

Motivating Sales Reps for Innovation Selling in Different Cultures

Innovation commercialization, an important managerial challenge, depends heavily on the sales force for its success. However, little empirical research has examined how firms should direct sales reps in this task in a global, multicultural context. Drawing on self-determination theory, this study investigates how to motivate sales reps for innovation selling in different cultures with various financial and nonfinancial steering instruments. The authors collected data in two waves from sales reps in 38 countries on four continents, making this study one of the largest international investigations in sales research. Results reveal that steering instruments should correspond closely with reps' national culture in terms of power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. For example, findings show that whereas individualism strengthens the positive relationship between variable compensation for innovation-sales results and financial innovation performance through innovation-selling motivation, power distance and uncertainty avoidance weaken this relationship. Results also reveal that long-term orientation strengthens the positive relationship between supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results and financial innovation performance through innovation-selling motivation.

Keywords: business-to-business marketing, innovation, national culture, sales force steering, self-determination theory

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The commercialization of innovations is a major success factor for firms but also represents a strong managerial challenge (Ahearne et al. 2010; Fu et al. 2010). Early research examining these issues has provided valuable initial insights. Specifically, prior studies have indicated that innovation selling differs strongly from the commercialization of established products because innovations are often complex and difficult for sales reps to understand (Atuahene-Gima 1997; Rackham 1998). Thus, many salespeople are reluctant to expend the energy to comprehend new offerings and to convince customers of their additional value (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). Previous investigators have therefore emphasized that sales force steering¹ should

especially focus on motivating sales reps for innovation selling (Atuahene-Gima 1997; Fu et al. 2010).

However, insights on sales force steering regarding innovation commercialization are scarce (Ahearne et al. 2010). In addition, because prior research has examined such issues almost exclusively within single countries, the literature offers little guidance for how to motivate sales reps for innovation selling in different cultures. This neglect is surprising given the increasingly international nature of innovation commercialization (Tellis, Prabhu, and Chandy 2009) and the evidence indicating that around the globe, many firms fail to encourage their sales forces to focus on innovation selling (Ahearne et al. 2010; Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000).

The literature relevant to this study essentially falls into two main categories. The first encompasses research scrutinizing steering issues regarding innovation commercialization (Ahearne et al. 2010; Fu et al. 2010; Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). This line of research demonstrates that motivating successful innovation selling is particularly challenging because established steering instruments can have varying effects in the innovation context (Ahearne et al. 2010). For instance, evidence has indicated that close guidance with regard to innovation commercialization fosters sales reps' innovation-selling motivation because reps are likely to consider these directions as helpful advice on how to better cope with this novel challenge (Atuahene-Gima 1997). However, prior work has also found that in the context of established products, sales reps may interpret such close guidance as micromanagement or surveillance, resulting in diminished motivation (Merchant and Van der Stede 2012; Ramaswami 1996).

¹By "sales force steering," we refer to all mechanisms that firms can employ to motivate their sales reps for desired activities. Thus, sales force steering includes firms' general behavior- and outcome-control strategies (Oliver and Anderson 1994), as well as the use of particular monetary or nonmonetary instruments, such as incentives (Kishore et al. 2013) or educational measures (Lassk et al. 2012).

Sebastian Hohenberg is Assistant Professor, Marketing Department, University of Mannheim (e-mail: sebastian.hohenberg@bwl.uni-mannheim.de). Christian Homburg is Professor of Marketing, Chair of the Marketing Department, and Director of the Institute for Market-Oriented Management, University of Mannheim (e-mail: homburg@bwl.uni-mannheim.de). The authors thank the *JM* review team for their insightful suggestions during the review process, as well as Martin Artz, Alexander Hahn, Martin Klarmann, Christina Kuehnl, Dirk Totzek, and Arnd Vomberg for their helpful comments. Robert Palmatier served as area editor for this article.

The second literature category comprises research focusing on intercultural steering issues. For example, this research has shown that employees have varying preferences regarding incentive schemes and rewards in different countries (Chiang 2005; Fisher and Yuan 1998) and that, across various countries, companies employ diverse types of compensation practices and structures (Gomez-Mejia and Welbourne 1991; Jansen, Merchant, and Van der Stede 2009; Segalla et al. 2006). In addition, prior studies in this category have examined national culture as a moderator of the relationships between sales force control strategies and sales rep behavior and satisfaction (Onyemah, Rouziès, and Panagopoulos 2010; Rouziès and Macquin 2003).

However, prior research relevant to this study is subject to at least three major limitations. First, studies have focused on either innovation commercialization issues in single countries or intercultural steering issues in general work settings. Thus, knowledge is scarce on how to motivate sales reps in different cultures for unique sales challenges, such as innovation selling. Second, prior studies have either investigated general sales force control strategies (i.e., behavior and outcome control) or focused on intercultural differences in compensation. Therefore knowledge is also scarce regarding how to motivate sales reps in different cultures through specific nonfinancial steering instruments, such as supervisor support (Jaworski and Kohli 1991; Kohli, Shervani, and Challagalla 1998), supervisor appreciation (Ryan and Deci 2000; Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1977), and selling education (Lassk et al. 2012). Third, in line with intercultural sales research in general, previous studies have typically investigated sales force steering only in certain countries, such as the United States or “similar, Western, developed economies” (Baldauf and Lee 2011, p. 212), resulting in limited understanding of sales force issues in other cultures (Panagopoulos et al. 2011).

Against this background, this study advances prior work in three major ways (see Table 1). First, we examine how to motivate sales reps in different cultures for innovation selling, which represents a unique challenge for sales reps. This study thus overcomes the first key limitation of previous research. In addition, we address recent calls for more nuanced analyses of sales force steering in general (Darmon and Martin 2011) and with regard to innovation commercialization in particular (Ahearne et al. 2010; Fu et al. 2010).

Second, we look at a range of financial and nonfinancial steering instruments, thus surmounting the second key limitation of prior research. More precisely, we investigate four important steering instruments: (1) variable compensation for innovation-sales results, (2) supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, (3) education for innovation selling, and (4) supervisor support for innovation selling. We examine as dependent constructs sales reps’ innovation-selling motivation and financial innovation performance.

Third, we use data collected from 406 sales reps of an international business-to-business supplier. These salespeople represent 38 countries on four continents. Consequently, this investigation not only overcomes the third key limitation of previous studies but also delivers one of the most far-reaching

international studies in sales research (Panagopoulos et al. 2011). Our study thus responds to various calls for research that provides actionable implications regarding sales force issues in broader international settings (Baldauf and Lee 2011; MSI 2014; Panagopoulos et al. 2011). In addition, we collected our data at two points in time—an important characteristic of our study because multiphase data collections are often demanded by marketing and sales researchers but are only seldom realized (Podsakoff et al. 2003; Rindfleisch et al. 2008).

Altogether, this study provides managers with actionable implications for directing their sales forces for innovation selling in different cultures. Most importantly, our results show that sales force steering instruments should be closely aligned to sales reps’ national culture in terms of four dimensions: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). For example, our findings indicate that the total effect on financial innovation performance increases by more than 350% when firms apply variable compensation for innovation-sales results in highly individualistic (vs. less individualistic) cultures. Our results also reveal that financial innovation performance increases by more than 300% when firms employ supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results in cultures with high power distance (vs. low power distance). Overall, the average variation of all instruments’ total effects across high versus low values for each cultural dimension is greater than 100%. Thus, on the basis of the study’s entire results, for sales reps from power-distant cultures (e.g., Brazil, China, India), we recommend that managers focus on steering measures that involve close interaction with the direct supervisor, such as appreciation for innovation-sales results. In contrast, for sales reps from highly individualistic cultures (e.g., the Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States), we recommend a focus on steering measures that do not entail such close interaction with the supervisor, such as variable compensation for innovation-sales results or education for innovation selling. For sales reps from cultures with high uncertainty avoidance (e.g., Belgium, Portugal, Romania) or high long-term orientation (e.g., Slovakia, South Korea, Taiwan), we advise focusing on supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results.

Theory, Conceptual Framework, and Constructs

We anchor our study in self-determination theory (SDT). In essence, SDT aims to explain the formation and change of motivated human behavior (Ryan and Deci 2000), thus offering a useful foundation for this study. In the following section, we briefly introduce SDT, develop the study’s conceptual framework, and define all variables in this framework by drawing on SDT.

