

UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

FROM KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT
TO STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS:
CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR
CO-CREATION OF VALUE

Christian Michael Veasey

Doctor of Philosophy

2019

List of Contents

Title page	i
List of contents	ii
List of figures	vi
List of tables	vii
List of abbreviations	x
Declaration	xi
The statement of intellectual ownership	xii
Abstract	xiii
Acknowledgements	xiv
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Purpose of research	2
1.2. Research objectives	3
1.3. Indicative research question and thesis structure	3
1.4. Statement of contribution	4
1.5. Thesis structure	5
2. Literature review	6
2.1. Defining KAM as a discipline	6
2.2. Definitions of KAM	10
2.2.1. Academic theory analysis, exploratory study	14
2.3. The CSFs for KAM implementation	19
2.4. Customer relationship management (CRM) and business ...	24
2.5. The role of the key account manager	27
2.5.1. The role of the key account manager and leadership	27
2.5.2. The role of the key account manager and role conflict, ...	31
2.5.3. The role of the key account manager and remuneration, ...	34
2.5.4. The role of the key account manager and measuring ...	38

2.5.5. The role of the key account manager and skills ...	41
2.5.6. The relationship between themes and CSFs	45
2.6. The perception of KAM by procurement	46
2.7. The role of the key account manager and personal ...	49
2.7.1. Social styles	51
2..8. The role of the key account manager and SDL	55
2.9. The role of the key account manager, conclusion	59
3. Research design and methodology	61
3.1. Researcher's knowledge and experience	61
3.2. Research philosophy	61
3.2.1. Positivism	62
3.2.2. Interpretivism	62
3.2.3. Positivism and interpretivism summary	62
3.2.4. Assumptions of positivism and interpretivism	64
3.2.5. Quantitative and qualitative data	67
3.3. Research approach	68
3.4. Research strategy	70
3.5. Research sampling	71
3.6. Data collection methods	73
3.6.1. Secondary data	73
3.6.2. Primary data	73
3.7. Questionnaire for exploratory survey	73
3.7.1. Demographic factors/characteristics and associations	76
3.7.2. SDL and FP-based questions and associations	77
3.8. Interview methods	79
3.8.1. Appreciative inquiry	80
3.9. Types of interviews	82
3.9.1. Reliability and validity of data	87
3.9.1.1. Reliability	87

3.9.1.2. Validity	88
3.9.2. Interview methods in the main study	88
3.9.3. Interview preparations and considerations	90
3.10. Data analysis and interpretation	90
3.11. Ethical considerations	92
3.12. Limitations and methodology summary	93
4. Exploratory survey, questionnaire synopsis	94
4.1. Exploratory survey, response volume	94
4.2. Exploratory survey, results	94
4.2.1. Exploratory survey, demographic results	95
4.2.2. Exploratory survey, KAMs' personal characteristics	98
4.2.3. Exploratory survey, FP of SDL, from Vargo and Lusch ...	100
4.2.4. Exploratory survey, conceptual transitions concepts theory	109
4.3. Exploratory survey, concluding comments	111
5. Main study survey synopsis	113
5.1. Main study, response volume	113
5.2. Main study, part 1, survey results	115
5.3. Main study, part 2, AI interview synopsis	119
5.4. Main study, KAMs AI interviews, thematic analysis	121
5.4.1. Main study, KAMs AI interviews conclusion	139
5.5. Main study, buyer AI interviews, thematic analysis	143
5.5.1. Main study, buyer AI interviews conclusion	147
5.6. Main study, Nvivo word frequency analysis, KAMs v buyer ...	150
5.7. Main study, KAMs and buyer crossbar analysis	150
5.7.1. Main study, KAMs FP-based questions, crossbar analysis	150
5.7.2. Main study, KAMs crossbar analysis summary	151
5.7.3. Main study, buyers FP-based questions, crossbar analysis	152
5.7.4. Main study, buyers crossbar analysis summary	152

5.7.5. Main study, KAMs and buyers crossbar analysis ...	152
5.8. Main study, summary of themes arising from surveys and interviews	153
5.8.1 Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to KAMs ...	153
5.8.2. The evolution of an SDL-KAM based approach towards ...	155
5.8.3. The FP of SDL supporting the CSFs and relational ...	156
5.8.4. The importance of seller-buyer relationships and joint ...	156
6. Job descriptions synopsis, thematic analysis	159
6.1. Job descriptions, thematic analysis	160
6.2. Job description, thematic analysis conclusion	165
7. KAM discussion, CSFs model and value model for KAM implementation	172
7.1. KAM discussion	172
7.2. KAM critical success factors (CSFs) model	176
7.3. Value model for KAM practitioners	180
8. Conclusion and recommendations	182
8.1. Recommendations (implementation of KAMs)	190
9. Research limitations and dissemination	192
10. Bibliography	194
11. Appendices	213
Appendix A, exploratory survey	213
Appendix B, main study	215
Appendix C, main study - T1 (GH68) interview transcription	220
Appendix D, main study, part 1, survey results	229

List of figures

Figure 1.1. Thesis structure	5
Figure 2.1. Millman and Wilson's (1995) KAM relational development model	7
Figure 2.2. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles	51
Figure 2.3. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles quadrants	52
Figure 3.1. Research philosophy, research onion, Saunders et al. (2012)	61
Figure 3.14. Exploratory survey, part 1	74
Figure 3.15. Exploratory survey, part 2	75
Figure 3.16. Exploratory survey, part 3	75
Figure 3.17. Exploratory survey, part 3 continuation	76
Figure 3.19. Main study survey, part 1	89
Figure 3.20. Main study survey, part 2	89
Figure 4.1. Exploratory survey, response volume	94
Figure 4.2. Exploratory survey, opening question results, histogram example	95
Figure 4.7. Conceptual transitions concepts question, histogram result	110
Figure 5.2. T11 buyer, prospective KAMs T9 and T10	114
Figure 5.3. T13 buyer, prospective KAMs T3, T5, T7, T8 and T12	115
Figure 5.4. T15 buyer, prospective KAMs T1, T2, T4, T6 and T14	115
Figure 5.5. Main study, KAMs, gender comparison results	116
Figure 5.6. Main Study, buyer, gender comparison results	116
Figure 5.7. Main study, AI interviews, KAMs Nvivo word cloud	141
Figure 5.8. Main study, AI interviews, buyer Nvivo world cloud	149
Figure 5.9. Main study, AI Interviews, KAMs v buyer, Nvivo word clouds	150
Figure 5.10. Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to KAMs and buyers	155
Figure 6.3. Job description, Nvivo word cloud	166
Figure 6.4. Job description, Nvivo word cloud comparison of KAMs and buyers	167
Figure 7.2. KAM CSFs model which underpins KAM by SDL and co-creation	176
Figure 7.3. Value model for KAM practitioners	181
Figure 7.3. Value model for KAM practitioners	191
Figure 2.2. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles	192

List of tables

Table 1.3. Objectives and indicative questions	3
Table 2.2. McDonald et al. (1998), stages of relational developments	8
Table 2.3. Definitions of KAM	10
Table 2.4. Academic theory analysis, exploratory study	14
Table 2.5. Academic theory analysis results, 1983–2014	18
Table 2.6. Definitions of KAM including related CSFs	19
Table 2.7. McDonald and Rogers (1998), KAM reward mechanisms	35
Table 2.8. Summarises the skill and knowledge requirements for KAM	44
Table 2.9. The relationship between literature themes and CSFs for KAM ...	45
Table 2.10. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles motivators	53
Table 2.11. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles context	54
Table 2.12. Lusch and Vargo (2006), conceptual transitions concepts	55
Table 2.13. FP of SDL, adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a)	55
Table 3.2. Collis and Hussey (2014), two main paradigms	63
Table 3.3. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), methodology approaches	63
Table 3.4. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), strengths and weaknesses ...	64
Table 3.5. Collis and Hussey (2014), assumptions of positivism and ...	66
Table 3.6. McNabb (2008) variances between quantitative and qualitative ...	67
Table 3.7. Saunders et al. (2012), deductive and inductive approaches	68
Table 3.8. Cohen et al. (2011), research kinds and purposes	69
Table 3.9. Yin (2014), different types of research designs	70
Table 3.10. Demographic factors	76
Table 3.11. FP-based exploratory survey question descriptions	77
Table 3.12. Klenke (2008), advantages and disadvantages of interview types	83
Table 3.13. Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis, seven stages	91
Table 4.3. Exploratory survey, demographic results summary	96
Table 4.4. Exploratory survey, KAMs' personal characteristics results summary	98
Table 4.5. Exploratory survey, FP-based questions results summary	100
Table 4.6. Exploratory survey, FP-based questions ranking results summary	105

Table 4.8. Conceptual transitions concepts question, results summary	110
Table 5.1. Participants in the main study, parts 1 and 2	114
Table 5.7. Main study survey, part 1, social style results synopsis	116
Table 5.7.1. Main study survey, part 1, demographics results synopsis	229
Table 5.8 Main study, KAMs' social style highest ave. weightings	116
Table 5.9. Main study, buyers' social style highest ave. weightings	118
Table 5.10. Main study, part 2, AI interview synopsis	120
Table 5.11. FP-based questions and number of nodes (references) obtained	121
Table 5.12. T1 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	123
Table 5.13. T2 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	124
Table 5.14. T3 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	126
Table 5.15. T4 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	127
Table 5.16. T5 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	128
Table 5.17. T6 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	130
Table 5.18. T7 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	131
Table 5.19. T8 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	133
Table 5.20. T9 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	134
Table 5.21. T10 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	136
Table 5.22. T12 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	137
Table 5.23. T14 KAMs themes summarised along with social style	139
Table 5.25. Main study, AI interviews, KAMs Nvivo highest ave. word counts	142
Table 5.26. T11 Buyer themes summarised, including social styles	143
Table 5.27. T13 Buyer themes summarised, including social styles	145
Table 5.28. T15 Buyer themes summarised, including social styles	146
Table 5.30. Main study, AI interviews, buyer Nvivo word counts	149
Table 5.32. Main study, KAMs FP-based questions, crossbar analysis	151
Table 5.33. Main study, buyers' FP-based questions, crossbar analysis	152
Table 5.34. Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to KAMs	153
Table 5.35. Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to buyers	154
Table 5.36. Summarises the relationship between themes and CSFs ...	156

Table 6.1. Job descriptions table noting companies and number of nodes	159
Table 6.2. Job description nodes via selected framework and definitions	159
Table 6.5. Job description, Nvivo word cloud thematic analysis word counts	167
Table 6.6. KAM skills and attribute requirements in contrast to job descriptions	168
Table 6.7. KAM knowledge requirements in contrast to job descriptions	169
Table 6.8. KAM skills, attributes and knowledge included in all 6 job ...	170

List of Abbreviations

ABPI	The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
AI	Appreciative inquiry
AP	Academic professionals
B2B	Business-to-business
BF	Focus on business and functional and process elements
CIPD	The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CIPS	The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply
CLA	Contract level agreement
CRM	Customer relationship management
CSFs	Critical success factors
FMCG	Fast-moving consumer goods
FP	Foundational premises of SDL, Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8)
GDL	Goods-dominant logic, Lusch and Vargo (2006, p. 286)
KAM	Key account management
KAMs	Key account managers
KAR	Key account relationships
KPIs	Key performance indicators
MGM	Management
NHS	National Health Service
PRP	Performance-related pay
REL	Focus on relationship and co-creation
SELL	Focus on selling
SDL	Service-dominant logic, Vargo and Lusch (2006, p. 286)
SLA	Service-level agreement
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
T1–T15	Transcripts from AI semi-structured interviews

Declaration

The author declares that this thesis embodies the author's research and the originality (and contribution to knowledge) rests solely with the author.

In addition, the author declares no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to another University, or institution of learning.

The Statement of Intellectual Ownership

The author of this thesis (including any appendices or schedules to this thesis) owns any copyright in it (the ‘copyright’) and the author has given the University of Derby certain rights to use such copyright for administration purposes only.

Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts, and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University of Derby has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

The ownership of certain copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the ‘intellectual property’) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example figures and tables (‘reproductions’), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such intellectual property and reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant intellectual property and/or reproductions.

Further information on the conditions under disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the copyright and any intellectual property rights and/or reproductions described in it may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University of Derby holds.

Abstract

Background and rationale for this study:

This study investigates Key Account Management (KAM) from a Marketing and Business to Business perspective. A review of literature finds that in recent years marketing scholars have proposed that KAM is developing from its traditional roots in sales management to a greater focus on relational aspects; for example, including elements of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Service Dominant Logic (SDL). However, whilst the principles of CRM and SDL are well grounded within the marketing literature there is little empirical evidence to show practical application within KAM, which this study will seek to address.

Aim:

To establish the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for KAM and the personal characteristics of Key Account Managers (KAMs) in order to develop a new model to inform and guide practitioners and academics.

Methodology:

The study aligns with a pragmatic research philosophy, where mixed methods are applied. The primary research includes a survey (n=71) and semi-structured interviews (n=15). Respondents were primarily KAMs from a variety of business sectors. The decision to follow pragmatism supported the use of mixed methods as well as modes of analysis and a continuous cycle of abductive reasoning while being guided by the research aim and objectives and the desire to produce socially meaningful knowledge. Pragmatism offers a strong emphasis on research questions, communication, and shared meaning making and seeks to achieve a balance between subjectivity and objectivity in research findings.

