Product Environmental Report for the iPhone 16 and iPhone 16 Plus, the device contains over 30% recycled content, and more than 30% of the manufacturing electricity is sourced from supplier low-carbon energy projects. (Apple, 2025c) The phone incorporates "smarter chemistry", being free from arsenic, mercury, brominated flame retardants, and PVC. (Apple, 2025c) It is designed with longevity in mind, featuring the latest-generation Ceramic Shield, which is twice as tough as any other smartphone glass, along with IP68-rated water and dust resistance to enhance durability. (Apple, 2025c) The packaging is 100% fiber-based, reflecting Apple's commitment to eliminating plastic use, and consists entirely of recycled or responsibly sourced wood fibers. (Apple, 2025c) The product's end-of-life recovery is facilitated through Apple Trade In, allowing customers to return devices in-store or online for free recycling or refurbishment. (Apple, 2025c) Additionally, Apple's Supplier Code of Conduct enforces strict environmental and social standards throughout its supply chain. The report further highlights adherence to multiple ISO standards and confirms the device's EPEAT Gold certification, an internationally recognized ecolabel. (Apple, 2025c)

In the online retail environment, Apple primarily emphasizes the iPhone 16's advanced features, such as Apple Intelligence - the device's latest AI capability; and productivity tools, alongside privacy assurances. (Apple, 2025a) The marketing focus is strongest on the camera system and the A18 chip. Sustainability aspects receive comparatively limited attention, with the longest battery life highlighted as a factor contributing to less frequent phone replacements. (Apple, 2025a) Durability is also mentioned within the product specifications. The Trade In program is promoted, accompanied by claims that the iPhone 16 uses more recycled materials than ever before: over 95% recycled lithium in the battery, 100% recycled gold in the plating of the USB-C connector and camera wires, and 100% recycled copper foil in the MagSafe inductive charger. Additionally, the packaging is noted as being 100% fiber-based for the first time and thinner, which reduces the carbon footprint associated with shipping. (Apple, 2025a)

Within the offline retail environment, a visit was made to the official retailer of Apple products - iDeal store in May 2025. As shown in Figure 13, the physical display of the iPhone 16 includes basic product information such as price, available colors, and storage capacity. There is a noticeable absence of eco-labels or sustainability-related messaging at the point of sale in-store, in contrast to the environmental details provided in the Product Environmental Report and the online retail environment.

Figure 13

Physical display of iPhone 16

Source: compiled by the author

The analysis of the iPad Pro 13-inch (M4 chip) revealed a similar pattern: while the device meets several sustainability criteria, this information is not prominently communicated to consumers. According to Apple's Product Environmental Report for the iPad Pro 11-inch and 13-inch (M4), the product contains over 20% recycled content, with more than 25% of manufacturing electricity derived from supplier low-carbon energy projects. (Apple, 2025d) The device also incorporates "smarter chemistry," is designed for durability and longevity, features 100% fiber-based packaging made from recycled or responsibly sourced wood fibers, and offers the Apple Trade In option. Apple's Supplier Code of Conduct is emphasized, alongside adherence to ISO standards. Notably, the iPad Pro holds both EPEAT Gold and ENERGY STAR certifications - internationally recognized ecolabels. (Apple, 2025d)

In the online retail environment, the iPad Pro (M4 chip) is primarily marketed for its portability, described as Apple's thinnest product to date, and its high-performance capabilities, particularly emphasizing the advanced M4 chip and display technology. (Apple, 2025b) The product description also highlights features such as the camera system and integration within the broader Apple ecosystem. In terms of sustainability messaging, Apple briefly notes that the iPad has a durable design and that its enclosure is made from 100% recycled aluminum. (Apple, 2025b) Additionally, aspects of social responsibility are mentioned through references to privacy protection and inclusive design, though these messages are secondary to performance and usability features. (Apple, 2025b)

Within the offline retail environment at iDeal, as illustrated in Figure 14, the physical display of the iPad Pro 13-inch (M4 chip) presents basic product information, including price, color options, and storage capacity, alongside key technical specifications such as camera features, display quality, and Wi-Fi connectivity. However, consistent with the findings for the iPhone 16, there is a noticeable absence of eco-labels or sustainability-related messaging at the physical store.