Self-Determination Theory

The primary assumption of SDT is that individuals are active, learning-oriented organisms whose motivational states and performance are strongly influenced by the social

TABLE 1
Overview of Existing Research Fields and Contributions of This Study

	Previous Research Relevant to This Study		This Study	
	Sales Force Steering with Regard to Innovation Commercialization	Intercultural Sales Force Steering	Research Gap Filled by This Study	Contribution of This Study
Key studies	Ahearne et al. (2010); Fu et al. (2010); Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000)	Chiang (2005); Onyemah, Rouziès, and Panagopoulos (2010); Rouziès and Macquin (2003); Segalla et al. (2006)		
Dominant research context	Investigation of sales reps within single countries	Investigation of employees across different functions (e.g., service, marketing, sales, human resources) or investigations of sales reps with regard to their general work behavior or attitudes	Prior research has either focused on antecedents of innovation commercialization within single countries or examined intercultural steering issues in more general work settings (thus not making statements specific for innovation commercialization).	Contribution 1: Investigation of how to motivate sales reps to sell innovations in different cultures
Selective research insights regarding investigated steering instruments	In the innovation commercialization context, sales force control strategies (i.e., behavior and outcome control) have varying influences. For instance, outcome-oriented control improves the innovation-selling performance of sales reps, whereas behavior-oriented control reduces it.	<p>In different countries,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees have varying preferences for rewards and incentives. For example, employees from Hong Kong rank the basic salary as more important than employees from the United Kingdom. • Companies employ different types of compensation schemes. For example, Dutch firms are less likely to employ variable compensation than U.S. firms. • Sales force control has a varying influence. For example, cultural performance orientation strengthens the relationship of behavioral control and sales reps' focus on the customer. 	Previous research has either investigated behavior and outcome control or focused on financial instruments when considering intercultural differences in specific steering measures.	Contribution 2: Investigation of intercultural differences in the impact of specific financial and nonfinancial steering instruments
Scope of investigated countries	The determinants of successful innovation selling are essentially assessed within single developed countries (e.g., United States, Netherlands).	Reward preferences, compensation systems or practices, and the influence of sales force control are assessed in up to six developed countries (e.g., France, United Kingdom, United States) simultaneously.	Previous research has focused on studying only a few developed countries.	Contribution 3: Investigation of sales reps from 38 countries on four continents, including developing, emerging, and developed countries

environment they engage with (Ryan and Deci 2004). In accordance with this premise, SDT expects individuals to behave differently in particular situations, first, because they receive varying impulses from their immediate social environment, and second, because they differ with regard to their inner resources (Gagné and Deci 2005).

Prior work on SDT has demonstrated that environmental impulses and inner resources conjointly translate to motivational states that eventually manifest in performance (Grant et al. 2011). According to SDT, this transition occurs because the combination of various environmental impulses and inner resources facilitates the satisfaction or frustration of three basic human needs: the need for competence, the need for autonomy, and the need for relatedness (Ryan and Deci 2000). More specifically, the *basic need for competence* refers to the impetus to feel effective in mastering one's environment; the *basic need for relatedness* is defined as the urge to feel connected to others; and the *basic need for autonomy* denotes the desire to experience behaviors as an expression of the self (Ryan and Deci 2004).

As Figure 1 shows, this study builds on these insights and investigates environmental impulses (i.e., sales force steering and sales reps' national culture), inner resources (i.e., sales rep-level variables), motivational states (i.e., innovation-selling motivation), and performance consequences (i.e., financial innovation performance). In addition, the hypothesis development draws on each of the three basic needs to explain how environmental impulses and inner resources manifest in motivational states and performance.

Conceptual Framework and Constructs

Endogenous variables. We conceptualize innovation performance as the dependent variable of this study. As outlined previously, this conceptualization builds on SDT because, according to this theory, performance variables represent the common ultimate consequences (Gagné and Deci 2005; Ryan and Deci 2004). In line with prior work on innovation commercialization (Ahearne et al. 2010; Fu et al. 2010), we focus on innovation performance in terms of financial metrics. Specifically, we define *financial innovation performance* as the extent to which sales reps are able to generate favorable financial outcomes for the innovations in their portfolios in terms of market share and profits (Song and Parry 1997).

In addition, we conceptualize sales reps' innovation-selling motivation as a mediator of the relationship of sales force steering instruments and financial innovation performance. This consideration also builds on SDT, which argues that particular impulses from the environment (i.e., sales force steering instruments) manifest in performance consequences (i.e., financial innovation performance) through task-specific motivational states (i.e., innovation-selling motivation) that essentially fall into the categories of autonomous and controlled motivation (Boivie, Graffin, and Pollock 2012; Ryan and Deci 2004). This study focuses on *autonomous innovation-selling motivation* (i.e., sales reps' drive to sell innovations that arises from their own free will) as the endogenous motivation construct. Thus, we acknowledge

that—per SDT—autonomous motivation is generally the considerably stronger driver of performance as compared with controlled motivation (Gagné and Deci 2005). As a consequence, recent empirical studies across various related fields have also focused on autonomous motivation in their analyses (De Cooman et al. 2013; Fang and Gerhart 2012; Reinholt, Pedersen, and Foss 2011).

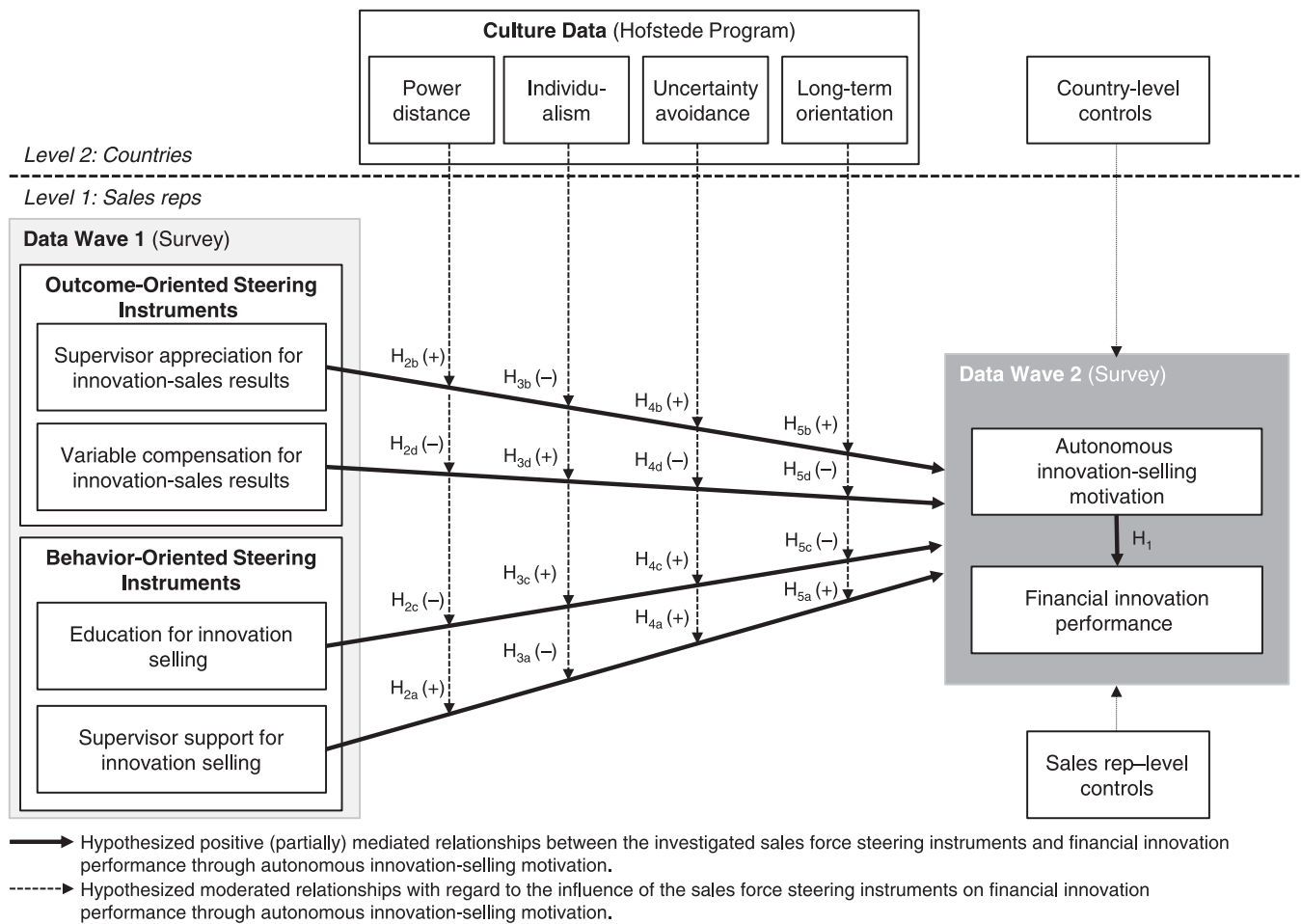
Exogenous variables. Drawing on SDT, we examine as independent variables four typical steering instruments intended to foster sales reps' innovation commercialization: (1) variable compensation for innovation-sales results, (2) supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, (3) education for innovation selling, and (4) supervisor support for innovation selling. Together, these four instruments reflect a broad range of steering mechanisms that are covered by the literature (Anderson and Oliver 1987; Brown et al. 2005; Darmon and Martin 2011; Merchant and Van der Stede 2012; Spiro, Rich, and Stanton 2008). As we show in Figure 1, these instruments are either behavior oriented (supervisor support and education for innovation selling) or outcome oriented (supervisor appreciation and variable compensation for innovation-sales results).