Findings:

This research captured a shifting contemporary KAM approach where KAM is seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships, leading to the development of strategic partnerships. The study finds that amongst KAMs whilst there is strong recognition of CSFs in KAM, CRM, and SDL, there are inconsistent and weak applications in practice. The study explores the reasons for this and proposes that more work is needed to better interpret and translate the language and rhetoric and theoretical principles.

Contribution:

A new model for KAM is proposed showing the CSFs for implementation and a shift of emphasis from KAM to Key Account Relationships (KAR). The model covers the CSFs in CRM, and SDL, and provides guidance for issues in business processes, leadership roles, role clarity, remuneration and performance measurement, knowledge management, and skills, competencies and experience.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors Dr Alison Lawson and Dr David Longbottom for the continuous support of my PhD study and related research and for their patience, motivation and immense knowledge. I could not have imagined having better advisors or mentors.

Besides my supervisors, I would especially like to thank all participants within the research who dedicated their time, thoughts and efforts; it is most appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank my family – my wife, son and daughters – for supporting me spiritually throughout the writing of this thesis and my life in general.

1. Introduction

The concepts of key account management (KAM), according to Randall (1994), were first introduced in the fast-moving consumer goods sector (FMCG) during the 1970s in the USA, and subsequently in Europe in the 1980s. Furthermore, Langdon (1995) contended that most ideas and tools being developed and refined were in business-to-business sectors such as computer hardware and software industries.

To date, KAM was still considered a strategic customer-focused approach to business-to-business markets. The approach has also been described as adopted by selling companies aimed at building and developing a portfolio of loyal key accounts by offering them, on a continuing basis, a product or service package tailored to their individual needs. The key account was selected based on strategic importance (McDonald et al., 2000). McDonald and Rogers (1998, p. 120) also noted, the requirement to ‘manage’ key accounts as opposed to ‘sell’ to them has evolved by increased sophistication of buying strategies, maturing markets and competition; nevertheless, there was a distinct lack of knowledge concerning the critical success factors (CSFs) of KAM and the personal characteristics of key account managers (KAMs).

Some academics (Davies and Ryals, 2013) advocated that there were perceptible differences between how KAMs work and traditional sales methods such as working closely with internal teams and management, greater planning and customer flexibility. KAM was also seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships based around service (Pardo et al., 2014; AL-Hussan and Fletcher, 2014). Richardson et al. (2014) also noted the importance collaboration and cross-functional working to find faster and easier solutions.

Richardson et al. (2014) stated a new landscape existed which was more complex and challenging and included the digital age so initial conversations required deeper and broader preparation to add value. The author stated the importance of demonstrating greater expertise, stronger skills, more creativity and deeper motivation. The author noted that the conversation between buyer and sellers was mutual with business equals in productive collaboration and that the conversation was still the most important sales tool, describing technology as being the vehicle, and knowledge the content. Richardson (2014) stated that the KAMs were the differentiator with their expertise, while buyers directed, the buyer required cross-functional objectives with sellers to support their corporate goals. Similarly, the importance of differentiation was also noted by Rackham (1989) who suggested differentiation could be achieved by understanding customer behaviour. The author affirmed that KAMs ignoring customers, or not taking sufficient account of the customer behaviour would likely result in failure. However, these authors along with many others do not specify in detail CSFs, or define the personal characteristics required for understanding customer behaviour to achieve differentiation, which this study seeks to develop.

While current research has focussed on the KAMs external relationships, with buyers and the customer purchasing network (Dwyer et al., 1987; Krapfel et al., 1991; Weitz, 1978), along with research considering the internal role of KAM centred around sales, salesperson, sales manager relationships, motivation and performance (Ford and Walker, 1975; Pettijohn et al., 2002, Speakman and Ryals, 2012;). There is little work that has addressed the combination of KAM, customer relationship management (CRM) and service-dominant logic (SDL), which this study will address and examine in chapter 2.

Considering existing processes, frameworks and models was also an important part of this study; the aim was to define CSFs and personal characteristics of KAMs. Pardo et al. (2014) developed a model that looked into desirable aspects of integration and differentiation to facilitate the effect of KAM programme implementation. The authors distinguished the importance of internal functions within the company to support the processes, along with senior management and the necessary skills and competencies of KAMs. However, the authors did not specify personal attributes of KAMs or expedite a methodology for identifying CSFs.

In addition to exploring CSFs and personal characteristics of KAMs, this research also used a mixed methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative data. The data was collected through professional networks and through 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 practising KAMs working in the UK and 3 prospective buyers. The interviews used appreciative inquiry, a novel approach in this field and noted by Lewis et al. (2008, p. 179) as ‘encouraging people to talk about positive experiences and dreams’, in a manner that provides ‘extreme flexibility and versatility’.

The participants also completed a personality questionnaire to give an insight into their personal characteristics. Finally, job adverts and person specifications for KAMs positions were analysed to compare and contrast. Combining these methods produced a full picture of the personal characteristics and skills required of KAMs and highlighted some inconsistencies in application. CSFs were analysed regarding implementation of KAM and the personal characteristics required for successful implementation. It was evident that the respondents disclosed developments and implementation plans pertinent to this strategy. Even so, the KAMs and prospective buyers sampled discussed their respective KAM strategies, CSFs, implementations and methodologies. With this in mind, the anticipated conclusions defined good practice along with developing a new approach for future implementation.

It was important to research this subject; KAM is a method that can improve business effectiveness for large or small companies at a time when the economy is extremely challenging – many businesses fail in the first two years and successful implementation of KAM could improve this statistic, if KAM is understood and adopted correctly, but what does ‘success’ mean for KAM. The term successful is defined as accomplishing a desired aim or result which has traditionally been seen as working with customers to retain them in order to hit sales and financial targets. This research explores the CSFs needed for KAM. It will be interesting to see whether the traditional measures of success in KAM are seen as good measures of success today or whether they now need updating and/or amending to reflect current business practice. The research will also examine the personal characteristics of successful KAMs in order to develop a new model for and approach to implementation.

1.1. Purpose of research

The research purpose was to establish CSFs of KAM and the personal characteristics of KAMs. The emphasis was on KAMs practising KAM strategy to ascertain what tools/models, if any, were being implemented, with the objectives of developing a new model and a new approach to implementation. The research also intended to identify necessary characteristics of KAMs for successful application. The combination of analysing tools/models and personal characteristics has not been completed before.

1.2. Research objectives

In order to conduct this research appropriately, some specific research objectives were set.

1. Critically evaluate the literature on KAM to identify themes and issues concerning KAM and CSFs for implementation of KAM, and relevant theoretical models.
2. Use primary and secondary research with KAMs and buyers to identify CSFs for KAM and the personal characteristics sought in the KAM role.
3. Develop a new KAM model and a new approach to implementation based on the research results.

1.3. Indicative research questions

The indicative questions of this research involved considering KAM and strategic partnerships and identifying CSFs in order to co-create value. Table 1.3. notes the objectives and indicative research questions.

Table 1.3. Objectives and indicative research questions (source: author).

Objectives	Indicative research questions
1. Critically evaluate the literature on KAM to identify themes and issues concerning KAM and CSFs for implementation of KAM, and relevant theoretical models.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the role of KAMs? 2. What performance measurements are in place for KAMs? 3. What are the CSFs in KAM? 4. What personal characteristics are required for KAMs?
2. Use primary and secondary research with KAMs and buyers to identify CSFs for KAM and the personal characteristics sought in the KAM role.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do KAMs see their role? 2. How is CRM relevant to KAM? 3. Which CSFs are defined by KAMs for successful KAM? 4. How do buyers perceive the KAM role? 5. Which personal characteristics are defined by KAMs for KAM?
3. Develop a new KAM model and a new approach to implementation based on the research results.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which key components of a model for KAM in 2019 are required, and how can this be implemented?

1.4. Statement of contribution

The definition of KAM has changed over time and may no longer fully encompass the complexity and richness of the role. While the role has evolved from sales management and often involved engaging with sales and other areas of the business, leading to possible role ambiguity, or even conflict, the role still included building and maintenance of long-term relationships and was often measured in financial and numerical terms.

Measuring performance was often difficult when assessing social/relational and co-creational skills, which may have been deemed personal characteristics, rather than simply measuring how someone follows a process that has been developed. This was where this research attempted to fill that knowledge gap by providing a working definition of social/relational and co-creational aspects, as well as personality traits and CSFs for successful KAM.

Many academics as already mentioned have described a change in KAM since 2012 where KAM was seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships (Pardo et al., 2014; AL-Hussan and Fletcher, 2014). While, Vargo and Lusch (2004) described a shift in marketing much earlier, they stated this change was from goods-dominant logic (GDL) to SDL. The authors noted GDL focussed on the product and process elements, but SDL on the application of competencies where knowledge and skills were used leading to co-production and co-creation.

The emergence of SDL theory also supported Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) views that CRM supported co-creation and mutually valued outcomes, yet, little research on application and practice has been completed. In addition, Brown (2009) argued that the reality of GDL to SDL was less straightforward in empirical practice than in academic theory and described the research as having rhetorical changes. These views were echoed by Miles et al. (2014) who noted that SDL was greatly supported by persuasive and classical rhetorical techniques used to meet desired outcomes. Hackley (2009) also noted that SDL required further clinical research to support the authors academic theory and argued that SDL reinforced the belief that academic research was not useful for practitioners.

This study aimed to accomplish the idea that KAM has moved towards strategic partnerships by working with CSFs and a service-dominated propositions towards co-creation of value. In addition, the study aimed to test the theory of SDL towards co-creation of value to examine whether this theory can apply to KAM. Hackley (2009) and Brown (2009) suggested that the theory relevant to marketing was not significantly tested so further clinical research was necessary, therefore this study aimed to resolve this to support both practitioners and academics. Recent books also indicated that research was still needed in this area and there were no studies at the time of reviewing existing literature that addressed service, KAM and co-creation, so this study was unprecedented and may contribute to both academic theory and professional practice.

The author intends to disseminate this research as an evolving and constantly developing process, so that it would become valuable and influential. The author intends to write a number of different articles for journals in the field of marketing that use open access publishing, so articles reach more people because subscriptions barriers have been removed. The selected journals will also be high-quality peer-reviewed journals to enhance the author's reputation and to help get the author's work cited by others in future journals and studies.

1.5. Thesis structure

The structure of the thesis is noted below; the thesis will provide complete elucidations.

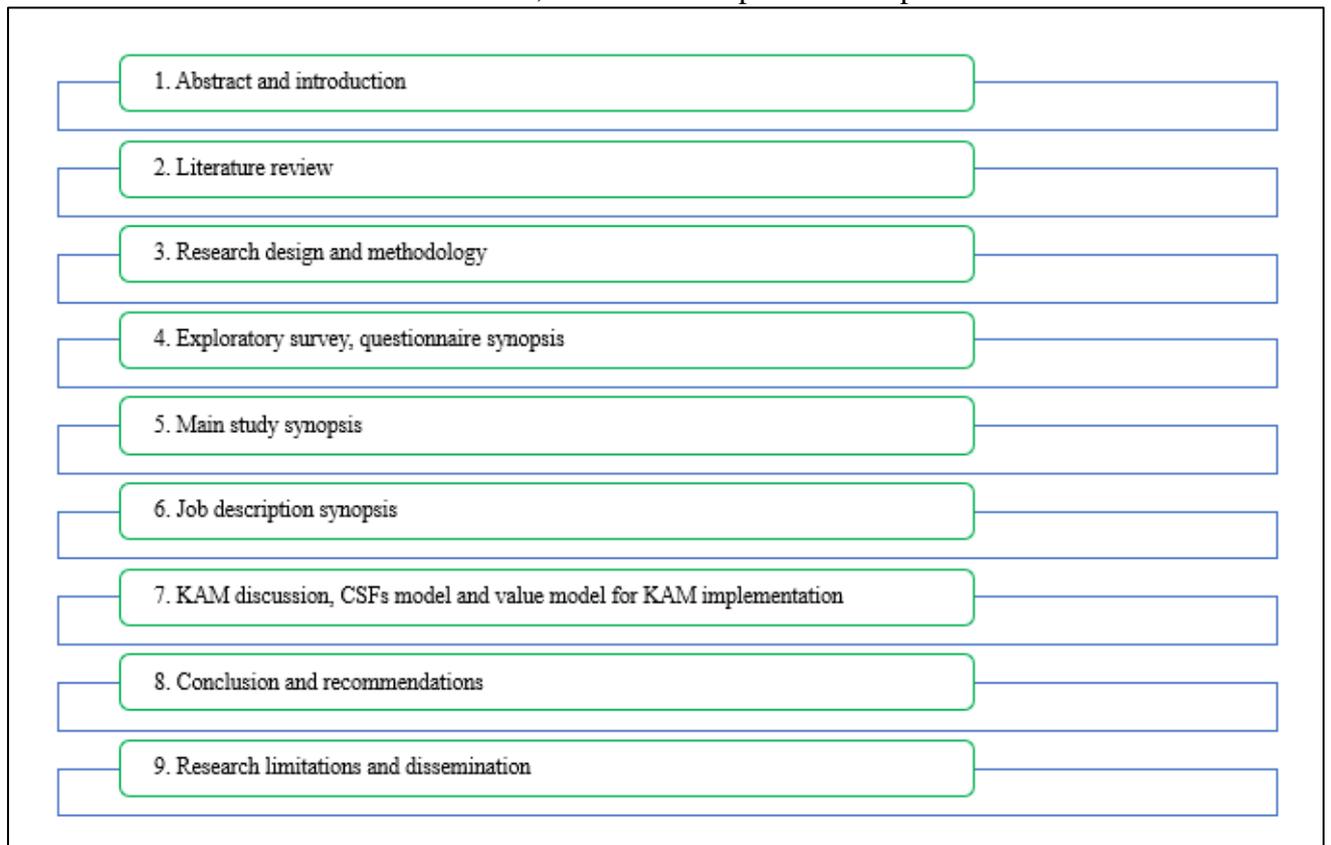


Figure 1.1. Thesis structure (source: author).