Figure 14

Physical display of iPad Pro 13-inch (M4 chip)

Source: compiled by the author

The analysis of the Samsung S25 shows that while the device incorporates significant sustainability features, they are also not properly presented to consumers. According to Samsung's Product Environmental Report on Samsung Galaxy S25, the phone includes a wide range of recycled materials, such as 100% recycled gold and rare earth elements, 50% recycled cobalt in the battery, and 20% recycled aluminum in the enclosure. (Samsung, 2025c) The packaging is made from 100% recycled paper, with a 96.6% reduction in plastic use compared to earlier models. (Samsung, 2025c) The Samsung Galaxy S25 is also free from hazardous substances like PVC and BFRs and is designed for durability with IP68 water and dust resistance. (Samsung, 2025c) It supports longevity through OS and security updates, and Samsung offers expanded repairability and recycling programs. All manufacturing sites are ISO 14001 and ISO 50001 certified, and the device is UL ECOLOGO certified, confirming its adherence to recognized environmental standards. (Samsung, 2025c)

Within the online retail environment, Samsung prominently highlights features such as Galaxy AI, unique design, advanced display technology, and improved ergonomics, emphasizing the device's thinner and more comfortable form factor. (Samsung, 2025a) Attention is also given to the powerful processor, optimized battery life, water resistance, advanced camera capabilities, software features and security enhancements. The Samsung ecosystem and device personalization

are also highlighted. (Samsung, 2025a) However, sustainability receives minimal attention in this context; the only related mention pertains to Samsung's broader corporate commitments to energy efficiency and a circular economy, rather than specific environmental attributes of the Samsung Galaxy S25 device itself. (Samsung, 2025a)

Within the offline retail environment, a visit was made to the Tele2 store, a retailer of Samsung Electronics products, in May 2025. This visit was intended to illustrate an alternative retail setting beyond official Samsung stores. As can be seen in Figure 15, the physical display of the Samsung Galaxy S25 highlighted general product characteristics such as camera lenses, operating system, and display specifications. Pricing information was also provided, along with a prompt encouraging customers to consult sales representatives for further details. However, no sustainability-related information or eco-labels were present at the point of sale.

Figure 15

Physical display of Samsung Galaxy S25

Source: compiled by the author

On the analysis of the Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra, no specific Product Environmental Report was found. However, according to this official source, Samsung (2025d), Samsung claims that this tablet uses a range of recycled materials, including plastics, aluminum, glass, and rare earth elements in both internal and external components. It comes with seven generations of OS upgrades and seven years of security updates, supporting long-term use. (Samsung, 2025d) The packaging is made of 100% recycled paper, excluding minor plastic elements due to client

requests. The device also received the Selo Colibri certification, which assesses environmental impacts across a product's life cycle. (Samsung, 2025d)

Within the online retail environment, the Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra is primarily marketed through its product features, including Galaxy AI, the tablet's sleek design, integration with the Galaxy ecosystem, large display, specialized software, high-performance processor and camera functionality. What can be partially linked to sustainability is the emphasis on product durability and battery life; however, no direct reference is made to recycled materials, eco-certifications, or Samsung's broader environmental commitments.

In the offline retail environment at Tele2, as shown in Figure 16, the physical presentation of the Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra focused on basic product features, including camera lenses, operating system, and display specifications. Pricing was clearly indicated, and there appeared to be a trade-in option available. However, there was no visible information regarding sustainability or eco-certifications at the point of sale.

Figure 16

Physical display of Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra

Source: compiled by the author

3.2. Sales approaches within retail environment, findings from interviews

Across interviews with retail experts, several key sales methodologies were identified as particularly influential in the consumer electronics sector. Expert No.5 emphasized the relevance of the SPIN Selling approach, where sales professionals engage with the customer's Situation, Problem, Implication, and Need-payoff. Similarly, the Challenger Sales model was highlighted, which involves challenging customers by presenting new perspectives - "not to be impolite," Expert No.5 noted, "but to introduce new facts into the conversation." Expert No.1 echoed this, by saying: "If a client shows interest in one model but there is another option that better suits them, the consultant will suggest it - without pressure, just informative advice, as the ultimate decision always left to the consumer." Another frequently referenced model was the 3T sales approach (Teach, Tailor, Take control), which emphasizes a sales consultant's ability to personalize product information and assertively guide the conversation. According to Expert No.5, "A salesperson have a certain level of being assertive and be able to teach and tailor the information to the client's needs every time."