On the basis of previous work investigating variable compensation (Lo, Ghosh, and Lafontaine 2011; Rouziès et al. 2009), we define *variable compensation for innovation-sales results* as the extent to which sales reps receive monetary compensation based on their innovation-selling performance. Similarly, we define *supervisor appreciation of innovation-sales results* as the extent to which sales reps receive from their direct supervisor intangible recognition, such as praise or awards, for their innovation-selling performance (Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1977). We investigate these instruments because sales management commonly employs such outcome-oriented incentives (Krafft, Albers, and Lal 2004; Spiro, Rich, and Stanton 2008). In addition, previous studies have emphasized the potentially strong effects of these instruments in the innovation context (Ahearne et al. 2010; Atuahene-Gima 1997).

We define *education for innovation selling* as the extent to which sales reps receive training and information regarding innovation selling centrally from their organization (Lassk et al. 2012; Leach, Liu, and Johnston 2005). We investigate education for innovation selling because its capability-building measures play an essential role in developing sales reps' competences in novel solutions, thus potentially fostering their innovation-selling motivation (Atuahene-Gima 1997). In addition, we define *supervisor support for innovation selling* as the extent to which sales reps receive encouragement and support for innovation selling decentrally from their direct supervisor (DeConinck and Johnson 2009; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Rich 2001). This perspective builds on prior research that has emphasized the important role of supervisors in shaping sales reps' attitudes and behaviors (Ahearne et al. 2013; Jaworski and Kohli 1991), which is especially germane to innovation selling (Kuester, Homburg, and Hess 2012).

Moderating variables. Further drawing on SDT, we conceptualize various dimensions of sales reps' national culture as moderating variables. Specifically, as prior work on

FIGURE 1
The Influence of National Culture on the Effectiveness of Sales Force Steering Instruments



SDT has pointed out, analyzing the motivational effect of steering instruments requires the consideration of individuals' national culture as a contingency factor, owing to "variability in the emphasis placed upon these basic psychological needs across cultures" (Chen et al. 2015, p. 218). More precisely, although SDT postulates that all people around the globe share the same three basic needs, this theory acknowledges that the importance individuals ascribe to competence, relatedness, and autonomy may vary according to their cultural imprint (Ryan and Deci 2004). This variation implies that a specific steering instrument that affects motivation by satisfying a particular combination of the three basic needs can have a strong motivational effect in one culture but a substantially lesser effect in another culture (Chirkov et al. 2003).

In line with previous intercultural research (Samaha, Beck, and Palmatier 2014; Steenkamp, Ter Hofstede, and Wedel 1999), we draw on the seminal work of Geert Hofstede (1980) to conceptualize sales reps' national culture. More precisely, we focus on the four cultural dimensions that relate most importantly to the study's context: *power distance* (the degree to which societies accept that power is distributed unequally), *individualism* (the degree to which societies

expect individuals to take care of only themselves and their immediate relatives), *uncertainty avoidance* (the degree to which societies feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity), and *long-term orientation* (the degree to which societies attach value to the future and prioritize future attainments). We do not investigate the remaining two dimensions of Hofstede's framework (i.e., masculinity and indulgence) because they are less germane to influencing the consequences of steering instruments (Chiang 2005; Segalla et al. 2006).

Controls. To account for sales reps' inner resources, we employ two controls at the sales rep level: selling experience and job satisfaction, which researchers have identified as important individual drivers in studies based on SDT (Fernet, Gagné, and Austin 2010; Kovjanic et al. 2012). In addition, we also control for economic wealth and national education level to account for other noncultural differences between societies (Tellis, Stremersch, and Yin 2003).

Hypothesis Development

According to SDT, steering instruments drive sales reps' motivation and performance (Ryan and Deci 2004). Prior

work on sales force steering has closely examined these relationships (Cravens et al. 1993; Fang and Gerhart 2012; Oliver and Anderson 1994), and these links are also well established in the innovation-commercialization literature (Atuahene-Gima 1997; Fu et al. 2010). We therefore do not develop detailed hypotheses for these main relationships and instead summarize the basic rationales in Table 2. Briefly, these rationales explain that the steering instruments enhance sales reps' autonomous innovation-selling motivation by adding to the satisfaction of one or more of the three basic needs (i.e., the need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy). In addition, these rationales theorize a positive influence of autonomous innovation-selling motivation on financial innovation performance. Therefore, these rationales together provide the underlying SDT logic for the indirect influence of the steering instruments on financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

However, SDT also suggests that sales force steering instruments may affect financial innovation performance through other, weaker routes (Ryan and Deci 2004). Empirical studies from the general sales force context also report that, in addition to having an indirect influence via motivation, steering measures may have a direct relationship with performance (Cravens et al. 1993; Oliver and Anderson 1994). We integrate these insights and apply them to the study's context. Specifically, we expect an at least partially mediating role of autonomous innovation-selling motivation in the impact of the investigated sales force steering instruments on financial innovation performance. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H₁: Autonomous innovation-selling motivation at least partially mediates the relationship between sales force steering instruments and financial innovation performance.

The following hypothesis development analyzes the moderating role of national culture on the effectiveness of the investigated sales force steering instruments. More precisely, we focus the ensuing hypotheses on the indirect influence of the steering instruments on financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation. This is because—per SDT—this indirect influence constitutes the substantially stronger driver of performance as compared with potential alternative routes (Ryan and Deci 2004). In addition, in the results section, we provide empirical evidence that (1) the moderated indirect effects are generally larger than the moderated direct effects, and (2) the moderated indirect effects thus essentially determine the direction and size of the moderated total effects on financial innovation performance.

Moderating Role of Power Distance

As prior research has shown (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010), societies with high power distance differ from less power-distant cultures in that these societies appreciate and expect that power is distributed unequally. Prior investigators have demonstrated that, owing to these attributes, cultures with high power distance tend to develop more nuanced hierarchical structures because members of these societies willingly accept and value the inequalities

that accompany the status, power, or wealth of others (Gomez-Mejia and Welbourne 1991; House et al. 2004). Related literature has found that such intense hierarchies increase the importance of being well connected to others because, for example, individual progress in such systems (vs. those of less power-distant cultures) depends more heavily on the quality of relationships with superiors or peers (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). Thus, according to the logic of SDT, these findings imply that the basic need for relatedness is more important in cultures with high power distance (Chen et al. 2015; Chirkov et al. 2003).

We apply these insights to this study's context of intercultural sales force steering with regard to innovation commercialization. More precisely, we argue that steering instruments that involve close interactions with the direct supervisor (i.e., supervisor support for innovation selling and supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results) are particularly effective in power-distant cultures. We anticipate this response because such instruments drive sales reps' innovation-selling motivation by enhancing the satisfaction of the basic need for relatedness (Table 2), which is the basic need that is particularly important in power-distant cultures (Chen et al. 2015). We therefore expect sales reps from power-distant cultures to especially value satisfaction of the basic need for relatedness, which is achieved through supervisor support for innovation selling and supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, thus further adding to their autonomous innovation-selling motivation, which manifests in greater financial innovation performance (Gagné and Deci 2005). Thus:

H_{2a-b}: Power distance strengthens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of (a) supervisor support for innovation selling and (b) supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

In contrast, we expect that power distance weakens the positive relationship with financial innovation performance of variable compensation for innovation-sales results and education for innovation selling. Specifically, previous investigators have shown that cultures with high power distance strongly value hierarchical systems in which everybody has a place that needs no further justification (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). Thus, related research has found that for various employees from such societies (vs. employees from less power-distant societies), acting independently is less important because they appreciate dependencies with superiors and peers in hierarchical systems (House et al. 2004). Following the reasoning of SDT, then, the basic need for autonomy has less relevance in cultures with high power distance (Ryan and Deci 2004).