2. Literature review

The literature review will examine definitions of KAM, KAM as a discipline and aspects pertinent to KAM, such as CRM, leadership, role conflict, remuneration, measuring performance, knowledge management, procurement principles and personal characteristics of KAMs. Other factors such as product and service aspects, the number of competitors and the effect they may have on whether or not the KAMs relationship is considered successful will also be reviewed. All theories will be explored because they are relevant to understanding and answering the question at hand, therefore meeting research objectives 1, 2 and 3.

2.1. Defining KAM as a discipline

The importance of winning sales from accounts deemed as key has been recognised for some time. Bjerre (2002, p. 81) cited Randall (1994) as stating that KAM was first introduced in FMCG during the 1970s in the USA, and subsequently in Europe in the 1980s.

McDonald et al. (2000) suggested that KAM was a strategic, long-term activity, reliant on competent KAMs to develop loyal key accounts by offering them, on a continuing basis, a product or service package tailored to their needs. The key account was often selected as being of strategic importance by the selling company based on sales turnover, reference value, prestige or access to new markets and technologies (McDonald et al., 2000).

The development of key account relationships between buying and selling companies evolved over time and typically unveiled two main features: first, an increasing involvement associated with a shift from one-off exchanges known as a 'transaction sell' to regular patterns of behaviour characterised as 'collaborative', and second, the development of trust and a commitment to shared goals. Also, identifying key accounts and putting plans in place to achieve their full potential was considered a long-term relational process. Account plans were required to include as much precise detail as the company's marketing plans and to use similar frameworks along with minimum 3-5-year outlooks, noting goals and objectives. Planning at granular level was considered necessary; the activity must also be integrated into other internal plans (Ryals and Rogers, 2007).

However, Brehmer and Rehme (2009) defined KAM as the organisation that caters for the management and the development of the relationship in a fairly formal structure. However, Homburg et al. (2003) suggested that a key account was defined in a KAM programme by top management's emphasis on or active participation in the key account. Bradford et al. (2012) concurred and suggested that dedicated strategic accounts were becoming more common as companies needed to foster close relationships with strategic customers. Although dedicated strategic accounts can be large teams, often they were smaller teams due to having to tailor towards customer's requirements. Also, using fluid teams was an efficient and effective manner to address strategic customer needs.

The above view was shared by AL-Hussan et al. (2014), who advocated in an Arab context that the social/relational dimension of business relationships was not only important but also crucial for managing key account relationships. Furthermore, AL-Hussan et al. (2014) noted that the sales and KAM literature and the communication and transfer of literature on international marketing provide empirical evidence of the way in which 'external contingencies' impact on the design and implementation of KAM.

Moreover, the concept that KAM involved the interaction between selling and buying companies was supported by McDonald and Woodburn (1999), who acknowledged Millman and Wilson's (1995) KAM relational development model, which defined several stages in a relationship between a selling company and a key account. Millman and Wilson (1995) revealed that the relationship initially started at 'Pre-KAM' stage, moved to 'Partnership KAM' stage and potentially to 'Synergistic KAM', as seen in the following model in figure 2.1.

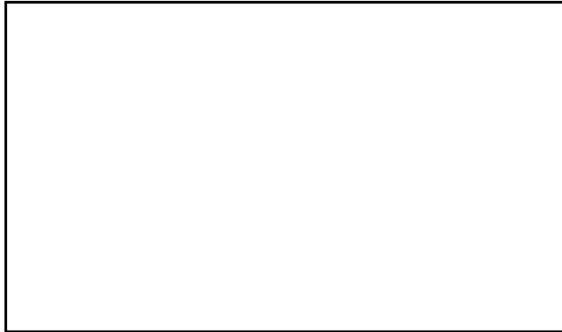


Figure 2.1. Millman and Wilson's (1995) KAM relational development model - Content removed for copyright reasons.

Millman and Wilson (1995) recognised that as the depth and intensity of the relationship developed, the selling proposition became tailored to the key account's requirements. The authors considered KAM to be the ultimate approach to a focus on the customer. In contrast, transactional selling was considered the opposite and was typified as being focused on the individual sale, with little emphasis on customer services, and as having short timescales.

To collaborate with daily interaction under the umbrella of a long-term relationship, selling companies typically formed dedicated teams headed up by a key account manager. This special treatment has significant implications for the organisation's structure, internal and external communications and for managing expectations. Ryals and Davies (2013) supported this view regarding organisational structure, suggesting that practitioners viewed their relationship types in terms of resource usage, which in turn was linked to structure.

Alternatively, McDonald and Woodburn (1999) suggested that strategic intent lay more with KAMs' offering, noting that adaptation of the selling company's offer was consistently greater than in less successful companies. They also stated that a position may be reached where the buyer and seller work together to achieve 'joint problem resolution' (p.69). Cheverton (2001, p. 9) supported this statement, suggesting that 'KAM is about managing the future'. Gibas (1997) and McDonald and Rogers (1998) agreed with this declaration; however, McDonald and Woodburn (1999) stated that it was more logical to apply labels to the original Millman and Wilson (1995) model which described the nature of the relationship itself, rather than a description of the relationship stage.

Table 2.2. below shows McDonald and Rogers (1998) views based on the different stages of Millman and Wilson’s (1995) KAM relational development model:

Table 2.2. McDonald and Rogers (1998) stages of relational developments (source: author).

Millman and Wilson (1995) Stages of KAM relational development model	McDonald et al. (1998) Stages of KAM relational development model based on labels	McDonald et al. (1998) Label descriptions
Pre-KAM	Exploratory	Searching, reviewing and matching, before serious trading commences
Early-KAM	Basic	‘No frills’, prominence on effective and efficient transactions
Mid-KAM	Cooperative	More than a transactional relationship, positive but not close
Partnership-KAM	Interdependent	Recognition of mutual advantage, frequent contact and dialogue
Synergistic-KAM	Integrated	Rare type, joint activity, cross-boundary teams, development of trust
Uncoupling-KAM	Disintegrating	Transitional stage of regression or exit, can start from any level

Correspondingly, Francis (1998) suggested that KAM has developed considerably since it was first introduced and that globalisation has led to increased competition, which was reflected in the development of more collaborative customer–supplier relationships. Similarly, Rogers (1999) noted that decision makers were becoming ever more knowledgeable and sophisticated and that some relationships between suppliers and customers were therefore becoming more collaborative and complex.

A comparable view was taken by Cheverton et al. (2005), who affirmed that developing a global account management strategy required understanding the overall profitability of each client and its worldwide situation and needs. Millman and Wilson (1995) agreed with elements of this theory and suggested that unprecedented levels of international competition and technological change mean that this approach was essential. Also, McDonald and Woodburn (1999) reiterated that KAM had evolved due to globalisation, new technology in production and communication, economic turbulence and ever-accelerating marketplace dynamics. The fact that most industry-to-industry product/service markets in the developed world were mature was also cited by McDonald et al. (2000).

McDonald and Rogers (1998) had already confirmed the above statement in a previous study affirming that KAM was shaped due to internationalisation, market maturity and customer power. Additionally, McDonald and Woodburn (1999) suggested that KAM may be seen as part of the newer discipline of relationship marketing, which related to customer orientation and leadership. Similarly, the key account manager, according to McDonald and Woodburn (1999), was the person who enacted this process and has also been referred to as the guardian of the strategic relationship (2002). Nonetheless, defining the discipline of relationship marketing was considered difficult.

Bradford and Rollinson (2000) agreed with this and noted that KAM really needed to be in a process that featured directors, adding invaluable input to performance development plans. Equally, Wilson (1999, p. 28) suggested that 'the communication of key account policies throughout the organisation and the development of information are appropriate to support the development of information systems to support those policies.' However, Pardo et al. (2014) proposed a model that looked at desirable degrees of integration/differentiation to facilitate the effect of KAM programme implementation. They concluded that KAM must behave as an integrative device and develop 'buy-in' behaviours from other internal functions within the company, ideally with the support of management. It was therefore necessary for managers of KAM programmes to take a proactive, integrative approach to developing support for the KAM initiative, both through their own ability to communicate, influence and persuade and through enlisting not just the tacit support of senior managers, but their involvement.

Furthermore, the same authors suggested that co-creation and social/relational aspects defined KAM and noted that internal alignment rather than aligning with customers was often the first challenge faced by KAM programmes. This observation reflected the views of several authors (Ivens et al., 2009; Piercy, 2009; Sheth et al., 2009), who all stated that attention should be paid to how ideas translate into 'organisational devices', or, in other words, attention must be rewarded to the 'organisational how to do' of several managerial orientations (relationship orientation, customer orientation and, of course, key account orientation).

According to Davies and Ryals (2013, p. 928): 'There is a perceptible difference between KAMs and sales in how they approach their roles. This contribution therefore has two facets: firstly, we can demonstrate that the elements of the key account manager roles around internal management, adaptability to customers and planning do indeed signify an alternative role to traditional sales.' Furthermore, the authors also suggested that there were many issues such as goal orientation, close networks and strategic priorities regarding which senior salespeople present attitudes very similar to those of KAMs.

Even so, not all theorists entirely agreed with the context above. Pardo et al. (2014, p. 8) stated:

KAM's fundamental purpose is to coordinate existing resources within the supplier company to support the value co-creation process with the key customer

The authors also noted that KAMs rarely have dedicated resources or hierarchical power over support systems at their disposal to enable them to work at building the key account relationship. Yet, salespeople working with an integrated KAM strategy often work with internal multi-functional teams whose performance was measured against diverse objectives.

Speakman and Ryals (2012, p. 367) acknowledged this and suggested that a critical success factor for a salesperson was adapting styles and behaviours to customers and internal colleagues, citing; 'KAMs use a wide and continually changing range of behaviours to attain the best possible outcome while continuing to service the customer requirements'. Also, the authors acknowledged that the conflicts KAMs experience within the organisation do not occur in isolation and that their perception of conflict was multidimensional; they also observed that conflict was seen as an inherent condition of KAMs' role. Whereas, Pardo et al. (2014) stated that KAM's fundamental purpose was to coordinate existing resources within the supplier company to support the key account customer during the value co-creation process. Pardo et al. (2014) also noted the importance of communication, influence and persuasion regarding customers and senior managements input for successful implementation.

Similarly, Senn et al. (2013) advocated that in today’s dynamic B2B environment, which was marked by buyer consolidation and price pressures, suppliers must consider their customers as important firm assets that should be proactively managed, thus creating value and reducing associated risks. Moreover, the role of KAMs consisted of elements such as cross-functional working, multilevel leadership, treating value and risk considerations as core activity drivers, having long-term planning horizons, owning opportunities, adaptability and an ability to cope with uncertainty.

The clear purpose of KAM to build long-term working relationships with potentially profitable customers suggests a link with the ideas of customer relationship management (CRM), which is a longer-established theory.

2.2. Definitions of KAM

In an attempt to draw together the key aspects of KAM, table 2.3 gives the definitions of KAM offered by scholarly authors since 1983. For each definition, the researcher offers a view as to the key focus of each attributing one, or more of the following:

1. Business, functional and process elements
2. Selling
3. Relationships and co-creation

Table 2.3. Definitions of KAM (source: author).

Year, page	Authors	Definition	Focus
1983, p. 35	Lawrence	A key account is not defined as a large customer with many branches and wide geographical coverage, but as an account that is coordinated into one account, which combines the buying power, conducts the negotiation and pays the bills.	Business, functional and process elements.
1989, p. 107	Shapiro	KAM requires coordination of effort; it is an approach in which one executive or team takes overall responsibility for all aspects of a customer’s business, directly or by coordinating the activities of others.	Business, functional and process elements.
1992, p. 6	Burnett	The process of allocating and organising resources to achieve optimal business with a balanced portfolio of identified accounts whose business contributes or could contribute significantly or critically to the achievement of corporate objectives, present or future.	Business, functional and process elements.
1995, p. 51	Cravens	The strategy of relationship building is a long-term proposition; more and increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long term.	Relationships and co-creation.