In practice, these methodologies translate into deeply customer-centric strategies. Expert No.9 explained, "We try to learn about the buyer first. We don't want to upsell or push into buying products that they don't need." Moreover, Expert No.4 and Expert No.6 emphasized that sales should focus on how consumers feel when using the device, their user experiences, rather than just on technical specifications or features. On that, Expert No.7 mentioned that "You need to understand what customer needs or simply put yourself in the shoes of the customer as opposed to the shoes of yourself - only then can you truly notice the problem they're facing and find the right solution." Expert No.1 also mentioned this, by stating that sales staff aim to match the right product to customer needs - "balancing features and price". Moreover, building trust and long-term relationships was stressed by multiple interviewees. Expert No.7 stated, "You're also selling them a lifestyle - not just the product," emphasizing the emotional and experiential elements of sales, particularly for premium brands like Apple and Samsung. On the other hand, Expert No.2 observed that the industry largely focuses on the product itself, with limited emphasis on broader narratives - highlighting Apple as an exception, as it markets and sells its devices through a more distinct approach. Also, Expert No.3 emphasized that selling the device revolves around servitization: "It's not just about the product itself, but about combining it with complementary services, such as maintenance or repair."

When consumers visit retail stores, they typically seek comprehensive information to clarify their needs. As Expert No.7 noted, "they want to know everything… and get a better understanding of what exactly they want." Similarly, Expert No.1 observed that many customers

struggle to choose between two or three models and often rely on the salesperson's expertise, saying: “Many ask for recommendations, such as a good phone under 20,000 UAH. They don’t want to dive deep into research or simply don’t have the time or interest - so the consultant becomes the expert.”

Expert No.1 also emphasized that purchasing electronics is rarely spontaneous, citing market research in Ukraine: “People typically buy electronics once or twice a year. It can take a month or more of consideration.” Additionally, product longevity plays an important role in the purchase decision. As Expert No.7 explained, customers often expect to use Samsung products for several years: “That's something they’re going to have for the next four to five years.” Therefore, consumers do not rush with the final decision, according to the Expert No.1, approximately 75% of consumers begin their decision-making process online - researching via Google, comparing models and prices, reading reviews before visiting physical stores to experience the product firsthand and consult with sales staff.

Consequently, when asked about the degree of localization in sales tactics, Expert No.1 emphasized that global brands like Apple and Samsung dictate much of the local approach: “We do not invent our own approach - they dictate what must appear in materials. And that is how it should be. However, for brands without global marketing, it is up to us to decide how to present and sell the product.” Although, the same expert noted that there might be regional differences depending on the market in promoting specific products. This means that while eco-labels and sustainability may be embedded in global marketing materials, their application in local sales depends largely on how those assets are used in-store, which currently leans heavily toward product features and pricing.

As Expert No.6 discussed the implementation of ISO standards, Expert No.2 and Expert No.4 noted that while there are some eco-labels in the electronics industry, they are not commonly applied to smartphones or tablets: “For example, in computer screen monitors, there’s Energy Star, which relates more to energy consumption rather than the materials used. In France, there’s also something called the Repairability Index, which indicates how easy or complicated it is to repair certain devices.”