We apply these insights to this study's context. More precisely, we contend that steering instruments fostering sales reps' personal freedom and perceived independence in innovation commercialization (i.e., education for innovation selling and variable compensation for innovation-sales results) are less effective in cultures with high power distance. We anticipate this response because such instruments drive financial innovation performance via autonomous innovation-selling motivation especially by enhancing the

TABLE 2
Summary of Main Relationships

Main Relationships	Basic Rationales for Relationships	Selected Supporting Literature
Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results and supervisor support for innovation selling are positively related to sales reps' autonomous innovation-selling motivation.	Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results and supervisor support for innovation selling both provide sales reps with important advice and feedback on how to further improve at innovation selling. Such specific directions by the supervisor make sales reps more proficient at innovation selling, enhancing the satisfaction of their basic need for competence and, thus, driving sales reps' autonomous innovation-selling motivation. In addition, both steering instruments increase the interactions of sales reps and their supervisors. In the context of innovation commercialization, sales reps are likely to appreciate such close guidance by the supervisor, which improves the sales rep-supervisor relationship. These responses add to the satisfaction of sales reps' basic need for relatedness, driving their autonomous innovation-selling motivation.	Ahearne et al. (2010); Atuahene-Gima (1997); Gagné and Deci (2005); Ryan and Deci (2004)
Variable compensation for innovation-sales results is positively related to sales reps' autonomous innovation-selling motivation.	Variable compensation for innovation-sales results contributes to sales reps' perceived freedom in innovation selling by increasing the reps' awareness of their personal achievements at innovation commercialization and by heightening their financial independence. These consequences therefore add to the satisfaction of the reps' basic need for autonomy and, thus, drive their autonomous innovation-selling motivation.	Ahearne et al. (2010); Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000); Ryan and Deci (2000)
Education for innovation selling is positively related to sales reps' autonomous innovation-selling motivation.	During education for innovation selling, sales reps learn and practice new innovation-selling techniques and skills. These novel qualifications make the sales reps more proficient at innovation selling, enhancing the satisfaction of their basic need for competence and, thus, driving sales reps' autonomous innovation-selling motivation. In addition, education for innovation selling adds to the personal independence of sales reps, who may, for example, conduct innovation selling more freely and independently after having attended such educational events. These responses add to the satisfaction of the reps' basic need for autonomy, thus driving their autonomous innovation-selling motivation.	Fu et al. (2010); Gagné and Deci (2005); Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000)
Autonomous motivation for innovation selling is positively related to financial performance of innovations.	SDT argues that motivated people strive harder to succeed in their tasks, which ultimately leads to higher performance outcomes. Thus, sales reps experiencing autonomous motivation to sell innovations are likely to put more effort into this challenge, which results in higher financial innovation performance.	Atuahene-Gima (1997); Ryan and Deci (2004)
		Fu et al. (2010); Gagné and Deci (2005); Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (1997)

satisfaction of the basic need for autonomy (Table 2), which is less important in power-distant cultures (Chen et al. 2015). Thus:

H_{2c-d}: Power distance weakens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of (c) education for innovation selling and (d) variable compensation for innovation-sales results, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

Moderating Role of Individualism

Prior work has indicated that individualistic societies strongly value the feelings of personal freedom and independence and disparage perceptions of surveillance and control (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). Owing to these preferences, previous investigators have demonstrated that having close connections to others is less important for employees from

individualistic societies (vs. employees from less individualistic societies) because they more strongly value privacy and tend to be more self-oriented (Gomez-Mejia and Welbourne 1991; Hofstede 2001). In terms of SDT, these findings indicate that the basic need for relatedness is less important in individualistic cultures (Chen et al. 2015).

Adapting these insights to this study's context, we argue that steering instruments that are accompanied by an increase in interactions with the direct supervisors (i.e., supervisor support for innovation selling and supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results) are less effective in individualistic societies. This response occurs because—per SDT—such instruments drive financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation by enhancing the satisfaction of the basic need for relatedness (Table 2). However, as outlined in the previous paragraph, the basic need for relatedness is less important for sales reps from individualistic cultures, which reduces the increase in autonomous innovation-selling motivation these reps gain from supervisor support for innovation selling or supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results and results in lower financial innovation performance (Gagné and Deci 2005). Thus:

H_{3a-b}: Individualism weakens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of (a) supervisor support for innovation selling and (b) supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

In contrast, we anticipate that individualism strengthens the positive relationship with financial innovation performance of variable compensation for innovation-sales results and education for innovation selling. Specifically, as outlined earlier, individualistic cultures strongly value feelings of independence and personal freedom (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010; Segalla et al. 2006), and prior research has found that for employees from such societies, acting autonomously and independently is highly important (House et al. 2004). Thus, according to SDT, these results indicate that the basic need for autonomy is particularly meaningful in individualistic cultures (Chen et al. 2015; Chirkov et al. 2003).

We build on these insights. More precisely, we argue that steering instruments that promote sales reps' independence and perceived self-determination in innovation commercialization (i.e., education for innovation selling and variable compensation for innovation-sales results) are more effective in individualistic cultures. We anticipate this response because such instruments drive financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation by enhancing the satisfaction of the basic need for autonomy (Table 2), which, as outlined earlier in this article, is especially important in individualistic cultures. Thus:

H_{3c-d}: Individualism strengthens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of (c) education for innovation selling and (d) variable compensation for innovation-sales results, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

Moderating Role of Uncertainty Avoidance

Existing research has shown that uncertainty-avoidant societies feel uncomfortable with risk and ambiguity (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). As a consequence, prior investigators have found that employees from uncertainty-avoidant societies especially strive to reduce ambiguities and various performance risks, for example, by improving their ability and proficiency in particular tasks and challenges (Gomez-Mejia and Welbourne 1991; House et al. 2004). According to SDT, these findings indicate that the basic need for competence is particularly important in uncertainty-avoidant cultures (Chen et al. 2015).

We apply these insights to the study's context. More precisely, we argue that steering instruments that further sales reps' innovation-selling proficiency (i.e., supervisor support for innovation selling, supervisor appreciation for innovation-selling results, and education for innovation selling) are particularly effective in uncertainty-avoidant cultures. This response occurs because such instruments drive financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation by enhancing the satisfaction of the basic need for competence (Table 2), which is the more important basic need in these cultures (Chen et al. 2015). Because of these interrelationships, we expect sales reps from uncertainty-avoidant cultures to especially value satisfaction of the basic need for competence that results from these steering instruments. These consequences further increase sales reps' autonomous innovation-selling motivation, manifesting in higher financial innovation performance. Thus:

H_{4a-c}: Uncertainty avoidance strengthens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of (a) supervisor support for innovation selling, (b) supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, and (c) education for innovation selling, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

In contrast, we expect that uncertainty avoidance weakens the positive relationship with financial innovation performance of variable compensation for innovation-sales results. Specifically, because uncertainty-avoidant cultures aim to reduce risk and ambiguity, prior research has found that employees from these cultures focus less on acting independently in new challenges (vs. employees from less uncertainty-avoidant cultures; House et al. 2004). For example, independent actions can make new challenges more risky by adding to the accountability for a potential failure (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010; Segalla et al. 2006). Thus, in terms of SDT, these results indicate that the basic need for autonomy is less important in uncertainty-avoidant cultures (Chen et al. 2015).

In applying these insights to this study's context, we argue that variable compensation for innovation-sales results is less effective in uncertainty-avoidant cultures. We anticipate this response because this instrument drives financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation mainly by enhancing the satisfaction of the basic need for autonomy. However, as outlined earlier, the basic need for autonomy is less important in uncertainty-avoidant cultures. We therefore make the following hypothesis:

H_{4d}: Uncertainty avoidance weakens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of variable compensation for innovation-sales results, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

Moderating Role of Long-Term Orientation

Cultures with a strong long-term orientation place high value on the future and thus prioritize future attainments over present accomplishments (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). Consequently, prior work has indicated that for employees from such cultures, being well connected with others is highly important, as is expanding personal abilities, because good relationships and individual competences may represent important antecedents for future success (House et al. 2004). Thus, in terms of SDT, these findings imply that the basic needs for competence and relatedness are especially important in long-term-oriented cultures (Ryan and Deci 2004).

We apply these insights to the study's context. More precisely, we argue that supervisor support for innovation selling and supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results are particularly effective in long-term-oriented cultures. We anticipate this response because such instruments enhance the satisfaction of the basic needs for competence and relatedness (Table 2), which are the two basic needs that are particularly important in long-term-oriented cultures (Chen et al. 2015). Consequently, we expect sales reps from these cultures to especially value satisfaction of these basic needs, which is achieved through these steering instruments (i.e., supervisor support for innovation selling and supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results), thus further increasing their autonomous innovation-selling motivation and manifesting in higher financial innovation performance (Gagné and Deci 2005). Thus:

H_{5a-b}: Long-term orientation strengthens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of (a) supervisor support for innovation selling, and (b) supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

In contrast, we expect that long-term orientation weakens the positive relationship with financial innovation performance of education for innovation selling and variable compensation for innovation-sales results. Specifically, long-term-oriented societies strongly value future attainments (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010). As a result, prior research has found that employees from such societies (vs. employees from less long-term-oriented societies) consider acting independently in the present to be less important because current autonomy may decrease future potentials, as, for example, when a trade-off occurs between present and future consumption of resources (House et al. 2004). Thus, according to SDT, these findings indicate that satisfaction of the basic need for autonomy has less relevance in long-term-oriented cultures (Ryan and Deci 2004).