1995, p. 9	Millman and Wilson	A customer in a business-to-business (B2B) market identified by a selling company as being of strategic importance qualifies as a key account. Strategic importance is sales turnover, prestige, reference value and access to new markets and technologies.	Business, functional and process elements.
1997, p. 103	Shipley and Palmer	KAM is a process that provides a route map showing how increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long term.	Business, functional and process elements.
1998, p. 64	Francis	Determining a key account is a kind of business discipline or thinking regarding long-term accounts.	Business, functional and process elements.
1998, p. 373	Noonan	The strategy of relationship building is a long-term proposition; increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long term.	Business, functional and process elements.
1999, p. 69	McDonald and Woodburn	KAM requires strategic joint working between the customer and the supplier to overcome problems with solutions and future products/offerings’.	Business, functional and process elements.
1999, p. 329	Millman and Wilson	Determining a key account is typified by the achievement of preferred supplier status in a customer management process, the provision of excellent service and long-term interaction.	Business, functional and process elements.
1999, p. 29	Wilson	A long-term venture in developing KAM processes to define key accounts of strategic importance. The process then requires up to three years to see strong returns from the KAM strategy.	Business, functional and process elements.
2000, p. 127	Jobber and Lancaster	To receive key account status, a customer must have high sales potential that could benefit the organisation.	Business, functional and process elements.
2000, p. 25	McDonald et al.	A management approach adopted by selling companies aimed at building a portfolio of strategic and loyal key accounts by offering them, on a continuing basis, a product/service package tailored to their individual needs.	Selling.
2000, p. 19	Tzokas and Donaldson	The selling approach that is based on the development of long-term relationships between the salespersons and their customers.	Relationships and co-creation.
2001, p. 58	Holt and Millman	Strategic importance is the main criterion for determining a business-to-business customer as a key account.	Business, functional and process elements.
2002, p. 81	Bjerre	KAM is based on human and organisational asset specificity that recognises the internal and external need to focus on the key account(s) and is supported by varying degrees of financial, technological, reputational, brand and temporal asset specificity.	Business, functional and process elements.

2005, p. 20	Cheverton et al.	Using a strategic understanding to develop a global account management strategy which includes the overall profitability, situation and needs of the customer.	Business, functional and process elements.
2007, p. 219	Ryals and Rogers	Key account planning and phase planning at granular level are necessary and strategically important; the activity must be integrated into other internal plans.	Business, functional and process elements.
2009, p. 962	Brehmer and Rehme	The organisation that caters for the management and development of the relationship in a formal structure.	Relationships and co-creation.
2010, p. 1056	Davies et al.	KAM is of strategic importance and is an approach to achieving goals and commercial interests to ensure long-term development and retention of strategic customers.	Business, functional and process elements.
2011, p. 279	Atanasova and Senn	KAM requires support in the form of resource allocations and public recognition with input from senior management with account plans; it supports overcoming potential resistance or power struggles within the firm, which impacts positively on performance, enhances internal and external collaboration, reduces conflict and enforces a more proactive approach.	Business, functional and process elements.
2012, p. 53	Bradford et al.	KAM requires a strategic account manager ultimately responsible for the customer from the firm's perspective and the key advocate for the customer when faced with inherent conflict.	Business, functional and process elements.
2012, p. 367	Speakman and Ryals	Relationship types are associated with contact structure rather than strategic intent. KAMs experience conflict when working within internal teams but adjust their behaviours to cater for customer needs.	Relationships and co-creation.
2013, p. 928	Davies and Ryals	KAM requires customer adaptability, planning and goal orientation, close networks and strategic priorities; senior salespeople also present attitudes like those of KAMs regarding these aspects.	Relationships and co-creation.
2013, p. 161	Day et al.	KAM requires relationship management skills including empathy-driven skills and capability-driven skills that reflect a firm's philosophy. Both patterns of trust are built over time and develop from embedded internal cultural and policy norms, which carry over into external relationships.	Relationships and co-creation.

2013, p. 1566	Durif et al.	KAM is based on a set of moral and ethical principles designed to operate as mechanisms for building trust and commitment between customers and KAMs.	Relationships and co-creation.
2013, p. 43	Senn et al.	Key account managers' role consists of internal and external collaboration, multilevel leadership and long-term planning with key customers, with support from senior management.	Business, functional and process elements.
2013, p. 191	Tzempelikos and Gounaris	The strategic importance of key account planning with management input, customer orientation and inter-functional coordination.	Business, functional and process elements.
2014, p. 600	AL-Hussan et al.	The social and relational dimension of business relationships is crucial for managing key account relationships.	Relationships and co-creation.
2014, p. 8	Pardo et al.	KAM's fundamental purpose is to coordinate existing resources within the supplier company to support the key customer during the value co-creation process.	Relationships and co-creation.

The published literature above suggests that KAM focuses on business, functional and process elements, all of which could be further broken down into strategic operational elements. Reviewing this literature confirms a nearly predominance of business/functional behaviours, which gives way towards relational and co-creational behaviours in more recent times.

The academic literature focuses on business, functional and process elements, and perhaps shows that it took longer than we think for sales personnel to turn their attention outwards (i.e. turn their attention to customers rather than to internal processes) and to build relationships (rather than making sales at the potential cost of a longer-term investment).

The literature may also point towards short-term perspectives rather than relational viewpoints, which are considered longer term. However, it appeared that since 2012 there has been a move towards a focus on relationships and co-creation, suggesting that co-creation and social/relational behaviours were now defining KAM, as opposed to KAM focusing on business, functional and process-driven elements.

2.2.1. Academic theory analysis, exploratory study

To further support this research that aimed to define KAM and to ensure against researcher bias in allocating a specific focus to each definition, two academic professionals (AP) with initials AL and DL working at the University of Derby in business and marketing were sent table 2.4. However, the final column noting keywords and key themes were removed. Each AP was asked to write in the last column one of the following keywords and key themes that they felt encapsulate the definition of KAM;

1. **BF** – Focus on business, functional and process elements
2. **SELL** – Focus on selling
3. **REL** – Focus on relationships and co-creation

Table 2.4. Academic theory analysis, exploratory study (source: author).

Year, page	Authors	Definition	(AP) Authors' keywords and key themes	AL (AP) keywords and key themes	DL (AP) keywords and key themes
1983, p. 35	Lawrence	A key account is not defined as a large customer with many branches and wide geographical coverage, but an account that is coordinated into one account that combines the buying power, conducts the negotiation and pays the bills.	BF	BF	BF
1989, p. 107	Shapiro	KAM requires coordination of effort; it is an approach in which one executive or team takes overall responsibility for all aspects of a customer's business, directly or by coordinating the activities of others.	BF	BF	BF
1992, p. 6	Burnett	The process of allocating and organising resources to achieve optimal business with a balanced portfolio of identified accounts, whose business contributes or could contribute significantly or critically to the achievement of corporate objectives, present or future.	BF	BF	BF
1995, p. 51	Cravens	The strategy of relationship building is a long-term proposition; more and increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long-term.	REL	REL	REL

1995, p. 9	Millman and Wilson	A customer in a B2B market identified by a selling company as being of strategic importance qualifies as a key account. Strategic importance is sales turnover, prestige, reference value and access to new markets/technologies.	BF	BF	BF
1997, p. 103	Shipley and Palmer	KAM is a process that provides a route map showing how increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long term.	BF	BF	BF
1998, p. 64	Francis	Determining a key account is a kind of business discipline or thinking regarding long-term accounts.	BF	BF	BF
1998, p. 373	Noonan	The strategy of relationship building is a long-term proposition, increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long-term.	BF	BF	BF
1999, p. 69	McDonald and Woodburn	KAM requires strategic joint working between the customer and the supplier to overcome problems with solutions and future products/offering's'.	BF	BF	BF
1999, p. 329	Millman and Wilson	Determining a key account is typified by the achievement of preferred supplier status in a customer management process, the provision of excellent service and long-term interaction.	BF	BF	BF
1999, p. 29	Wilson	A long-term venture in developing KAM processes to define key accounts of strategic importance. The process then requires up to three years to see strong returns from the KAM strategy.	BF	BF	BF
2000, p. 127	Jobber and Lancaster	To receive key account status, a customer must have high sales potential that could benefit the organisation.	BF	BF	BF

2000, p. 25	McDonald et al.	A management approach adopted by selling companies aimed at building a portfolio of strategic and loyal key accounts by offering them, on a continuing basis, a product/service package tailored to their individual needs.	SELL	SELL	SELL
2000, p. 19	Tzokas and Donaldson	The selling approach that is based on the development of long-term relationships between the salespersons and their customers.	REL	SELL	REL
2001, p. 58	Holt and Millman	Strategic importance is the main criterion for determining a business-to-business customer as a key account.	BF	BF	BF
2002, p. 81	Bjerre	KAM is based on human and organisational asset specificity that recognises the internal and external need to focus on the key account(s) and is supported by varying degrees of financial, technological, reputational, brand and temporal asset specificity.	BF	BF	BF
2005, p. 20	Cheverton et al.	Using strategic understanding to develop a global account management strategy which includes the overall profitability, situation and needs of the customer.	BF	SELL	SELL
2007, p. 219	Ryals and Rogers	Key account planning and phase planning at granular level are necessary and strategically important; the activity must be integrated into other internal plans.	BF	BF	BF
2009, p. 962	Brehmer and Rehme	The organisation that caters for the management and development of the relationship in a formal structure.	REL	REL	REL
2010, p. 1056	Davies et al.	KAM is of strategic importance and is an approach to achieving goals and commercial interests to ensure long-term development and retention of strategic customers.	BF	BF	BF

2011, p. 279	Atanasova and Senn	KAM requires support in the form of resource allocations and public recognition with input from senior management with account plans it supports overcoming potential resistance or power struggles within the firm, which impacts positively on performance, enhances internal and external collaboration, reduces conflict and enforces a more proactive approach.	BF	BF	BF
2012, p. 53	Bradford et al.	KAM requires a strategic account manager ultimately responsible for the customer from the firm's perspective and the key advocate for the customer when faced with inherent conflict.	BF	BF	BF
2012, p. 367	Speakman and Ryals	Relationship types are associated with contact structure rather than strategic intent. KAMs experience conflict when working within internal teams but adjust their behaviours to cater for customer needs.	REL	REL	REL
2013, p. 928	Davies and Ryals	KAM requires customer adaptability, planning and goal orientation, close networks and strategic priorities; senior salespeople also present attitudes like those of KAMs regarding these aspects.	REL	REL	REL
2013, p. 161	Day et al.	KAM requires relationship management skills, including empathy-driven skills and capability-driven skills that reflect a firm's philosophy. Both patterns of trust are built over time, and develop from embedded internal cultural and policy norms, which carry over into external relationships.	REL	REL	REL
2013, p. 1566	Durif et al.	KAM is based on a set of moral and ethical principles designed to operate as mechanisms for building trust and commitment between customers and KAMs.	REL	REL	REL

2013, p. 43	Senn et al.	Key account managers' role consists of internal and external collaboration, multilevel leadership and long-term planning with key customers, with support from senior management.	BF	BF	BF
2013, p. 191	Tzempelikos and Gounaris	The strategic importance of key account planning with management input, customer orientation and inter-functional coordination.	BF	BF	BF
2014, p. 600	AL-Hussan et al.	The social and relational dimension of business relationships is crucial for managing key account relationships.	REL	REL	REL
2014, p. 8	Pardo et al.	KAM's fundamental purpose is to coordinate existing resources within the supplier company to support the key customer during the value co-creation process.	REL	REL	REL

Table 2.5. summarises that the definition of KAM includes a predominance of business/functional aspects, including process elements; both academics affirmed this trend, which was surprising given that many theorists suggest the whole idea of KAM was to build long-term relationships.

Table 2.5. Academic theory analysis results, 1983–2014 (source: author).

1983–2014	Author	AL (AP)	DL (AP)
BF	20	19	19
REL	9	8	9
SELL	1	3	2

Academic theory analysis, exploratory study conclusion

The results showed that from 1983 to 2011 the definition of KAM included a high proportion of business, functional and process elements; however, from 2012 onwards there had been a distinct change in its focus, which was now on relationships and co-creation. The academic literature perhaps shows that it may have taken longer than anticipated for sales personnel to turn their attention towards building relationships that focus on longer-term perspectives rather than on short-term goals. The researcher's interpretation of the observed shift in definition has been confirmed through independent verification by two academic professionals.

Having established what KAM encompasses and having viewed the definitions of KAM systematically, the review will now consider CSFs required for implementation.

2.3. The CSFs for KAM implementation

The importance of establishing CSFs for KAM and the personal characteristics of KAMs are fundamental to this study and the literature shows that this has not been completed before, so is unprecedented.

While examining the definitions of KAM since 1983 which can be viewed in table 2.3 (p. 10), the themes that emerged showed a shift in KAM since 2012 from a focus on business, functional and process elements associated with remuneration linked to retaining customers and sales, towards measures of success associated with customer relationships and co-creation of value. Since 2012 it appeared that social/relational behaviours were now defining KAM, as opposed to KAM focusing on business, functional and process-driven elements. Many authors described KAM from 2012 onwards as being a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships (Pardo et al., 2014; AL-Hussan and Fletcher, 2014). Similarly, some years before Vargo and Lusch (2004) described a shift in marketing from GDL to SDL, they stated the application of competencies where knowledge and skills were used leading to co-production and co-creation.