Despite the availability of eco-certified devices and environmentally conscious product features, most experts agree that eco-labels play a minimal role in retail sales interactions. As Expert No.1 plainly stated, “Customers are always looking for solutions to their problems… ecology comes in tenth place. The client’s priority is solving a specific issue with a product they are willing to pay a significant amount for.” The Expert No.1 also mentioned that eco-friendly messaging is not the primary selling point: “Certain labeling is present on many products, like on

packaging, but it is not something we highlight or something customers ask about when choosing a particular device. If someone asks, we will explain. It is the case that some eco-related points might be included in sales scripts." Therefore, Expert No.1 confirmed: "No, we don't use green selling tactics for electronics - it's not practical. Sales focus on features, quality, the brand, value for money and the product ecosystem." Expert No.2, Expert No.4 and Expert No.6 agreed to this idea, "I think this environmentally friendly thing is not yet, at least, part of marketing communication."

Regarding product attributes, Expert No.3, Expert No.7 and Expert No.8 highlighted the price of the product and name of the brand, aesthetics, functionality, and energy efficiency being emphasized that to be particularly important. On the other hand, Expert No.4 stated that about 50% of the decision to purchase a particular product depends on price, 25% on functionality or performance, and approximately 25% on environmental friendliness. As Expert No.8 explained branding is the key: "Samsung is appreciated for the possibility of downloading and using free applications, while Apple is known for privacy and security of data." The Expert No.1 also emphasized that brand reputation as a critical factor: "For phones and tablets, Apple and Samsung are leaders, partly because the brand itself implies quality." Furthermore, Expert No.2 along with Expert No.6 noted that "It's probably the image or status that you can obtain through those products." Rather than simply offering a solution to a problem, these products often serve to elevate the buyer's social standing or self-perception.

Expert No.1 noted that, in general, consumers prioritize practical aspects such as ecosystem integration, installment payment options (as many purchases are made on credit), promotional gifts (e.g., headphone discounts with an iPhone), and especially trade-in offers. Trade-in has become particularly popular, allowing customers to exchange old devices and pay the difference for a new one - an approach that is especially well-established for smartphones and tablets. (Expert No.1) Expert No.3 emphasized that repairability is a major issue for consumers today: "When customers look for spare parts for devices like computers or smartphones, they often find it impractical because the cost of the parts can exceed the price of buying a new device. Very few companies truly provide accessible repair services beyond the warranty period. For instance, Apple phones have traditionally been difficult to open or repair without causing damage, though they are gradually improving in this area." Additionally, Expert No.4 emphasized another practicality: "Apple products tend to be purchased more often because they retain value in the secondary market. For branded products, this reusability or resale value is significant, whereas for lower-priced or cheaper devices, this factor is generally not taken into account." However, the same expert noted: "For example, Apple nowadays puts restrictions on this kind of secondary

market business, so if you want to buy used Apple devices, it has to be through official Apple channels. This definitely improves safety and reduces risks - such as buying a broken device, one that hasn't been properly tested, or has malicious software installed, which users often can't verify themselves. Of course, this comes at a cost, as Apple sells these refurbished devices at higher prices." (Expert No.4)

From a product-level perspective, Expert No.3, Expert No.4, Expert No.7 and Expert No.8 confirmed that Samsung highlights fully recyclable packaging and that is what indicated in eco-labels, and trade-in programs are also promoted as a sustainability feature. Expert No.2 also commented on the use of eco-labels in packaging, noting that: "Companies often highlight reductions in packaging or the increased use of recycled materials, such as paper. However, when it comes to the products themselves, these sustainability efforts are not particularly visible. Only a few companies whose entire value proposition revolves around environmental responsibility seem to emphasize it consistently." However, Expert No.9 clarified that eco-labels are not actively marketed: "We don't have specific new devices that promote eco-labels; we just promote that we recycle all devices." In addition, when comparing specific product categories, experts identified distinct audience and use-case profiles. Expert No.7 explained that phones serve everyday functions, while tablets like the Galaxy Tab S10 Ultra are more often purchased as lightweight laptop alternatives. Despite differences in form factor and screen size, Expert No.9 emphasized that both products may share identical chipsets, making the distinction more about use than performance. Also, while discussing specific product sales strategies, Expert No.1 noted: "You can't really separate Apple and Samsung individually. Of course, the product presentations differ - Samsung has its strengths, Apple has its own strengths – but overall, the global approach to sales doesn't change."