We apply these insights to this study's context. Specifically, we contend that steering instruments fostering sales reps' current personal freedom and perceived independence in innovation commercialization (i.e., education for innovation selling and variable compensation for innovation-sales

results) are less effective in cultures with a high long-term orientation. We anticipate this response because such instruments drive financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation, especially by enhancing the satisfaction of the basic need for autonomy, which, as shown in the previous paragraph, is less important in long-term-oriented societies. As an illustration, consider that training budgets are often limited for each sales rep (Spiro, Rich, and Stanton 2008). Consequently, participation in innovation-selling education events reduces the possibility of participating in other potentially more valuable training in the future. In addition, as prior work on innovation commercialization has demonstrated (Atuahene-Gima 1997; Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000), participation in such specific training events, as well as monetary rewards for outstanding innovation-commercialization results, can serve as signals to managers to increasingly assign these reps to innovation-commercialization tasks, which may reduce these reps' autonomy in the future. Because both of these steering instruments focus on encouraging present autonomy, potentially at the expense of future potentials, we make the following hypothesis:

H_{5c-d}: Long-term orientation weakens the positive indirect relationship with financial innovation performance of (c) education for innovation selling, and (d) variable compensation for innovation-sales results, through autonomous innovation-selling motivation.

Method

Research Setting and Data Collection

To test our hypotheses, we collected data from a global chemical supplier. Our unit of analysis is the individual sales rep who offers specialty chemical solutions to his or her customers. To mitigate common method variance, we conducted the survey in two waves (Rindfleisch et al. 2008).

In total, we invited 614 sales reps to participate in the survey. The first questionnaire collected data regarding the reps' personal information and their perceptions of sales force steering at the firm (i.e., exogenous variables and controls). The second questionnaire focused on the endogenous variables (i.e., innovation-selling motivation and financial innovation performance). In the first wave, we obtained 471 usable responses (76.7% of the entire population). After three months, we contacted these 471 sales reps again and asked them to complete the follow-up survey. In the second wave, we received a total of 406 usable responses (66.1% of the entire population). These respondents represent 38 countries across Europe (171 sales reps), North and Latin America (111 sales reps), and the Asia-Pacific region (124 sales reps). On average, each country has 11 participants. The respondents have a mean of 13.06 years of sales experience (SD = 6.95) and hold direct customer contact.

Measurement

Measure development. We designed the questionnaires after thoroughly reviewing the literature and used reflective measures captured by seven-point rating scales to assess all

multi-item constructs (Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2003). We adapted as many scale items as possible from prior studies. To develop new scales and to adjust existing scales to the study's context, we conducted two extensive workshops with three members of the chemical supplier's top management (i.e., sales director Europe, sales director North America, and head of the Excellence Function in Marketing and Sales).

We then carefully pretested all scales. Specifically, we distributed both questionnaires to ten academic experts in sales management and ten sales reps of the chemical supplier in different countries. To fine-tune the scales and questionnaires, we adapted all scales according to comments of academics and practitioners and conducted a third workshop with the three members of the chemical supplier's top management.

To measure supervisor support for innovation selling, we adapted five items of DeConinck and Johnson's (2009) scale for measuring perceived supervisor support. We measured education for innovation selling with two items from the scale of Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000). To measure variable compensation and supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, we developed original scales, adhering to the standard procedures of psychometric scale development (Churchill 1979; Gerbing and Anderson 1988). We measured both constructs with four items each. To measure financial innovation performance, we drew on four items from Song and Parry (1997), which we adapted to the firm-specific context. We measured autonomous innovation-selling motivation with five items from the scale of Grant et al. (2011), which we adapted to the innovation-selling context. We included job satisfaction and sales experience as control variables. We measured job satisfaction with one item that asked how satisfied the sales reps were with their jobs. Sales experience refers to the amount of time the sales reps have been in a selling job and was measured with one item. All scales were distributed in English across countries. In addition, from the Hofstede research program, we obtained the national-level indicators for power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. Finally, we collected two country-level indicators to account for differences between societies with regard to economic wealth and national education level. We provide all items and properties of the sales rep-level variables in Table 3. We provide an overview of all country-level variables in Web Appendix A.

Measurement reliability and validity. Using confirmatory factor analysis, we assessed reliability and validity for each measure. Overall, our scales exhibit sufficient psychometric properties: for all constructs, the values for composite reliability, average variance extracted, and Cronbach's α surpass the recommended thresholds (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). In addition, the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion supports discriminant validity of the investigated constructs (Table 4), and all item reliabilities are above the recommended value of .40 (Table 3).

Because testing for measurement invariance across 38 countries would require very large sample sizes, in line

with prior international research, we created four categories of countries that each "share a similar cultural and economic background" (Tellis, Prabhu, and Chandy 2009, p. 18). In the first group are all English-speaking countries from our sample (e.g., United Kingdom, United States). The second group comprises the European countries (e.g., Germany, France), the third group encompasses the Asian nations (e.g., China, South Korea), and the fourth group contains the Latin American countries (e.g., Argentina, Brazil). At least partial scalar measurement invariance is needed to meaningfully compare means across countries (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). With $\alpha = .01$, we find at least full metric invariance for all investigated variables, indicating that cross-national variance in measurement is not a problem for this study.

Analysis and Results

Analytical Procedure

Our multilevel data set contains survey data from 406 sales reps nested in 38 countries (Level 1) as well as national-level data for these 38 countries (Level 2). To account for these dependencies and to investigate cross-level interactions, we applied hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Drawing on recommendations in the multilevel methodology literature (Hofmann 1997), we group mean-centered all sales rep-level predictors within countries and grand mean-centered all country-level variables. In addition, we controlled for the Level 1 group means in the Level 2 models (Hofmann and Gavin 1998).² We provide further details on the analytical procedure in Web Appendix B.

Hypothesis Testing

We employed Stata 14 to estimate the HLM models using a stepwise approach. Specifically, for both endogenous variables (i.e., autonomous innovation-selling motivation and financial innovation performance), we first analyzed a baseline model that encompassed all predictors on Level 1 and Level 2 (Hox 2010). We then added the hypothesized cross-level interactions to these baseline models. In light of the sample sizes at both levels of analysis, we ran these analyses using one cultural dimension at a time, to keep model complexity at a manageable level (Aguinis, Gottfredson, and Culpepper 2013). This approach is in line with previous intercultural research that has employed HLM (Onyemah, Rouziès, and Panagopoulos 2010; Sturman, Shao, and Katz 2012). We summarize these estimation results in Table 5.

First, to test H_1 , we used the approach outlined by Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010) to formally examine whether autonomous innovation-selling motivation mediates the relationships of the investigated sales force steering instruments with financial innovation performance. In line

²We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that group mean-centering requires the reintroduction of the lower-level group means in the higher-level models.

TABLE 3
Measures, Items, and Item Reliabilities (IRs)

Domain and Measures	IR
Outcome-Oriented Sales Force Steering	
<i>Variable compensation for innovation-sales results^a (seven-point scale: “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”):</i>	
“The amount of my variable compensation (i.e., bonus and other monetary rewards) ...”	
“... largely depends on the amount of innovations I sell.”	.79
“... will significantly increase if I sell lots of innovations.”	.83
“... is strongly affected by my innovation-related selling performance.”	.96
“... highly correlates with the success of innovations in my selling portfolio.”	.86
<i>Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results^a (seven-point scale: “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”):</i>	
“The extent of appreciation (i.e., praise, awards) [by my supervisor] ^c ...”	
“... largely depends on the amount of innovations I sell.”	.83
“... will significantly increase if I sell lots of innovations.”	.85
“... is strongly affected by my innovation-related selling performance.”	.93
“... highly correlates with the success of innovations in my selling portfolio.”	.91
Behavior-Oriented Sales Force Steering	
<i>Education for innovation selling^a (seven-point scale: “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), according to Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000)</i>	
“I receive sufficient training regarding the innovations I need to sell.”	.65
“I usually have a good understanding of the innovations I sell due to the information provided by my company.”	.90
<i>Supervisor support for innovation selling^a (seven-point scale: “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), according to DeConinck and Johnson (2009)</i>	
“My supervisor emphasizes strongly on the importance of selling innovations.”	.89
“My supervisor encourages me to put high effort into innovation selling.”	.90
“My supervisor promotes the selling of innovations.”	.88
“My supervisor warrants me enough time to fully understand the innovations I need to sell.”	.53
“My supervisor supports me in innovation selling with specific advice.”	.56
Innovation-Selling Motivation and Innovation Performance	
<i>Autonomous innovation-selling motivation^b (seven-point scale: “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), according to Grant et al. (2011)</i>	
“I like selling innovations because it is challenging.”	.49
“I like selling innovations because it is interesting.”	.62
“I like selling innovations because I enjoy the process.”	.66
“I like selling innovations because it is an integral part of who I am.”	.70
“I like selling innovations because it is coherent with my individual goals.”	.42
<i>Financial innovation performance^b (seven-point rating scale: “much worse” to “much better”), according to Song and Parry (1997)</i>	
“Relative to competing products how successful are the innovations in terms of market share?”	.45
“Relative to the company’s objectives how successful are the innovations in terms of market share?”	.51
“Relative to competing products how successful are the innovations in terms of profits?”	.73
“Relative to the company’s objectives how successful are the innovations in terms of profits?”	.77
Controls	
<i>Job satisfaction^a (seven-point scale: “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”), according to Lucas, Babakus, and Ingram (1990)</i>	
“I am satisfied with my job.”	N.A. ^d
<i>Selling experience^a (categorical: “less than one year” to “more than 20 years”)</i>	
“For how long have you been in a selling job (not only for [company name])?”	N.A. ^d

^aMeasured in questionnaire 1.