Nonetheless, since 1983 the literature showed that there had been considerable research on KAM application critical to success, but no theoretical articles specific to CSFs for KAM implementation frameworks and models which this study seeks to address. There are no articles that specifically state CSFs specific to KAM, although Millman and Wilson (1995) drafted a relational development model for KAM, in which they note that all stages should be completed for success (see Figure 2.1). The CSFs listed below have been drawn from the literature using a systematic approach based on themes emerging from the definitions of KAM in table 2.6.

Table 2.6. Definitions of KAM including related CSFs (source: author).

Year, page	Authors	Definition	Focus	Related CSFs
1983, p. 35	Lawrence	A key account is not defined as a large customer with many branches and wide geographical coverage, but as an account that is coordinated into one account, which combines the buying power, conducts the negotiation and pays the bills.	Business, functional and process elements.	Coordination (accounts), negotiation skills.
1989, p. 107	Shapiro	KAM requires coordination of effort; it is an approach in which one executive or team takes overall responsibility for all aspects of a customer's business, directly or by coordinating the activities of others.	Business, functional and process elements.	Coordination (effort), responsibility.
1992, p. 6	Burnett	The process of allocating and organising resources to achieve optimal business with a balanced portfolio of identified accounts whose business contributes or could contribute significantly or critically to the achievement of corporate objectives, present or future.	Business, functional and process elements.	Coordination (resources).

1995, p. 51	Cravens	The strategy of relationship building is a long-term proposition; more and increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long term.	Relationships and co-creation.	Relationship building.
1995, p. 9	Millman and Wilson	A customer in a business-to-business (B2B) market identified by a selling company as being of strategic importance qualifies as a key account. Strategic importance is sales turnover, prestige, reference value and access to new markets and technologies.	Business, functional and process elements.	Turnover, prestige, reference value, access to new markets/ technologies.
1997, p. 103	Shipley and Palmer	KAM is a process that provides a route map showing how increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long term.	Business, functional and process elements.	Relationship building.
1998, p. 64	Francis	Determining a key account is a kind of business discipline or thinking regarding long-term accounts.	Business, functional and process elements.	Long-term relationships.
1998, p. 373	Noonan	The strategy of relationship building is a long-term proposition; increasingly productive relationships can be achieved in the long term.	Business, functional and process elements.	Long-term relationships.
1999, p. 69	McDonald and Woodburn	KAM requires strategic joint working between the customer and the supplier to overcome problems with solutions and future products/offerings.	Business, functional and process elements.	Joint working, finding solutions.
1999, p. 329	Millman and Wilson	Determining a key account is typified by the achievement of preferred supplier status in a customer management process, the provision of excellent service and long-term interaction.	Business, functional and process elements.	Excellent service, long-term relationships.
1999, p. 29	Wilson	A long-term venture in developing KAM processes to define key accounts of strategic importance. The process then requires up to three years to see strong returns from the KAM strategy.	Business, functional and process elements.	Long-term relationships, strong (financial) returns.
2000, p. 127	Jobber and Lancaster	To receive key account status, a customer must have high sales potential that could benefit the organisation.	Business, functional and process elements.	High sales potential.
2000, p. 25	McDonald et al.	A management approach adopted by selling companies aimed at building a portfolio of strategic and loyal key accounts by offering them, on a continuing basis, a product/service package tailored to their individual needs.	Selling.	Long-term relationships, tailored service.
2000, p. 19	Tzokas and Donaldson	The selling approach that is based on the development of long-term relationships between the salespersons and their customers.	Relationships and co-creation.	Long-term relationships.

2001, p. 58	Holt and Millman	Strategic importance is the main criterion for determining a business-to-business customer as a key account.	Business, functional and process elements.	No CSF mentioned.
2002, p. 81	Bjerre	KAM is based on human and organisational asset specificity that recognises the internal and external need to focus on the key account(s) and is supported by varying degrees of financial, technological, reputational, brand and temporal asset specificity.	Business, functional and process elements.	Financial, technological, reputational, brand and temporal importance.
2005, p. 20	Cheverton et al.	Using a strategic understanding to develop a global account management strategy which includes the overall profitability, situation and needs of the customer.	Business, functional and process elements.	Profitability, tailored service.
2007, p. 219	Ryals and Rogers	Key account planning and phase planning at granular level are necessary and strategically important; the activity must be integrated into other internal plans.	Business, functional and process elements.	Integrated planning.
2009, p. 962	Brehmer and Rehme	The organisation that caters for the management and development of the relationship in a formal structure.	Relationships and co-creation.	Building relationships.
2010, p. 1056	Davies et al.	KAM is of strategic importance and is an approach to achieving goals and commercial interests to ensure long-term development and retention of strategic customers.	Business, functional and process elements.	Commercial targets, long-term relationships.
2011, p. 279	Atanasova and Senn	KAM requires support in the form of resource allocations and public recognition with input from senior management with account plans; it supports overcoming potential resistance or power struggles within the firm, which impacts positively on performance, enhances internal and external collaboration, reduces conflict and enforces a more proactive approach.	Business, functional and process elements.	Coordination (resources), collaboration, proactive approach.
2012, p. 53	Bradford et al.	KAM requires a strategic account manager ultimately responsible for the customer from the firm's perspective and the key advocate for the customer when faced with inherent conflict.	Business, functional and process elements.	Advocate for customer.
2012, p. 367	Speakman and Ryals	Relationship types are associated with contact structure rather than strategic intent. KAMs experience conflict when working within internal teams but adjust their behaviours to cater for customer needs.	Relationships and co-creation.	Tailored service.
2013, p. 928	Davies and Ryals	KAM requires customer adaptability, planning and goal orientation, close networks and strategic priorities; senior salespeople also present attitudes like those of KAMs regarding these aspects.	Relationships and co-creation.	Tailored service, coordination (planning), achieving goals.

2013, p. 161	Day et al.	KAM requires relationship management skills including empathy-driven skills and capability- driven skills that reflect a firm’s philosophy. Both patterns of trust are built over time and develop from embedded internal cultural and policy norms, which carry over into external relationships.	Relationships and co-creation.	Relationship management, empathy for customer, trust, development. coordination (internal policy and culture).
2013, p. 1566	Durif et al.	KAM is based on a set of moral and ethical principles designed to operate as mechanisms for building trust and commitment between customers and KAMs.	Relationships and co-creation.	Moral and ethical principles, trust, development.
2013, p. 43	Senn et al.	Key account managers’ role consists of internal and external collaboration, multilevel leadership and long-term planning with key customers, with support from senior management.	Business, functional and process elements.	Collaboration, leadership, long-term planning.
2013, p. 191	Tzempelikos and Gounaris	The strategic importance of key account planning with management input, customer orientation and inter-functional coordination.	Business, functional and process elements.	Customer orientation, coordination (functions).
2014, p. 600	AL-Hussan et al.	The social and relational dimension of business relationships is crucial for managing key account relationships.	Relationships and co-creation.	Relationship development.
2014, p. 8	Pardo et al.	KAM’s fundamental purpose is to coordinate existing resources within the supplier company to support the key customer during the value co- creation process.	Relationships and co-creation.	Coordination (resources), value co-creation.

The CSFs drawn from the definitions may be grouped as follows, with the number of times each term was mentioned shown in brackets:

Long-term relationship management (15)

- Relationship building
- Relationship building
- Long-term relationships
- Relationship management
- Building relationships
- Relationship development
- Collaboration
- Collaboration
- Joint working

Coordination and planning (11)

Coordination (accounts)
Coordination (effort)
Coordination (resources)
Coordination (resources)
Coordination (planning)
Coordination (internal policy and culture)
Coordination (functions)
Coordination (resources)
Integrated planning
Long-term planning
Proactive approach

Financial success (8)

Turnover
Strong (financial) returns
High sales potential
Profitability
Commercial targets
Financial importance
Achieving goals
Reference value

Customer orientation (6)

Customer orientation
Empathy for customer
Trust development
Moral and ethical principles
Trust development
Advocate for customer

Tailored service (5)

Tailored service
Tailored service
Excellent service
Tailored service
Tailored service

Other

Negotiation skills
Responsibility
Prestige
Access to new markets/ technologies
Finding solutions
Technological, reputational, brand and temporal importance
Leadership
Value co-creation

The resultant CSFs are, in order of number of times mentioned in the academic literature, therefore:

1. Managing long-term relationships (customer relationship management)
2. Coordinating and planning of business processes, for example, resources, accounts, functions, policy, etc.
3. Achieving financial targets
4. Customer orientation
5. Delivering a tailored service

Having established the CSFs of KAM implementation, CRM and business processes are an important aspect of KAM, the review will now consider the literature on CRM.

2.4. Customer relationship management (CRM) and business processes

CRM is considered a managerial philosophy that seeks to build long-term relationships with customers. According to Shaw (1991), the approach involved a company managing interactions with current and new customers, often involving technology to organise, automate and synchronise sales, marketing, customer service and technical support. This view was shared by Finnegan and Willcocks (2007), who suggested that keeping good relationships with valuable customers ensured greater customer relations, which was essential. The same authors suggested that utilising management systems for networking to motivate employees helps to find ways to get closer to customers.

Moreover, Opara et al. (2010) reiterated the importance of maximising customer relations, noting the importance of CRM and supplier departments working in cooperation to put much effort and time into retaining profitable customers in order to acquire, retain and maximise customer lifetime values. In addition, Kotler and Keller (2012) affirmed that acquiring a new customer can cost five times more than retaining a customer; they also stated that as relationships progress, customers become more profitable. Furthermore, Kotler and Keller (2012) defined CRM as the process of carefully managing detailed information about individual customers or prospects to contact, transact and build customer relationships to deepen customer loyalty, reactivate purchases and avoid serious customer complaints.

In accordance with the above, Buttle (2015, p. 16) noted, 'CRM is the core business strategy that integrates internal processes and functions, and external networks, to create and deliver value to targeted customers at a profit. It is grounded on high-quality customer-related data and enabled by information technology.'

Furthermore, Buttle (2015) stated that CRM was divided into three categories:

1. Strategic, 2. Operational, and 3. Analytical:
 1. The strategic level involved nurturing a type of organisational culture that was characterised as a customer-oriented approach as opposed to a product-, production- or sales-oriented approach.
 2. The operational level focused on the automation of customer-facing elements, for example marketing, selling and service functions.
 3. The analytical level comprised of customer data obtained in an automated manner, with the application of software to support the understanding of buyer behaviour with the purpose of improving levels of customer attraction and retention.

Similarly, Xu and Walton (2005) suggested that the purpose of CRM systems was to improve customer satisfaction, retain existing customers, provide strategic information and improve customer lifetime values. Moreover, the authors stated that implementing an effective CRM achieved customer retention and close relationships. Xu and Walton (2005) also suggested that customer knowledge enabled the business to target customers well and satisfy needs effectively, encouraging customers to repeat transactions, thereby maximising profits. Even so, CRM principles required commitment from the workforce and strategic-level management supporting compliance to achieve long-term growth.

Similarly, Salojarvi et al. (2013) also noted a need for more of a managerial emphasis on systematic processes linked to a CRM system that supported the storing and availability of key account-related knowledge. Payne and Frow (2006, p. 157) were agreeable stating ‘the role of senior executives in facilitating employee engagement is vital’. Furthermore, Payne and Frow (2006, p. 161) suggested that planning ‘the key components of a CRM strategy and to identify which process components of CRM should receive priority’. It has also been argued among academics such as Ernst et al. (2011, p. 291) that CRM required involvement from the whole company to develop and maintain customer relationships; they stated that ‘CRM puts the customer into a central focus of multiple organisational activities’.

The view that CRM required the whole company involved was also shared by Baran et al. (2008), who noted that high-level commitment with senior management along with support was essential for CRM to be successful. The authors also emphasised that in order to achieve greater development and implementation, understanding relationships between satisfaction, loyalty and profits was fundamental to optimising revenue and profitability. Furthermore, Baran et al. (2008), suggested that the main objectives with CRM were satisfying customers, creating customer loyalty and creating relationships between the business and its customers.

Additionally, Teau and Protopopescu (2015) noted that CRM provided management with quick access to measurements including KPIs to support performance management. The data could also be customised for coaching to address gaps and increase performance. Relationship marketing and CRM were often used interchangeably by academics, according to Parvatiyar and Sheth, (2001); nevertheless, the term CRM was used more often in the context of technology solutions and was described by Payne and Frow (2005, p. 167) as ‘informed-enabled relationship marketing’. Furthermore, Bruhn (2003, p. 11) observed; ‘relationship marketing covers all actions for the analysis, planning, realisation, and control of measures that initiate, stabilise, intensify, and reactivate business relationships with the corporation’s stakeholders – mainly customers – and to the creation of mutual value’.

Tzempelikos and Gounaris (2013) completed a study in Greece examining KAM from a relationship marketing perspective by shifting the focus from the organisational issues to the relational aspects of a KAM programme. They noted from data collected from 13 interviews with people in senior management positions within corporate companies that relationship quality mediates the effect of KAM orientation on a supplier’s performance. With this in mind, the existing literature provides further empirical evidence of the need to consider KAM from the relationship marketing perspective (Ivens and Pardo, 2007) since KAM orientation adoption enhances the customer’s degree of satisfaction, trust and commitment which, in turn, influences the financial and non-financial results of the KAM programme.