Expert No.2 noted that eco-labeling might have more impact in categories like household appliances - such as washing machines or microwaves - that consume significant energy and are used daily. In these cases, some consumers who prioritize energy efficiency may be more inclined to choose products with clear green credentials. In addition, Expert No.2, Expert No.3, Expert No.4, Expert No.6 and Expert No.7 suggested a demographics divide: older customers may be interested in energy efficiency to save on bills, while younger customers are increasingly aware of climate change. If the younger audience is presented with similar products, they will be more likely to choose products that emphasize green initiatives, as they offer "something that's above and beyond." (Expert No.7) Expert No.2 partially agreed to this statement that eco-labeling may have a marginal influence on purchasing decisions when other factors are equal: "It might help a little, but I don't think it would be the main driver behind someone's decision to buy a product."

Supporting this view, Expert No.4 and Expert No.6 noted that even if a product carries green certifications and is marketed as eco-friendly and it costs around 20% more, most people will still opt for the cheaper alternative. Expert No.2 and Expert No.3 also raised concerns about greenwashing in the industry: “There’s been so much greenwashing that consumers may no longer trust broad claims about being green. Instead, they tend to focus more on concrete factors like energy consumption or repairability. Those specific, measurable labels are probably the ones that can genuinely influence buying decisions. General statements like ‘we are climate neutral’ are often seen as empty, since most people know they aren’t entirely true.”

Although some shifts in customer sensitivity were acknowledged (Expert No.5 observed that “compared to 15 years ago, there is a difference”), overall, the ecological theme is not yet a core driver of consumer electronics sales. Expert No.1 concluded: “ecology is not a deciding factor… maybe one in a million people might care and ask.” Also, Expert No.2 stated that sustainability messaging in the industry is often more prominent at the corporate level rather than in direct-to-consumer product advertising. “Of course, companies sometimes present their efforts and numbers - like aiming for CO_2 neutrality - but it’s rarely about the products themselves. From what I’ve observed, these messages seem more directed at investors or regulatory bodies, not everyday consumers. All-in-all, when it comes to daily product advertising, I don’t really see anything related to being more green or environmentally friendly.”

3.3. The impact on performance outcomes in green-labelled consumer electronics businesses, findings from interviews

Expert No.8 noted that while eco-labels can be incorporated into sales strategies, they are unlikely to significantly impact the outcome of a sale. In other words, eco-labels do not necessarily drive sales performance. This view was echoed by Expert No.1, who shared a relevant experience: “I had experience launching a German cosmetics brand that was fully positioned around an ecological theme. The brand was excellent and had a strong, distinctive positioning. But ultimately, it didn’t succeed - neither in Ukraine nor in Europe.”

Expert No.2 and Expert No.4 emphasized that environmental performance efforts are often driven more by regulatory and legal compliance than by sales strategy: “There is legislation in place - stronger in some regions, weaker in others - and I believe that’s the main driver for companies to pursue greener practices and obtain eco-labels. Those green labels on packaging probably don’t make a big difference in sales within this domain. Most companies act because they have to, not necessarily because they want to - except for a few that are genuinely ahead and proactive in sustainability.” Expert No.3, Expert No.4 and Expert No.6 noted that the European

Union has implemented much stricter regulations in the consumer electronics sector, especially regarding the information companies must provide on packaging and products – "their history, matrials used and recycability aspect". As Expert No.4 mentiones: "With this Digital Product Passport, eco-labels offer consumers a degree of reassurance and trust when making purchasing decisions." Expert No.3 also pointed out that annual sustainability reporting is no longer optional for companies in this industry: "Whether you want to or not, you have to complete a 10 to 20-page questionnaire that includes detailed information -not only about your technical capabilities but also about your environmental performance, supported by numerical data."

Expert No.2 also emphasized a broader positive impact on the environmental performance: "Companies that are more proactive about making their products or technology greener tend to have greater overall environmental awareness. This often creates a positive feedback loop - starting with one greener initiative, they then extend efforts across other parts of the company to improve sustainability more broadly." Expert No.4 emphasized that it's not enough for a company to simply label its products as green; the entire company must genuinely commit to environmental responsibility: "For example, it's inconsistent if a company promotes green products while relying on energy generated from coal. True sustainability requires the whole company to operate in an eco-friendly way, such as using green electricity and adopting environmentally conscious practices across the board."