^bMeasured in questionnaire 2.

^cThe following definition was shown before this scale: “By personal appreciation we mean all performance-contingent rewards you receive from your direct supervisor that are non-monetary.”

^dN.A. = not applicable. Construct measured through a single indicator; IRs cannot be computed.

with prior research that has tested for mediation in HLM (Brady, Voorhees, and Brusco 2012; Homburg, Wieseke, and Bornemann 2009), we jointly analyzed three baseline models: the predictors–mediator model (see Baseline Model 1a in Table 5), the mediator–outcome model (see Baseline Model 1b in Table 5), and the predictors–outcome model (see Baseline Model C1 in Web Appendix C). To test for the significance of the indirect relationships of the four steering

instruments with financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation, we used bootstrapping methods (5,000 repetitions). Results provide evidence that all four steering instruments were indirectly related to the outcome variable. Moreover, the results indicate that neither supervisor support nor education for innovation selling had a significant direct effect on financial innovation performance, providing evidence for indirect-only mediation

TABLE 4
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	M	SD	CR	AVE	CA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Level 1: Sales Reps															
1. Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results ^a	4.06	1.43	.97	.88	.97	.94									
2. Supervisor support for innovation selling ^a	4.68	1.33	.94	.76	.94	.48**	.87								
3. Education for innovation selling ^a	4.59	1.39	.87	.78	.86	.27**	.44**	.88							
4. Variable compensation for innovation-sales results ^a	3.57	1.42	.96	.86	.96	.60**	.42**	.27**	.93						
5. Autonomous motivation for innovation selling ^a	5.58	.87	.87	.58	.87	.23**	.23**	.20**	.19**	.76					
6. Financial innovation performance ^a	4.34	1.12	.86	.62	.86	.23**	.17**	.17**	.25**	.26**	.79				
Level 2: Countries															
7. Power distance ^b	56.59	18.13	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	.21**	.08	-.11*	.18**	-.05	.18**	N.A. ^c			
8. Individualism ^b	57.41	27.68	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	-.14**	-.02	.13**	-.11*	.10*	-.17**	-.76**	N.A. ^c		
9. Uncertainty avoidance ^b	58.23	22.06	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	-.07	-.08	-.07	-.08	.00	-.13**	-.01	.00	N.A. ^c	
10. Long-term orientation ^b	57.57	24.18	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	N.A. ^c	.07	.03	-.07	.13*	-.14**	.05	.33**	-.60**	.00	N.A. ^c

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

^aN = 406 sales reps for individual-level variables.

^bN = 38 countries for country-level variables.

^cConstruct measured through single indicator; CR, AVE, and CA cannot be computed.

Notes: SD = standard deviation; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; CA = Cronbach's alpha; N.A. = not applicable. On the diagonal, we display the square root of AVE.

(i.e., full mediation). In addition, the results show that both supervisor appreciation and variable compensation for innovation-sales results were directly related to financial innovation performance, indicating partial mediation. In summary, H₁ receives support.

Second, regarding the moderated mediating relationships, results for the cultural dimension of power distance largely support the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, results reveal a negative moderating role of power distance on the relationships of variable compensation for innovation-sales results ($\gamma = -.004$; $p < .05$) and education for innovation selling ($\gamma = -.004$; $p < .05$) with autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 2a). In addition, results indicate a positive moderating role of power distance on the relationship of supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results with autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 2a: $\gamma = .008$; $p < .01$). However, results provide no evidence for a significant interaction of power distance and supervisor support for innovation selling on autonomous innovation-

selling motivation (Model 2a: $\gamma = .000$; $p > .10$). To test the significance of the indirect relationships of these cross-level interactions with financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation, we conjointly analyzed Model 2a and Model 2b via bootstrapping methods (5,000 repetitions). Results reveal significant indirect effects on financial innovation performance of the interactions of power distance with education for innovation selling, supervisor appreciation, and variable compensation for innovation-sales results (Table 5). Therefore, H_{2b}, H_{2c}, and H_{2d} receive support, but H_{2a} does not receive support.

Third, regarding individualism, results reveal a positive interaction with variable compensation for innovation-sales results ($\gamma = .003$; $p < .01$) as well as with education for innovation selling ($\gamma = .003$; $p < .05$) on autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 3a). Results also reveal a negative moderating role of individualism on the relationship of supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results and autonomous innovation-selling motivation

(Model 3a: $\gamma = -.004$; $p < .01$). However, findings provide no evidence for a significant interaction of individualism and supervisor support for innovation selling on autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 3a: $\gamma = -.001$; $p > .10$). Furthermore, bootstrapping analyses reveal significant indirect effects of the interactions of individualism with education for innovation selling, supervisor appreciation, and variable compensation for innovation-sales results on financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Table 5). Therefore, H_{3b} , H_{3c} , and H_{3d} receive support, but H_{3a} does not receive support.

Fourth, for uncertainty avoidance, results reveal supporting and also counterintuitive findings. Specifically, results provide limited evidence for a positive moderating role of uncertainty avoidance on the link between supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results and autonomous innovation-selling motivation ($\gamma = .003$; $p < .10$), as well as for a negative moderating role for the relationship of variable compensation for innovation-sales results ($\gamma = -.003$; $p < .10$) and autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 4a). However, findings offer no support for a moderating role of uncertainty avoidance on the relationship of education for innovation selling and autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 4a: $\gamma = -.001$; $p > .10$). Furthermore, bootstrapping analyses reveal marginally significant indirect effects of the interactions of uncertainty avoidance with supervisor appreciation and variable compensation for innovation-sales results on financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation. Therefore, H_{4b} and H_{4d} are marginally supported, but H_{4c} is not supported. In addition, and contrary to H_{4a} , results reveal a significant negative interaction of uncertainty avoidance and supervisor support for innovation selling on autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 4a: $\gamma = -.003$; $p < .05$) which, as bootstrapping analysis shows, results in a marginally significant negative indirect effect on financial innovation performance (Table 5). We discuss this counterintuitive finding in the next section.

Fifth, for long-term orientation, results reveal a negative moderating role regarding the relationship of education for innovation selling and autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 5a: $\gamma = -.004$; $p < .01$). In addition, results reveal a significant positive interaction of long-term orientation with supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results (Model 5a: $\gamma = .004$; $p < .05$) on autonomous innovation-selling motivation. However, findings offer no support for a moderating role of long-term orientation on the relationships between supervisor support for innovation selling ($\gamma = .002$; $p > .10$) or variable compensation for innovation-sales results ($\gamma = .000$; $p > .10$) and autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Model 5a). Bootstrapping analyses reveal significant indirect relationships of the interactions of long-term orientation with supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results and education for innovation selling on financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation (Table 5). Therefore, H_{5b} and H_{5c} receive support, but H_{5a} and H_{5d} do not receive support.

Additional Analyses: Direct and Total Relationships

In line with SDT, the indirect route from the interactions between sales force steering instruments and national cultural dimensions to financial innovation performance through autonomous motivation is generally regarded as substantially stronger than other routes (Ryan and Deci 2004). We have accordingly focused the hypothesis development and testing on these indirect relationships. In addition, we have analyzed the direct relationships of the interactions between steering instrument and national culture with financial innovation performance. Specifically, as Models 2b–5b in Table 5 show, most of the direct relationships are nonsignificant and have the same direction as the hypothesized indirect relationships. Thus, as expected on the basis of SDT, most total relationships (i.e., direct effects plus indirect effects) are substantially shaped by the indirect relationships.³

However, the results present one notable exception. We could not confirm the proposed interactions of supervisor support for innovation selling with power distance, individualism, and long-term orientation in the autonomous innovation-selling motivation models (H_{2a} , H_{3a} , and H_{5a}). Interestingly, these interactions receive support in the hypothesized direction in the financial innovation performance direct-effects models (see Models 2b, 3b, and 5b) and also manifest in significant total effects (see Models C2, C3, and C5 in Web Appendix C). These findings suggest that the focal interactions actually operate through another pathway to financial innovation performance. Thus, although these interactions affect financial innovation performance in the hypothesized direction, the main theoretical rationale for these effects may differ from the expected impact via the three basic needs.

Robustness Checks

Multicollinearity. To identify potential multicollinearity among the predictors, we calculated the variance inflation factors for the individual-level and disaggregated national-level predictors (Schmitz, Lee, and Lilien 2014). Variance inflation factor values range from 1.13 (uncertainty avoidance) to 3.78 (individualism), indicating no problems of multicollinearity (Kleinbaum et al. 1998).