Similarly, Day et al. (2013) noted two patterns of trust development (empathy driven and capability driven) that reflect a firm's approach to relationship development, which can be monitored. Vitrally, each development pattern appears to raise different risks. Both patterns of trust are built over time and develop from embedded internal cultural and policy norms, which carry over into external relationships. It is clear in both case studies that these norms, shared by those at each case company, have considerable influence over the expectations of relationships with suppliers. Durif et al. (2013) supported elements of the above, noting that it is critical that KAM is based on a set of moral and ethical principles designed to operate as mechanisms for building trust and commitment between customers and KAMs (Gatfaoui, 2007), and ultimately building relationship capital (Vézina and Messier, 2005).

Similarly, Wang (2012, p. 375) also noted the importance of 'trust, stability, relationships and joint working commitments with good revenue key accounts.' Also, Friend and Johnson (2014) noted that key account relationships were crucial for companies involved in B2B sales. The authors also suggested that management must know how to motivate, support and provide knowledge and expertise when linking effort and performance to support KAMs to cultivate effective relationships based on customer-specific goals. The success of the relationship-based approach required trust, referred to as the ethical bases of relationship marketing according to Murphy et al. (2007). Relationship marketing was also agreeable with Tapp (2008) who suggested that CRM supported cross selling along with direct marketing to acquire and maintain customers by providing a framework for three activities:

1. Analysis of individual customer information,
2. Strategic information and
3. Implementation with customers who respond directly.

Also, Gummesson (2004, p. 139) proposed that 'when relationship marketing, CRM, and services marketing are combined with a network view they become drivers of a paradigm shift in marketing'. This view is shared by Buttle (2009), who suggested that CRM was a process that can develop and maintain mutually beneficial long-term relationships with strategically significant customers through three stages of the customer life cycle:

1. Customer acquisition,
2. Customer retention and
3. Customer development.

CRM supporting the development of relationships based on SDL was noted by Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2008) who suggested that relationship marketing was a facet of CRM focusing on customer loyalty and long-term engagement that was classified as SDL. Similarly, Lusch et al. (2006, p. 17) stated that 'in SDL, competition was a matter of knowledge creation and application. It was about the comparative advantage in service provision'; value can only be created when a customer puts SDL into use, yet the authors also stated that another important aspect was to do with treating employees, value-network partners and customers as collaborators to co-create value for all stakeholders. In essence, SDL emphasised collaborative processes and reciprocal value creation.

Lusch et al. (2010) agreed with SDL emphasising collaborative processes including reciprocal value creation pertinent to CRM; they applied SDL to supply chain management and discovered the importance of value networks to achieving value creation. The social and economic actors (suppliers) of a value network were bound together by competences, relationships and information. The authors confirmed it was essential to recognise and establish value-creation networks by learning to serve and accommodate necessary changes.

Given these long-term goals and in relation to CRM, the links with KAM are clear. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) also suggested that CRM supports co-creation and stated it was a management initiative, or form of economic strategy, that brings different parties together. The parties included personnel from different companies to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome. These sentiments were accepted by Vargo and Lusch (2008b, p. 284), who noted that 'co-creation of value and co-production make the consumer endogenous'.

In conclusion, the key objectives of CRM according to the literature thus far, were to recognise, acquire, satisfy and retain profitable customers to support the business to enhance performance and increase revenues and profitability. CRM enables resources like co-creation of value, value networks and customer relationships to form a dominant logic for marketing and other departments that is entirely focused on services provision rather than goods as the central element of economic exchange. The link with KAM is, therefore, clear, as the stronger the relationship the better the chances of maintaining a key account and CRM supports the development of relationships, customer loyalty and long-term engagement based on SDL. Having established that CRM based on SDL is an important part of KAM, the review will now consider the literature regarding the role of the key account manager.

2.5. The role of the key account manager

The KAMs' role is more than a salesperson and necessarily involves managing people as well as finances and other resources. The review of literature on the KAMs role identified several key themes, the following sections will therefore consider crucial elements of the KAMs' role, namely their role as leaders, issues concerning role ambiguity and conflict, remuneration, knowledge management and personal characteristics.

2.5.1. The role of the key account manager and leadership

The word leadership often has connotations of images of powerful, dynamic individuals in history who have led military, political, religious or social events. While this study does not aim to define leadership, expressions such as power, authority, management administration, control and supervision often describe this phenomenon. Leadership is complex and difficult to define. As long ago as 1974, Stogdill (p. 259) concluded that there were almost as many definitions as there were persons attempting to define the concept.

Academic theory evolved over time to include the ideas of transactional and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). Transactional leaders determine what subordinates need to do to achieve their own and organisational objectives, then classify these requirements and help subordinates become confident that they can reach their objectives. Conversely, transformational leaders motivate people to do better than they would have expected by raising motivation and emphasising the importance of the value of people's tasks within the organisation. These leaders go beyond transactional leadership by using their personal vision and energy to inspire their followers. Bass's theories have remained popular, with Bass and Avolio (1994) noting that transformational leadership connected with team members to enhance a sense of identity and self and the collective identity of the organisation in relation to the mission. They further noted that managers were considered role models by their team members and inspired and challenged the team to take greater ownership of their work.

A sociologist called Downton (1973) first coined the term transformational leadership. Downton was known for his research on charismatic leadership. He subsequently wrote a book called 'Rebel leadership: Commitment and charisma in the revolutionary process'. Transformational leadership as a concept was further developed by Burns (1978) who described transformational leaders as people who tap the motives of followers to better achieve the goals of leaders and followers. Furthermore, transformational leadership endeavours to change individuals and social systems to create valuable and positive change and to change individuals into leaders, enhancing motivation, morale and team performance.

Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) concurred with this view and stated that transformational leadership was possible when shared goals and standards were adopted by followers, thus producing changes in attitudes, beliefs and goals. Equally, the authors affirmed that people who exhibit transformational leadership often have a strong set of internal values and ideals, and they were effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self-interests, which was often associated with transactional leaders.

The same conclusions were drawn by Weitz and Bradford (1999, p. 249); they cited Bass (1985) and Podsakoff et al. (1996), who confirmed that transformational leadership provided inspiration for the team, with the manager serving as a role model for the appropriate team behaviours, and fosters team goals. Bryman (1992) shared the same views, suggesting that transforming leadership involved both leaders and followers raising each other's motivation and sense of purpose. This greater sense of purpose was one in which the aims and aspirations of leaders and followers congeal into one. Furthermore, both leaders and followers were transformed in pursuit of goals that express aspirations with which they can identify. Similarly, Dvir et al. (2002, p. 735) suggested that 'transformational leaders exhibit charismatic behaviours, arouse inspirational motivation, provide intellectual stimulation, and treat followers with individualised consideration'. This view was also shared by MacKenzie et al. (2001, p. 129), who noted that leaders need to provide individualised support and respect for people; moreover, 'leadership started and ended with people.'

Transformational leader theory, according to Wiehrich and Koontz (1993), was just a return to trait theory and nothing new; however, according to Bass and Avolio (1994), it was the most complete picture of the 'full range' of leadership. Bass (1985), though, described this model as a relatively new construct with new components, factors and behaviours. Donaldson et al. (2001) probed further by suggesting that salespeople use strong management and leadership as examples for their own behaviours. The authors confirmed that transformational leadership can contribute significantly to the customer orientation of salespeople.

Artur et al. (2001) commented that sales managers applying behaviour-based control focused more on collaboration than control, suggesting that the greater the extent of involvement by sales managers in these activities, the more behaviour based the control systems. Nevertheless, Cravens et al. (1993, p. 56) noted that both methods of control are unrealistic and inappropriate. An essential requirement of KAMs, according to Oliver et al. (1994, p. 54), was working with leadership towards achieving qualitative aspects including knowledge, time management, maintenance and service, which can be managed with the use of behaviour-based control; they wrote that behaviour-based control 'allows for non-sales goals, such as account maintenance and service, to be pursued'. The functions of management have been reviewed by Kotter (1990) who stated that the prime function of management is to provide order and consistency to organisations.

Donaldson (1998) supported elements of this view and suggested that the primary task of the sales manager is to lead and manage salespeople rather than sales. Furthermore, Donaldson et al. (2001) argued that one of the three main reasons why management support salespeople who are working towards relationship-based sell is that they educate others about the processes in their own firm and also re-engineer them. However, Mullins et al.'s (2014) noted the importance of sales management and leadership in a study which focused on sellers knowing their customers regarding forecasting processes and marketing strategies. The findings underpinned the importance of sales management reviewing inaccuracies that required intervention, because self-efficacious salespeople were upwardly biased in their perceptions of customer relationship quality, whereas customer-orientated salespeople were downwardly biased. Similarly, Spreitzer et al. (1999) affirmed that empowered supervisors sense a greater meaning or importance to their work and believe that it has a strong impact on organisational results. This in turn ensures that the supervisors become more involved with the decisions that subordinates make, which is likely to be positively enhanced by the level of empowerment that he or she perceives.

Grove et al. (2010) agreed with these sentiments. The authors wrote a paper presenting the challenges identified during an implementation programme to improve productivity in a health-visiting service within the NHS. They concluded that management required a transformational leadership approach, noting 'Successful lean implementation can be overcome with upfront planning, transformational leadership, excellent communication, identification and sharing of best practice and above all a shared vision (2010, p. 216)'. The transformational leader behaviour is also associated with employee commitment to the organisation, trust in the leader and positive organisational citizenship behaviours, according to Podsakoff et al. (1996). This view is supported by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), which is quoted by Truss et al. (2006) in a report called 'Working life: employee attitudes and engagement'. The CIPD states that being positively present during the performance of work is achieved by willingly contributing intellectual effort and experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others.

Likewise, a study in Perth, Australia, by Lee and Fink (2013, p. 26), discovered that 'managers need to become more like a coach to advise, support and facilitate'. The study also suggested that managers 'should work closely with their team members to understand their needs and requirements'. Management would achieve this by listening to and observing their staff to understand the impeding factors and developing the necessary strategies to overcome them, which was comparable behaviour to that of transformational leadership. Team integration and agreed targets for sales personnel and management were also essential for transformational leadership to be successfully implemented.

Oliver and Anderson (1994, p. 54) cited Cravens et al. (1993) when they conceptualised the philosophies of outcome-based sales force control systems, suggesting that managers should control salespersons' behaviours in return for fixed level of compensation; they also suggested that behaviour-based sales force control systems require incentives to control the sales force. Also, Oliver and Anderson (1994, p. 54) described outcome control as an 'essential laissez-faire approach' which was 'administered with a carrot and stick approach'; moreover, they described behaviour control as being 'a paternalistic approach whereby managers dictate that salespeople provide what they believe are correct inputs to achieve the firm's goals'.

Atanasova and Senn (2011) explained that, in particular, support in the form of resource allocations and public recognition of the global customer team efforts convey the importance that senior management attributes to the global account management initiative and was pivotal for overcoming potential resistance or power struggles within the firm; this impacts positively on the KAM performance, enhances internal and external collaboration, reduces conflict and enforces a more proactive approach. Similarly, Pardo et al. (2014, p.1138) have argued that transformational leaders must be accepted by KAM units, which in return must develop their own efforts and support management in order to differentiate themselves internally, and quoted:

It is therefore necessary for managers of KAM programmes to take a proactive, integrative approach to developing support for the KAM initiative, both through their own ability to communicate, influence and persuade, and by enlisting, not just the tacit support of senior managers, but their involvement.

Tzempelikos and Gounaris (2013) concurred with this view and suggested that top management's commitment to developing KAM programmes, customer orientation (referring back to CRM and service-dominant logic) and inter-functional coordination is essential.

Tzempelikos and Gounaris (2013) further noted that implementing KAM is a long-term aim and that KAM adoption enhances the customer's degree of satisfaction, trust and commitment which, in turn, influences the financial and non-financial results of the KAM programme. Similarly, Gotsis and Kortezi (2011, p. 467) supported transformational leadership, noting, 'pro-social behaviour, other-regarding preferences and strong reciprocity are required' furthermore, components of boundedly self-interested attitudes were conducive to cooperation and "win-win" situations, a basis of constructive politics oriented to the collectively best.' The authors demonstrated that constructive politics that was used to manage boundedly selfish power/influence processes was in a position to claim organisational legitimacy because it leads to a higher level of organisational well-being.

The importance of the sales manager's internal influence on supporting tasks, processes and the development of KAM has been expressed by Wilson (1999, p. 29), who suggested that

[t]he involvement of senior management in the process is essential in order to drive the changes in organisational structure, systems, processes and culture that may be necessary.

Similarly, MacKenzie et al. (2001, p. 131) suggested that a person needs to articulate a vision: 'uncertainty is corrosive, tell them where they're headed'; furthermore 'the most effective way to get results is to show someone what you want done'. Kowalkowski's work (2011) resonated with the above, and the author suggested that a more holistic approach to the management of service offerings is required and that to have a competitive service offering, the firm must think in terms of integration of structure and processes (cf. Normann, 1983). Furthermore, Homburg et al. (2002, p. 48) noted:

The role of the key account manager can be similar to that of sales, albeit on a more extensive level. Systematic planning, development of new offerings, and customer relationship management will lead to new business agreements.