When discussing market competitiveness related to eco-label integration, Expert No.2 highlighted an example: a small mobile phone and computer company producing modular devices with easily replaceable parts. Despite emphasizing sustainability, this company remains very small compared to giants like Apple and Samsung. Thus, focusing solely on green aspects, "I don't think these companies could gain significant market share based on sustainability alone; this value proposition remains largely niche in the industry." On the other hand, Expert No.3 explained that while companies compete with each other, there are also many platforms where even competitors collaborate and share knowledge: "In Estonia, despite being a small country, there are several industry associations that facilitate this exchange and support mutual learning. Of course, there is a balance to maintain - companies don't want to reveal too much to their competitors - but cooperation still plays an important role in advancing shared goals."

Nevertheless, Expert No.1 further emphasized that different sales approaches can directly influence key business metrics such as turnover, financial performance, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Expert No.3 pointed out that offering environmentally friendly products can lead to improved financial performance in the long run: "Many studies suggest that investing in sustainable practices, obtaining eco-labels, and enhancing repair services often creates a win-win

scenario, benefiting both turnover and profitability over time. The challenge, however, lies in the time horizon required for these returns. While large companies can afford to adopt a long-term approach - starting initiatives now and expecting results in five years - small businesses, especially those with just a handful of employees, often lack the resources to invest heavily and wait for such sustainability investments to pay off."

Lastly, the Expert No.1 highlighted the importance of personalized, in-person consultation in driving sales outcomes: "A well-conducted consultation is a very powerful sales tool. Most sales still occur offline, as customers want to physically examine the product, hold it, speak with a real consultant, and ask questions. That's why identifying needs, presenting the product properly, answering questions effectively, and addressing the client's doubts are all essential to helping them select the product that truly fits their needs."

3.4. Discussion of the research findings

Collectively employing a mix of qualitative data, the research enabled a comprehensive examination of the rationale (why) and processes (how) behind the incorporation (or in this case omission) of green labels in sales approaches. It also allowed for an exploration of managerial and expert perceptions regarding their effectiveness in influencing product performance, overall company outcomes, and broader industry trends.

More specifically, interviews highlighted that sales practices in consumer electronics largely follow well-established methodologies such as the SPIN Selling approach was also mentioned along with the Challenger Sales approach, and the 3T sales model - which align with adaptive selling principles, where salespersons adjust their tactics dynamically based on customer cues, emphasizing customer-centricity and problem-solving over hard selling. Nevertheless, with additional insights from observations, product-based selling remains foundational, with a focus on technical specifications and brand value. However, experts also underscored the importance of solution-based selling and conceptual selling, particularly for high-end brands like Apple and Samsung, where emotional and lifestyle elements strongly influence purchases. Customers are not merely buying devices; they are buying an ecosystem, status, and experience.

Contrary to expectations, green selling - defined here as emphasizing environmental benefits, eco-certifications, and sustainability narratives - plays a minor role in retail sales. Despite the presence of eco-labels on products and packaging, most experts agreed these are rarely focal points in sales conversations or marketing mesaging. Environmental claims are often relegated to secondary status behind price, brand, functionality, and user experience. Here are several reasons that could explain this limited influence:

- Consumer priorities: Experts repeatedly noted that customers primarily seek solutions to functional problems. Ecology is “tenth place” or a niche concern for the majority, with very few actively inquiring about environmental features.
- Market dynamics: Green initiatives tend to be driven more by regulation and corporate social responsibility than direct sales incentives. Eco-labels are often compliance-related rather than marketing tools aimed at end consumers.
- Trust issues: Greenwashing concerns make customers skeptical of vague environmental claims, preferring concrete and measurable attributes such as energy efficiency or repairability.

However, the presence of green initiatives within companies does have indirect benefits, contributing to brand reputation, regulatory compliance, and long-term sustainability that may not immediately translate into sales performance but build corporate resilience.