Endogeneity. Because of the possibility that supervisors choose between applying support or appreciation or sending their sales reps to educational events when motivating their direct reports for innovation selling, we tested for potential endogeneity of the two supervisor-related steering instruments, along with education for innovation selling, by

³To test whether the established indirect effects also manifest in significant total effects (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010), we re-estimated the financial innovation performance models without the mediator “autonomous innovation-selling motivation.” We summarize the results of these models in Web Appendix C. Briefly, the results show that most of the previously found indirect effects also lead to significant total effects in the hypothesized direction. The estimation results therefore support this study’s approach to focus on the indirect effects through autonomous innovation-selling motivation and highlight the robustness of the investigated framework.

TABLE 5
Hierarchical Linear Modeling Results and Hypothesis Tests

	Model 2a-b			Model 3a-b		
	Baseline Model 1a	Baseline Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b	Indirect Effects ^a	Hypothesis Results
Investigated cultural moderator (CULTURE)			Power distance	Power distance	Individualism	Individualism
Dependent variable	Autonomous innovation-selling motivation	Financial innovation performance	Autonomous innovation-selling motivation	Financial innovation performance	Autonomous innovation-selling motivation	Financial innovation performance
Intercept	4.027***	4.670***	4.027***	4.666***	4.027***	4.666***
Level 1: Sales Reps						
Supervisor support for innovation selling	.073**	-.024 (n.s.)	.060*	.014 (n.s.)	.064*	-.005 (n.s.)
Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results	.093**	.062*	.097***	.071*	.104***	.088*
Education for innovation selling	.047*	.033 (n.s.)	.046*	.043 (n.s.)	.047*	.041 (n.s.)
Variable compensation for innovation-sales results	.054*	.089**	.057*	.090**	.052*	.086**
Autonomous innovation-selling motivation		.458***		.458***		.448***
Level 2: Countries						
Power distance	.004 (n.s.)	.001 (n.s.)	.004 (n.s.)	.001 (n.s.)	.004 (n.s.)	.001 (n.s.)
Individualism	-.003 (n.s.)	.005 (n.s.)	-.003 (n.s.)	.005 (n.s.)	-.003 (n.s.)	.005 (n.s.)
Uncertainty avoidance	-.001 (n.s.)	.000 (n.s.)	-.001 (n.s.)	.000 (n.s.)	-.001 (n.s.)	.000 (n.s.)
Long-term orientation	-.004**	.000 (n.s.)	-.004**	.000 (n.s.)	-.004**	.000 (n.s.)
Cross-Level Interactions						
CULTURE × Supervisor support for innovation selling			.000 (n.s.)	.010***	-.001 (n.s.)	-.004**
CULTURE × Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results			.008***	-.001 (n.s.)	-.004***	.001 (n.s.)
CULTURE × Education for innovation selling			-.004**	-.001 (n.s.)	.003**	.002 (n.s.)
CULTURE × Variable compensation for innovation-sales results			-.004**	-.002 (n.s.)	.003***	.001 (n.s.)
Controls (Level 1)						
Selling experience	.071**	.036 (n.s.)	.073***	.046*	.069**	.042 (n.s.)
Job satisfaction	.022 (n.s.)	-.038 (n.s.)	.015 (n.s.)	-.065*	.021 (n.s.)	-.051 (n.s.)
Controls (Level 2)						
Economic wealth	.012**	.006 (n.s.)	.012**	.006 (n.s.)	.012**	.006 (n.s.)
National education level	-.003 (n.s.)	-.088**	-.003 (n.s.)	-.088**	-.003 (n.s.)	-.088**
Group means of all Level 1 variables	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Model Information						
Deviance (-2 log-likelihood)	970.4	1,047.3	955.0	1,028.7	958.4	1,037.7
Deviance difference from baseline model (4 d.f.)	N.A.	N.A.	15.4***	18.6***	12.0**	9.6**
Proportion of variance explained	14.06%	27.22%	17.96%	30.27%	17.21%	28.50%

TABLE 5
Continued

	Model 4a–b			Model 5a–b		
	Model 4a	Model 4b	Indirect Effects ^a	Hypothesis Results	Model 5a	Model 5b
Investigated cultural moderator (CULTURE)	Uncertainty avoidance	Uncertainty avoidance			Long-term orientation	Long-term orientation
Dependent variable	Autonomous innovation-selling motivation	Financial innovation performance			Autonomous innovation-selling motivation	Financial innovation performance
Intercept	4.027***	4.668***			4.027***	4.661***
Level 1: Sales Reps						
Supervisor support for innovation selling	.062*	-.005 (n.s.)			.059*	-.003 (n.s.)
Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results	.086**	.062 (n.s.)			.096***	.077*
Education for innovation selling	.048*	.033 (n.s.)			.051*	.042 (n.s.)
Variable compensation for innovation-sales results	.060*	.097**			.053*	.092**
Autonomous innovation-selling motivation		.456***				.456***
Level 2: Countries						
Power distance	.004 (n.s.)	.001 (n.s.)			.004 (n.s.)	.001 (n.s.)
Individualism	-.003 (n.s.)	.005 (n.s.)			-.003 (n.s.)	.005 (n.s.)
Uncertainty avoidance	-.001 (n.s.)	.000 (n.s.)			-.001 (n.s.)	.000 (n.s.)
Long-term orientation	-.004**	.000 (n.s.)			-.004**	.000 (n.s.)
Cross-Level Interactions						
CULTURE × Supervisor support for innovation selling	-.003**	.004*	-.001*	H _{4a} (X)	.002 (n.s.)	.003*
CULTURE × Supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results	.003*	.003 (n.s.)	.002*	H _{4b} (†)	.004**	-.002 (n.s.)
CULTURE × Education for innovation selling	-.001 (n.s.)	.000 (n.s.)	.000 (n.s.)	H _{4c} (—)	-.004***	-.001 (n.s.)
CULTURE × Variable compensation for innovation-sales results	-.003*	-.003*	-.001*	H _{4d} (†)	.000 (n.s.)	-.002 (n.s.)
Controls (Level 1)						
Selling experience	.066**	.033 (n.s.)			.066**	.046*
Job satisfaction	.023 (n.s.)	-.047 (n.s.)			.020 (n.s.)	-.050 (n.s.)
Controls (Level 2)						
Economic wealth	.012**	.006 (n.s.)			.012**	.006 (n.s.)
National education level	-.003 (n.s.)	-.088**			-.003 (n.s.)	-.088**
Group means of all Level 1 variables	Included	Included			Included	Included
Model Information						
Deviance (–2 log-likelihood)	962.3	1,036.5			960.3	1,038.6
Deviance difference from baseline model (4 d.f.)	8.1*	10.8**			10.1**	8.7*
Proportion of variance explained	15.60%	28.52%			16.92%	27.94%

* $p < .10$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

^aThe significance of the indirect effects on financial innovation performance through autonomous innovation-selling motivation is determined according to bootstrapping methods (5,000 repetitions). Notes: CULTURE = the investigated cultural moderator (i.e., power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, or long-term orientation). It is important to note that because the cultural dimensions were measured on a 100-point scale by the Hofstede research program, comparatively low absolute values for the unstandardized coefficients of the cultural dimensions as well as the affected cross-level interactions have high statistical and managerial significance. Unstandardized coefficients are shown. Abbreviations and symbols: n.s. = not significant; ✓ = hypothesis receives support; † = hypothesis receives marginal support; — = hypothesis does not receive support; X = counterintuitive finding; N.A. = not applicable.

employing the instrumental variable technique.⁴ Durbin–Wu–Hausman tests reveal that endogeneity of the steering instruments is not an issue (Antonakis et al. 2010; Raassens, Wuyts, and Geyskens 2012).

Nonresponse bias. We tested both survey waves for nonresponse bias by comparing construct means for early and late respondents (Armstrong and Overton 1977). We found no significant differences between early and late respondents for all main variables, indicating that nonresponse bias is not a problem for this study.

Discussion

In many companies today, managers are puzzled about how to motivate sales reps for innovation selling in different cultures. To address these issues, this study examines how various cultural dimensions affect the relationships between sales force steering instruments and sales reps' innovation-selling motivation and performance. Results reveal complex insights and make important contributions to the literature. In this section, we draw implications for research, propose specific managerial guidelines, and summarize the study's limitations.

Research Implications

This study finds that sales force steering effectiveness strongly depends on sales reps' national culture. However, prior research covering sales force steering issues has strongly focused on national settings (Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2004; Rouziès and Macquin 2003), thus largely neglecting intercultural differences. In light of this oversight, we recommend that further research on sales force steering more broadly positions itself internationally. In addition, this study's analyses and findings lead to various specific implications for future research.