The authors also suggest that this requires increased internal coordination all of which support the principles of transformational leadership.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that transformational leadership was a factor of the KAM's success (this requires testing within the primary research). This approach exhibits charismatic behaviours to arouse inspirational motivation and provide intellectual stimulation, while treating followers with individualised consideration, as noted by Dvir et al. (2002). Transformational leadership also required active participation of senior management while empowering KAMs to make decisions

Having researched companies' leadership structures within key accounts, Hurcomb (1999) also concluded that the most effective companies are three times more likely to involve their managing directors in developing strategic customers than the least effective, which supported the notions of transformational leadership. Millman and Wilson. (1999, p. 336) concurred by adding: 'Without total senior management involvement, the process is unlikely to succeed'. The review will now consider the literature regarding the role of the key account manager and role conflict, role ambiguity and authority.

2.5.2. The role of the key account manager and role conflict, role ambiguity and authority

The KAM role involves activities or tasks that must be performed through working with role partners from different departments, such as sales, marketing, customer services and finance, supported by management. Role clarity provided by management is therefore essential for successful KAM. Rehme et al. (2013) suggested that role partner working KAM programmes are ambiguous, overlaid and customer orientated. Similarly, Naughton and Tiernan (2012) suggested that role partner working required commitment from all stakeholders to be a success and that getting the relevant parties to subscribe to the concept at the beginning, was often problematic.

Definitions of KAMs roles were determined by expectations, demands and pressures when dealing with role partners, according to Pardo et al. (2013). The role partner working to achieve integration was essential for cooperation and implementation. As may be expected, KAMs were therefore susceptible to pressures due to disparate expectations from companies, colleagues, customers and management, as well as their personal circumstances. If expectations, demands and pressures become incompatible, there may be tension, resulting in lower job satisfaction, which, in turn, may influence job performance. Role clarity refers to the extent to which KAMs understand what is required from them to be effective in their role in the same way as their managers perceive how their role should be carried out. Rehme et al. (2013) stated role partner working KAM programs are ambiguous which may lead to role conflict when the demands of KAM roles are incompatible. Alternatively, role ambiguity may occur if KAMs do not have adequate access to important information that helps them to perform their role, or when KAMs are not entirely clear what customers' or management's expectations were.

According to Ryals and Davies (2013, p. 121), behavioural indicators of strategic intent are the basis of KAM in terms of goals; the following comment relates to role clarity and the importance of management support: 'It appears that practitioners view their relationship types in terms of resource usage which, in turn, is linked to structure. Thus, a basic relationship would be seen as one in which there was a single key account manager and a single purchaser'. When reviewing the role of KAMs, Mullins (1996) shared the same views and argued that role conflict arises from inadequate or inappropriate role definition.

The comment by Mullins (1996) links in well with McDonald and Roger's work (1998) relating to the relationship between customers and KAMs, leading to potential pressures with managers due to lack of involvement; the authors suggested that buying companies require KAMs to take ownership and accept accountability and responsibility, thus the need for selling companies to empower their KAMs.

Piercy et al. (1999) also stated that a firm may advocate customer-orientated relationship selling and yet inhibit transactional selling simply by assigning too many customers to each salesperson, which could lead to extreme role conflict. Nonetheless, the importance of the sales manager's internal influence to provide role clarity and support tasks, processes and the development of KAM was cited by Wilson (1999), who affirmed that senior management's involvement in processes was essential to drive the changes in organisational structure, systems, processes and culture. Also, the importance of management clarity and direction was indicated in a study by Mullins et al. (2014) which focused on sellers knowing their customers regarding forecasting processes and marketing strategies. The findings underpinned the importance of sales management reviewing inaccuracies that required intervention to minimise errors regarding sellers' perceptions of customer relationship quality.

Moreover, it has been noted by Churchill et al. (2000) that feelings of ambiguity and conflict and inaccurate role perceptions can cause psychological stress and consequently can lead to lowered performance. However, the same authors also stated that in small doses, role conflict and role ambiguity may be good for the individual and the organisation as they can lead to useful adaptation and change. While, Piercy et al. (2000) and Babakus et al. (1999) emphasised that role ambiguity produces lower job satisfaction and organisational commitment and causes KAMs to suffer emotional exhaustion, thus reducing performance.

Similarly, Longenecker et al. (2014) found that 81% of the participants in a study listed the single most important factors regarding their development as; 1. role clarity, 2. goals and 3. performance expectations. All managers expected clearly articulated and well-defined documents from their companies. Also, Longenecker et al. (2014) suggested sales managers needed to play an active role in supporting those who reported directly to them to ensure there was no ambiguity and that they were accountable for their positions. Additionally, MacKenzie et al. (2001) suggested that role ambiguity led to uncertainty which was corrosive and that management needed to provide clarity and direction. For example, management needed to advise KAMs where they needed to go, and the most effective way to get results was to demonstrate to them what management wanted them to do. Moreover, Salojarvi et al. (2013, p. 391) supported this view, noting a need for more of a 'managerial emphasis on systematic processes, clear guidelines, and incentives. Especially in large organisations this link could be supported by investing in CRM systems that support the storing and availability of key account-related knowledge.'

Bradford and Rollinson (2000) noted that the behaviours of KAMs may also be difficult to define; nevertheless, they described KAM success as being based on clear objectives, tasks and competencies of KAMs. In addition, they argued that KAM role ambiguity is a common problem. Furthermore, Bradford and Rollinson (2000) suggested that KAMs job definitions are often too vague and will essentially drive role ambiguity. Similarly, Piercy et al. (2000) suggested that greater role clarity for KAMs may substantially lower burnout which may be caused by role ambiguity. Piercy et al. (2000, p. 14) described burnout as being 'lower job satisfaction and organisational commitment, as well as reduced performance, most tellingly in salesperson behavioural performance'.

In addition to the above, clear goals and processes are essential according to Babakus et al. (1999) who suggested that role ambiguity is a potential antecedent of emotional exhaustion and thus leads to a negative impact on job satisfaction and organisational commitment. However, Donaldson et al. (2001) reflected on the more human aspects of individuals, suggesting that relationships at different levels of maturity required different treatment, which leads to further opportunities for role ambiguity due to flexibility requirements in the management of relationships with KAMs.

Nonetheless, the vulnerabilities and risks of KAM (Piercy and Lane, 2006) can be decreased and controlled by creating a strategic account management programme with high levels of configurational fit, thus reducing role ambiguity, according to Storbacka (2012). The author also noted that role partner working with clear goals is compulsory. This view is aligned with that of Pardo et al. (2013), who confirmed that role partner working integration was essential for cooperation between several coexisting units and implementation. Salojarvi et al. (2013) also noted the importance of control variables, which were positively related to the key account's business success, suggesting that suppliers perform better when the key account performs well in its own business.

Babakus et al. (1999) cited Rizzo et al. (1970), also stated that the definition of role ambiguity is the opposite of that of role clarity and that it has been described as the situation in which KAMs do not have clear direction from management about the expectations of his or her role. This also corresponds with Mullins (1996) views, which suggested that there was a lack of clarity as to the precise requirements of the role when KAMs were unsure what to do. Correspondingly, Handy (1985) suggested that role ambiguity commenced when there was some uncertainty of which tasks and responsibilities were part of the role. Equally, Siguaw et al. (1994) described role ambiguity as the result of uncertainty regarding the standards by which job performance was judged to be adequate.

While, Stone and Woodcock (1998) supported the view that empowerment was particularly important when dealing with large accounts for business that already had a relationship with the company; however, they failed to discuss the implications and pressures from management caused by lack of involvement. Yet Rogers (1999) suggested that if KAMs lack authority, this is usually clear to the customer and leads them to question whether there are any privileges in their key account status. Similarly, McDonald and Roger's (1998) suggested that authority is an essential part of KAMs role and that to be attractive in the long term to ambitious professionals' companies need to empower individuals with authority. However, Bradford and Rollinson (2000) questioned this and suggested that KAMs often complain of feeling isolated and unsupported by their company leading to role ambiguity.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that KAMs role requires role clarity, which in turn increases empowerment, job satisfaction and productivity, especially when working with internal or external teams supporting collaborative working. Role clarity is also achieved by a managerial emphasis on systematic processes, clear guidelines and incentives as cited by Salojarvi et al. (2013, p. 391), therefore preventing role ambiguity and role conflict.

Having established that role clarity is an important part of KAM, the review will now consider the literature regarding the role of the key account manager and remuneration, reward and performance.

2.5.3. The role of the key account manager and remuneration, reward and performance

KAMs may be remunerated and rewarded in a variety of ways, including salary plus commission and/or achievement of sales targets (Rogers 2007). Salary may be split across several areas, such as personal performance, team performance and organisational performance. Customer satisfaction ratings may also be considered (McDonalds and Rogers, 1998).

Reward mechanisms may also include sales-based bonuses, market share-based bonuses and profit-based bonuses. Other reward mechanisms to motivate KAMs may consist of discounted company share prices, including share options, reward packages based on the accuracy of forecasting, recovery of debt, handling complaints, or the number of contacts or opportunities identified.

Examples of salary and performance criteria, according to McDonald and Rogers (1998), included one-third personal performance, one-third KAM team performance and one-third corporate performance. Other examples suggested included customer satisfaction ratings encompassing KAMs, the key account team and indeed the company.

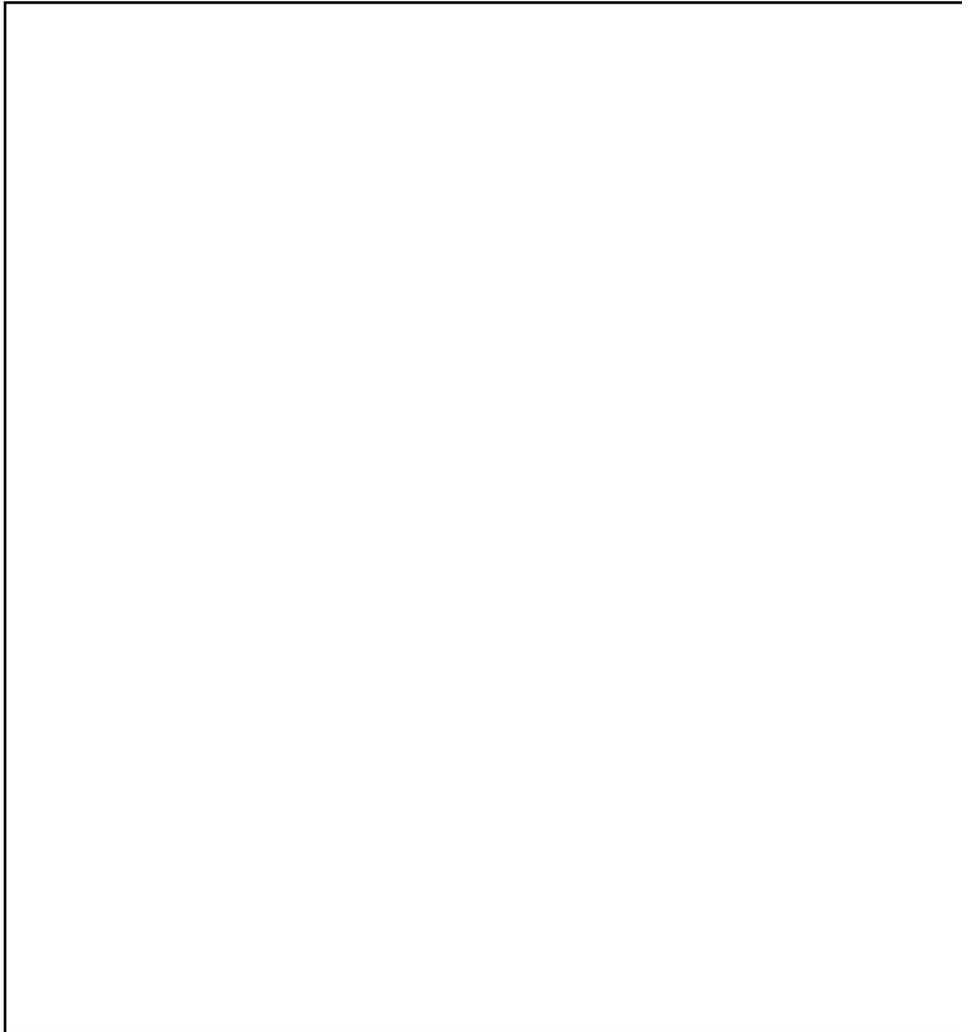
A study of 108 field sales managers by Kuster and Canales (2011) concluded that KAMs who receive a greater proportion of compensation as a fixed salary gave a better individual performance than those who were paid by commission only. Furthermore, salary was related to behavioural control over salespeople while compensation via a system of commission was related to motivation. The authors therefore concluded by suggesting that a combination of the security of a fixed salary and being rewarded for having the motivation to carry out parts of the role support the salesperson's development in terms of abilities and obtaining better outcomes and also deliver efficiencies for the company.