Moreover, the broader findings suggest that sales success in green-labeled consumer electronics hinges on personalized, consultative approaches - those aligned with adaptive and solution-based selling principles. Experts emphasized that thorough consultations, needs assessment, and matching products to consumer lifestyles drive customer satisfaction and loyalty more effectively than environmental messaging alone. Trade-in programs, repairability, ecosystem integration, and promotional financing options significantly influence purchasing decisions, highlighting the importance of combining practical benefits with lifestyle branding. This approach is consistent with conceptual selling, where understanding the customer’s conceptual framework and values guides the sales process.

Although companies like Samsung promote some sustainability features (recyclable packaging, trade-in programs), these are generally part of a broader value proposition rather than standalone green selling tactics. Meanwhile, Apple’s global marketing approach largely dictates local sales strategies, which focus primarily on product excellence and brand prestige rather than eco-centric narratives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study's findings reject the initial assumption that green-labeled consumer electronics companies distinctly deploy environmentally-centered sales approaches compared to non-green selling competitors. Instead, established sales methodologies focusing on customer needs, product features, brand equity, and experiential value continue to dominate. Green selling is still an emergent sales paradigm within consumer electronics industry, constrained by consumer priorities, market realities, and trust challenges. Nonetheless, sustainability remains an important backdrop for future innovation in sales strategies, with the potential to enhance financial outcomes, environmental impact, customer satisfaction, and loyalty - reflecting the principles of triple bottom line performance - as well as legal compliance because consumer awareness and regulatory pressures continue to increase. However, its influence on market competition remains limited; therefore, the hypothesis regarding sustainability's impact on competitive advantage cannot be fully accepted.

In order to make green selling more viable in long-term perspective, companies would need to integrate sustainability authentically across the entire product lifecycle and corporate operations, creating genuine value beyond compliance. Future green selling efforts might benefit from combining adaptive selling with provocation-based selling techniques to educate consumers, challenge their assumptions about electronics consumption, and build emotional connections grounded in shared environmental values. This approach could be especially effective in engaging younger, environmentally conscious demographics. Lastly, as highlighted in the literature analysis and backed up by this empirical research, salespeople would play a crucial role in the process of moving towards more environmentally-centered selling.

Further research on this topic, as suggested by Gorman et al. (2005), could benefit from employing triangulated data collection methods, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide both macro and micro-level perspectives within a single study. Quantitative information could also be used to quantify the impact of specific approaches on performance outcomes, however, that might require internal information which is not feasible to get.

Additionally, other product categories, such as accessories for consumer, warrant exploration due to their clear use of eco-labeling and green messaging electronics (as illustrated in Figure 17), which may also raise potential greenwashing concerns in this sector.

In addition, as depicted in Figure 18, future study can utilise the comparative and longitudinal multiple-case study with embedded units of analysis research strategy. Such model of longitudinal analysis could be used to track changes in sales approaches and performance

outcomes: research could examine the information for many units or cases across more than one point of time. (Neuman, 2014)

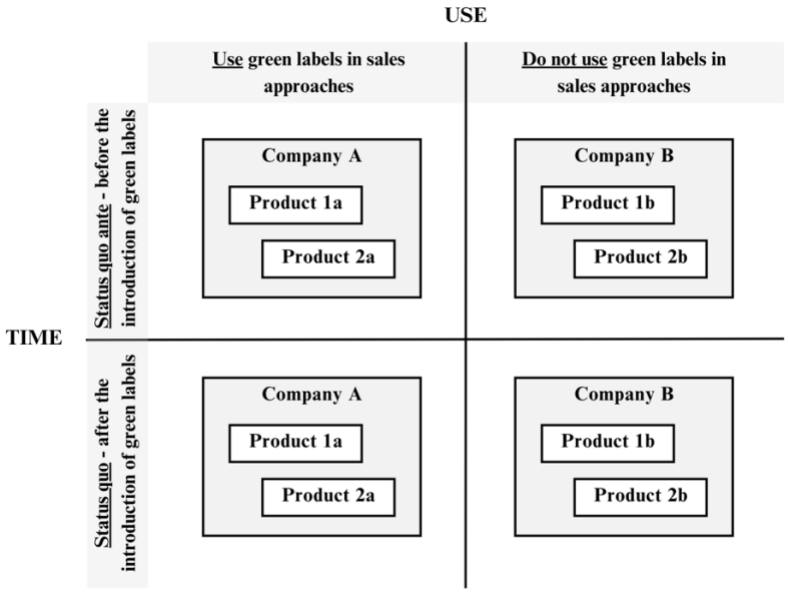
Figure 17

Possible future research product category – accessories for consumer electronics featuring eco-labeling and green messaging.