First, this study is the first to examine how to motivate sales reps in different cultures for innovation commercialization, which presents a central challenge for sales force steering. Importantly, this study's results extend prior work in two areas. On the one hand, previous investigators focusing on intercultural steering issues have found that behavior and outcome control have varying influence on sales reps' general attitudes and behaviors in different cultures (Onyemah, Rouziès, and Panagopoulos 2010; Rouziès and Macquin

2003). On the other hand, prior work on innovation commercialization finds that in Western societies, the outcome-oriented control strategy improves innovation commercialization, whereas behavior-oriented control impairs it (Ahearne et al. 2010; Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). However, we find that in all cultures, specific behavior-oriented and outcome-oriented steering instruments can foster sales reps' innovation-selling motivation and the financial performance of innovations. Thus, this study's findings indicate that in addition to whether steering instruments are behavior- or outcome-oriented, of particular importance is whether the specific instruments function by appealing to the basic needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Further research should build on these insights. Specifically, future studies could investigate steering issues by applying more nuanced conceptualizations of sales force steering beyond the traditional behavior-versus-outcome distinction. In addition, investigators could focus on other specific challenges sales reps encounter, such as market intelligence generation and cross-selling, to identify similarities and differences in these steering contexts. As prior investigators have pointed out (Darmon and Martin 2011; Steenburgh and Ahearne 2012), more nuanced analyses in sales force steering could lead to actionable implications that sales managers and other practitioners would greatly appreciate.

Second, this study demonstrates that, depending on sales reps' cultural imprint, firms should employ various steering instruments to motivate successful innovation selling. The study's results emphasize the importance of such specific analyses. For instance, although our findings confirm the insights of previous research from more general settings that financial incentives are better suited to individualistic cultures, we also show that the nonfinancial steering instrument of education for innovation selling is highly effective in these cultures. These insights advance prior intercultural work that has focused on the role of compensation in sales force steering (Jansen, Merchant, and Van der Stede 2009; Segalla et al. 2006). Further research could build on these insights and investigate the positive and negative influence of national culture on the effects of other nonfinancial instruments (e.g., status awards, central sales contests, development opportunities) and financial instruments (e.g., stock, stock options, benefits). In addition, future investigators could expand the understanding of international sales force steering by examining intercultural differences in the effectiveness of other steering aspects, such as performance measurement (e.g., subjective vs. objective performance measurement, determination of performance measures, the extent of participation in defining adequate targets).

Third, this study is one of the broadest and most internationally diverse investigations in sales research, in that it analyzes sales reps from 38 countries on four continents. In examining a larger number and a greater variety of cultures, this study expands previous research by enhancing the external validity of the finding that sales force steering should be tailored to cultural specifics. Further research could extend this study by investigating cross-cultural differences in broad and multifarious international settings with regard to other important sales force issues, such as price enforcement or

⁴In a first-stage probit model, we regress the potentially endogenous steering instruments on the instrumental variables and all other variables from a baseline model. More precisely, we use leader–member exchange as an instrumental variable for supervisor support for innovation selling, general relevance of appreciation at the company as an instrumental variable for supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results, and awareness of the formal innovation process as an instrumental variable for education for innovation selling. The first-stage estimation for supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results produces an F-statistic of 26.65; for supervisor support for innovation selling, an F-statistic of 84.01; and for education for innovation selling, an F-statistic of 11.53. Stock and Watson (2003) suggest a critical F-statistic of 10 or more for good instrumental variables. All chosen instrumental variables clearly surpass this threshold, thus representing good instrumental variables (Petersen, Kushwaha, and Kumar 2015).

channel management. Such broad analyses could help to reduce uncertainties about which sales force issues are open to management through global one-size-fits-all approaches and which require culturally sensitive strategies (Merchant et al. 2011; Rosenzweig and Singh 1991). In addition, future research could examine how other cultural elements, such as firm culture or industry culture, strengthen and weaken the influence of national culture on sales force steering effectiveness.

Fourth, we introduce SDT to sales research. In addition, this study is one of the first investigations to apply SDT to an intercultural context (Chen et al. 2015). The study's findings offer strong support for the proposed mechanisms, thus highlighting the relevance of SDT for motivating sales reps for innovation selling in different cultures. Further research could build on these insights and examine additional SDT concepts in sales force settings. For instance, future investigators could examine which types of sales reps, differentiated by their predispositions and causality orientations (Ryan and Deci 2004), are best suited for particular sales tasks. In addition, because SDT emphasizes the importance of various performance outcomes, further research could consider other types of steering consequences, such as customer-related success (Ramani and Kumar 2008).

However, in addition to offering a large amount of evidence supporting the conceptual reasoning based on SDT, our results reveal a marginally significant negative indirect effect of the interaction between uncertainty avoidance and supervisor support for innovation selling on financial innovation performance, which substantially impedes the positive direct effect of this interaction (Table 5). This counter-intuitive finding can be explained in terms of expectancy theory (Vroom 1964). In essence, expectancy theory posits that motivation emerges as a function of valence, instrumentality, and expectancy of particular outcomes. Thus, when choosing between uncertain alternatives, individuals consider not only their own preferences but also the probability that a particular consequence will occur. Uncertainty avoidance may therefore affect sales reps' assessment of the extent to which supervisor support leads to an actual competence gain. For instance, sales reps from uncertainty-avoidant cultures may expect less competence gain through support because they judge their own abilities more conservatively than reps from less uncertainty-avoidant cultures (House et al. 2004). In this case, uncertainty avoidance reduces the expected gain in satisfaction of the basic need for competence, weakening the positive influence of supervisor support for innovation selling on innovation-selling motivation and performance. Further research could build on these insights and investigate how different motivation theories, such as SDT and expectancy theory, can be integrated to create a more nuanced perspective on intercultural sales force steering.

Managerial Implications

This study has a number of actionable implications for practitioners. First, evidence is growing that many companies today harmonize sales force steering in the course of

globalization, as, for example, when implementing one-size-fits-all approaches derived from corporate strategy (Bloom, Milkovich, and Mitra 2003; Kumar et al. 2013; WorldatWork 2015). However, this study's results lead us to warn managers against overly meshing sales force steering across countries, because we find that sales reps' national culture strongly affects the effectiveness of various steering instruments. Several post-hoc analyses support these insights. Specifically, findings indicate that the total effect on financial innovation performance increases by more than 350% when variable compensation for innovation-sales results is applied in highly individualistic versus less individualistic cultures, and that the total effect on financial innovation performance increases by more than 300% when supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results is employed in cultures with high versus low power distance. Furthermore, results show that the total effect of education for innovation selling is about 90% lower for cultures with high versus low long-term orientation. Overall, the average variation of all instruments' total effects across high versus low values for each cultural dimension is greater than 100%. These findings lead us to strongly advise managers to focus on the most appropriate steering instruments for each culture rather than attempting to standardize the firm's approach to steering across all regions.

Second, many companies today conceive sales force steering in terms of various distinct challenges. Specifically, in many firms, diverse divisions focus on sales force steering issues (Spiro, Rich, and Stanton 2008). For example, the compensation division might design and adapt financial incentive plans, the benefits division might focus on non-monetary incentives, and global HR might be responsible for motivating and enabling sales reps with off-the-job development measures, whereas supervisors might employ on-the-job instruments to develop and direct their sales reps. On the basis of our study's results, we strongly recommend that firms acquire a more comprehensive understanding of sales force steering. Specifically, we recommend considering the entire range of potential steering instruments and advise managers to focus on the most appropriate financial or nonfinancial incentive or off-the-job or on-the-job development measure for each culture.

Third, to suitably customize sales force steering for motivating successful innovation selling, we advise managers to segment sales reps according to their cultural imprint. Specifically, managers might classify the sales force in terms of power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. To motivate innovation selling by sales reps from cultures with high power distance (e.g., Brazil, China, India), we recommend that managers focus on steering measures that involve close interaction with the direct supervisor, such as supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results. In contrast, for sales reps from individualistic cultures (e.g., Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States), we recommend a focus on steering measures that reward or foster individual attainments, such as education for innovation selling or variable compensation for innovation-sales results. For sales reps from cultures with high long-term orientation (e.g., Slovakia, South Korea, Taiwan) as well as for sales reps from uncertainty-avoidant cultures

(e.g., Belgium, Portugal, Romania), we advise focusing on supervisor appreciation for innovation-sales results.

Limitations

The limitations of this study suggest several opportunities for further research. First, in examining cross-cultural differences in sales force steering, this study—in line with prior intercultural research—considers the average measures of diverse cultural dimensions (Petersen, Kushwaha, and Kumar 2015; Sturman, Shao, and Katz 2012). Although this approach is methodologically rigorous, sales reps in specific countries vary with regard to their cultural imprint. Further research could therefore assess the

cultural dimensions on an individual level to more directly investigate the role of culture in sales force steering (Soares, Farhangmehr, and Shoham 2007).

Second, like prior work on sales force steering (Kishore et al. 2013) and innovation commercialization (Ahearne et al. 2010; Fu et al. 2010), this study employs a one-firm research design. Given that the fundamentals of innovation selling and sales force steering in a chemical sales environment are representative of other B2B sales settings (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter 1993), we believe the results are generalizable. However, we suggest that further research focus on additional industries to enhance the external validity of the existing knowledge on intercultural sales force steering.

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