Source: compiled by the author

Figure 18

Possible future research strategy – longitudinal case study analysis



Source: compiled by the author

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SANTRAUKA

PARDAVIMO POŽIŪRIO ĮTAKA VEIKLOS REZULTATAMS ŽALIOSIOS ETIKETĖS TURINČIŲ BUITINĖS ELEKTRONIKOS ĮMONIŲ SEKTORIUJE

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Vilnius, 2025

78 puslapiai, 18 paveikslų, 79 šaltiniai

Šiame darbe nagrinėjamas įvairių pardavimo metodų poveikis tvarių plataus vartojimo elektronikos įmonių veiklos rezultatams. Reaguodamos į augančius aplinkosauginius rūpesčius ir reguliavimo spaudimą, daugelis plataus vartojimo elektronikos sektoriaus įmonių pradeda taikyti ekologiško ženklinimo praktiką. Nepaisant gausių tyrimų apie pardavimo strategijas ir ekologišką ženklinimą atskirai, vis dar stokojama supratimo apie tai, kaip pardavimo metodai veikia įmonių veiklos rezultatus žaliuoju ženklinimu pažymėtų produktų kontekste. Pasitelkiant daugelio atvejų tyrimo metodą su įterptais analizės vienetais ir taikant įvairiapusį kokybinį tyrimo dizainą, šiame tyrime analizuojami tiek į aplinką orientuoti, tiek ne į aplinką orientuoti pardavimo metodai Europos Sąjungoje veikiančiose žaliuoju ženklinimu pažymėtose plataus vartojimo elektronikos įmonėse. Priešingai nei buvo manyta iš pradžių, tyrimas parodė, kad tokios įmonės nenuosekliai taiko išskirtinius, į aplinkosaugą orientuotus pardavimo metodus, palyginti su jų neekologiškais konkurentais. Vietoje to tradicinės pardavimo strategijos, taikomos pramonėje, padeda gerinti finansinius rezultatus, aplinkosauginius rodiklius, klientų pasitenkinimą, lojalumą (visa tai atitinka trigubos atsakomybės (angl. triple bottom line) principus) bei laikymąsi teisinių reikalavimų. Vis dėlto, jų įtaka rinkos konkurencingumui yra ribota, todėl hipotezė dėl tvarumo poveikio konkurenciniam pranašumui negali būti visiškai patvirtinta.

SUMMARY

THE IMPACT OF SALES APPROACHES ON PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES IN GREEN-LABELLED CONSUMER ELECTRONICS BUSINESSES

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This thesis investigates the impact of various sales approaches on the performance outcomes of sustainable consumer electronics companies. In response to growing environmental concerns and regulatory pressures, many firms in the consumer electronics sector are adopting green labeling practices. Despite extensive research on sales strategies and green labeling individually, there is limited understanding of how sales approaches influence performance in the context of green-labeled products. Using a multiple-case study approach with embedded units of analysis, combined with a multi-method qualitative design, this study explores both environmentally-centered and non-environmentally centered sales approaches within green-labeled consumer electronics companies in the European Union. Contrary to the initial assumptions, the study concludes that green-labeled consumer electronics companies do not consistently adopt distinct environmentally-centered sales approaches compared to their non-green counterparts. Instead, traditional sales strategies utilised in the inductry help to improve financial outcomes, environmental performance, customer satisfaction, loyalty (all in line with the triple bottom line framework), and regulatory compliance. However, its influence on market competitiveness appears limited, and therefore, the hypothesis regarding sustainability's impact on competitive advantage cannot be fully supported.