Remuneration and reward methods are designed to motivate KAMs to concentrate on customers' and the company's long-term interests (McDonald and Rogers, 1998, p. 128). Even so, events may occur outside KAMs' control, which may include the customer's market position slipping, the main contact leaving or the main contacts budget being cut due to unforeseen circumstances. All these events may affect the KAM performance due to no fault of KAMs and no performance system can make allowances for these external impacts. Nonetheless, rewards linked to outcomes do have a positive effect when they were perceived to be 'fair' and when the individual can actually influence the outcome, and when they do not fluctuate widely (Rogers 2007).

In line with the above, Weilbaker (1999) established that it was critical to the success and maintenance of a company's sales strategy to have a compensation plan that supported the company's goals and the salesperson's activities. Furthermore, the same author indicated the importance of long-term inputs, with clarity regarding objectives. Donaldson et al. (2001) acknowledged that reward systems must change to reflect the job that management wants done and if relationships were to the fore then individual incentives, especially financial incentives, need to be replaced with performance bonuses based on the tasks performed and reflecting teamwork.

McDonald and Rogers (1998) suggested that the pros and cons of various reward mechanisms for KAMs are as shown, in table 2.7.

Table 2.7. McDonald and Rogers (1998), KAM reward mechanisms – Content removed for copyright reasons.



McDonald and Rogers (1998, p. 129) suggested that ‘a substantial salary with a minority proportion of performance related pay is the preferred formula in many companies with partnership relationships.’ In 1998, evidence was mounting that this was the most effective reward mechanism for KAMs, ensuring long-term and short-term success with customers. This view was also agreeable with Rogers (2007) who reiterated that many companies were still using a combination of salary plus commission to motivate their KAMs.

However, this view is not entirely shared by all theorists. Sengupta et al. (2000, p. 5) examined KAMs performance and concluded that ‘the relationship processes are so important in key account selling, companies should design variable compensation for meeting or exceeding benchmarks on relationship processes and outcomes too’. Additionally, Cravens (1995) suggested that salespeople who have earned incentive compensation based on individual performance are not likely to favour group incentives. Kohn (1993) suggested that, by and large, rewards succeed in securing one thing only, which was temporary compliance. Dong et al. (2010) supported this view and noted that incentives may only provide temporary compliance rather than true acceptance of organisational initiatives.

Guan and Rehme (2012, p. 196) focused more on process and knowledge, noting:

In an increasingly tough and competitive business climate, manufacturers are focusing more intently on highly processed products with higher knowledge content. This change means that soft values such as smart logistics, technical support, and after-sales service have been assigned greater importance, therefore must be reflective in remuneration.

Similarly, Moncrief and Shipp (1997) suggested that reward systems are the selection and utilisation of organisational rewards in order to direct salespeople's behaviour towards the attainment of organisational objects. However, Tzokas and Donaldson (2000) noted that when salespeople were compensated according to customer satisfaction ratings, there was a higher level of customer service activity by those salespeople compared to those who were compensated according to sales volume. Widmier (2002, p. 613), repeated the same study and affirmed that customer satisfaction incentives motivate salespeople, stating that 'even a small percentage of customer satisfaction incentives increase the customer orientation of salespeople. The more traditional sales volume incentives like commissions were shown to increase sales orientation.'

Matthyssens and Vandembemt (2010) supported the above regarding customer feedback. The authors completed research in Belgium and other European countries to show how manufacturers can increase customer value and identify drivers and inhibitors; they concluded that important drivers were customer feedback systems, customer interaction and the facilitating role of KAMs in the process. The study also identified challenges, which were the need for new customer-centric tools, planning systems, feedback loops and control systems. Customer feedback was also pivotal to a study by Fung So and King (2010) who noted that service experience plays a dominant role in building brand equity.

Parvinen et al. (2013) completed some research in 2008 within B2B firms in Finland. The authors identified the importance of sales processes that captured activities relating to performance. Nonetheless, they identified the importance of trust, communication and information sharing in developing processes and relationships. The research concluded that despite the emergence of service-dominant logic (SDL), B2B service and product companies differ regarding how sales process management contributes to an organisation's performance (which we shall return to in section 2.6).

According to Songailiene et al. (2011) trust, communication and sharing knowledge are important factors driving performance provided that the individuals involved are highly networked and have access to market intelligence, and thus have a high score in terms of strategic value. The authors also noted the importance of cooperation and developing strategic opportunities. Integration with a buyer's key supplier management activities is another important factor and these components facilitate business exchange but also stimulate and steer the adaptation and coordination activities (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2013).

KAM teams with a higher perceived level of customer-knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation had a greater key account performance, according to Salojarvi and Saarenketo (2013). The authors noted that those in a team-based group perceived higher levels of KAM performance than those in the non-team group.

Salojarvi and Sainio, (2010, p. 348), concurred noting:

The positive relationship between the acquisition of customer knowledge and key account performance may indicate that the customer gets value not only from knowledge exchange with the firm but also from interaction with the supplier, which results in a deeper relationship with the supplier and thus better performance.

Furthermore, the better the firm can evaluate its own processes and utilise customer knowledge in developing new value-adding services and products, the better the key account performance. The paper suggested that a managerial focus must be directed to the acquisition phase of customer-knowledge processing, shaping the quality of the generated knowledge.

Gounaris and Tzempelikos (2013) wrote a paper in Greece to research conceptualisation and empirical validation of KAM orientation, a multidimensional construct integrating an attitude- and behaviour-related set of values regarding KAM, and to explore potential influences on different aspects of KAM effectiveness. The authors concluded that KAM orientation influences financial and non-financial performance. The findings also confirmed the mediating role of relationship quality and relational capabilities.

Wang (2012, p. 375) completed research examining key accounts' perceptions of revenue management practice and its impact on key account relationship development. Wang declared that 'revenue management plays a supportive role in key account relationships, in order to gain more business.' Wang also stated that trust was important and that the marketing and operations management functions of a firm should cooperate to optimise financial gain and performance. Similarly, Tzempelikos and Gounaris (2013) supported this view when identifying the importance of KAM relational aspects; when they affirmed that there had been a move away from operational issues, they confirmed that the quality of a relationship mediates the effect of KAM orientation on a supplier's performance.

All the same, Friend and Johnson (2014) suggested that key account relationships were crucial for organisations involved in B2B sales; managers must know how to cultivate effective relationships with existing key accounts based on their customer-specific goals. As managers begin to pinpoint specific strategic initiatives, this provides insights that are important within the reward motivation frameworks, because sales managers are presumed to have greater knowledge and expertise and thus as more accurately able to perceive the linkages between effort and performance.

In conclusion, a remuneration and reward package including a combination of salary plus commission motivates KAMs to perform which is aligned to the views of Rogers (2007). To date, it appears the above is most effective reward mechanism for KAMs, ensuring long-term and short-term success with customers.

Having established that remuneration and reward is an important part of KAM, the review will now consider the literature regarding the role of the key account manager and measuring performance.

2.5.4. The role of the key account manager and measuring performance

Whatever the remuneration and reward system in place between KAMs and their companies, both will only be able to monitor their success or failure if something is measured. Just as KAMs want to demonstrate returns such as increase revenue and improved productivity, senior management will want to prove value for their companies (Rogers, 2007).

While, procurement may measure the value of production and the value of delivery, sales managers, according to Rogers (2007), can demonstrate further commitment to buyers by understanding their goals and anticipating their needs and sharing ideas. At this stage the measurement becomes a joint issue and co-creational. However, Kuster and Canales (2011) as previously referenced suggested that when measuring performance, compensation and control policies affected sales performance and noted KAMs being measured by behavioural controls defined by management which were objective based increased performance.

Richardson (2014) suggested that value was determined by KAMs by consulting with customers and winning business off competitors which was more complex to measure because KAMs needed to differentiate solutions through insights, ideas, advice, proof of value, and by building trusting relationships. While the author agreed that product knowledge was a foundation, it was considered a small part of what the customer values, and that customers were expecting more than just tailored solutions. The customer according to Richardson (2014, p. 86) was now looking for a 'go to person' who can help companies anticipate issues, develop creative solutions, and achieve business and personal success.

Furthermore, Richardson (2014, p. 88) stated:

While you can influence what clients value, at the end of the day it is clients who define value. Unless your solutions track with what they value, you won't succeed.

Many philosophers including Richardson (2014) also highlighted that client scorecards were a mechanism for measuring performance. The scorecards used could be formal or informal as they make buying decisions and the role of KAMs was to know what was on each stake-holders list, and also to shape it with the customer who defined the value.

The concept of balance scorecards was developed by Kaplan and Norton (1992) who said that the scorecard aligned business activities to the vision and strategy of the business, improved internal and external communications, and monitored business performance against strategic goals. The process allowed managers to look at the business providing a comprehensive overview of financial and operational measures, including customer satisfaction and innovation.

Also, Kaplan and Norton (1992) noted that the approach provided a relevant range of finance and non-financial information that supported effective business management. The approach was also considered a consistent performance measurement tool which supported cross-functional integration, customer supplier partnerships, continuous improvement, and team rather than individual accountability. By combining the financial, customer, internal process and innovation, and organisational learning perspectives, the balance scorecard also helped managers understand and 'puts strategy and vision, not control, at the centre' (Kaplan and Norton, 1992, p. 79).

While, Qudrat-Ullah (2009, p. 321) suggested that the traditional balanced scorecard ‘is useful in helping business to align their resources to improve their performance’, they noted that implementation only provided a snapshot view of the business processes and failed to capture the dynamics of inter-related variables. The author argued for a system dynamic simulation based dynamic scorecard to qualitatively structure the process flow with various feedback mechanisms as not all measures used in performance measurement were relevant and can hinder performance. The author also indicated that some drawbacks of the balanced scorecard were the potential of having too many performance indicators and senior management too concerned with financial performance, along with the need to constantly update the scorecards.

However, the balanced scorecard according to Biazzo and Garengo (2012) was an actual management tool for encouraging and involving people in the implementation of a strategy and indicators that were transparent, understandable, complete and accessible were essential. The authors also noted that the process promoted the establishment of an interactive type of control system and developed a bottom-up approach that enabled facilitation of communication between various hierarchical levels and supported and promoted progress and innovation. Similarly, Teau and Protopopescu (2015) reaffirmed that performance can be measured by using clear key performance indicators (KPI) which was vital for sales and like Biazzo and Garengo (2012) comments required collaboration within the company.

Teau and Protopopescu (2015) also stated that the process needed to imply customer orientation to, firstly, meet customer requirements through service supply and, secondly, to increase volumes within specific time frames. This process also involved analysing the demands of the market, customers’ psychology and market fluctuations and preparing the necessary sales budgets to attract and retain customers to gain a competitive advantage using quantitative and qualitative measurements. Yet, the authors also noted that the seller’s main objectives were also to improve customer satisfaction which resonates with Kaplan and Norton (1992) views on measuring customer satisfaction and innovation against strategic goals.

Furthermore, Teau and Protopopescu (2015, p. 67-68) also suggested that ‘sales managers can quickly access KPIs from their CRM for every sales maker and use this data to customise coaching conversations that will address gaps and boost performance’, Also, example KPIs need to be written S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-based) including level of response rates and customer sales turnovers/profitability (Teau and Protopopescu, 2015). The authors views are similar to Doran’s (1981) who suggested that S.M.A.R.T. was the smart way to write managements goals and objectives, as well as performance objectives.

Performance objectives could be based on sales revenues to improve sales with a sales budget in place for forecasting turnover which inevitably would require a detailed breaking down at account level to include sales promotions, along with forecasted sale prices which could then be measured and evaluated to measure performance, Ionescu and Bigioi (2016). Nonetheless, this would require role clarity with clear goals and performance expectations to measure performance accurately (Longenecker et al. (2014), this method was based on numerical targets. Moreover, the authors stated that developing sales managers required clearly defined performance expectations as well as feedback from a wide variety of sources, including coaching, mentoring and 360-degree processes to help drive and support high performance.

Ionescu and Bigioi (2016, p. 800) suggested that to support the measurement of performance a numerical target involving a 'sales budget can support a company to achieve its sales goals, providing at the same time a basis in determining and evaluating individual and team objectives and successes' However, it should be noted that this process was considered time-consuming and may cause conflict with other departments; it needed to be realistic, with achievable indicators and performance reports comparing actual data with budgeted data if KAMs and management were to find it valuable. Also, it was stated that any forecast required the need to review the accuracy of the predicting strategies, as self-efficacious salespeople were upwardly biased, whereas customer-orientated salespeople were downwardly biased regarding their perceptions (Mullins et al., 2014).

Mullins et al. (2014) indicated that performance forecasting inaccuracies required correction by management pertinent to customer relationship quality they noted from their research findings that profit was greater from sellers in the later phases of the relationship. It was also noted that KAM teams with a higher perceived level of customer-knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation had a greater key account performance, according to Salojarvi and Saarenketo (2013). When reviewing performance, the authors also confirmed that those in the team-based group perceived higher levels of KAM performance than those in the non-team group.

Salojarvi and Sainio (2010, p. 348) agreed with this notion and stated that

[t]he positive relationship between the acquisition of customer knowledge and key account performance may indicate that the customer gets value not only from knowledge exchange with the firm but also from interaction with the supplier, which results in a deeper relationship with the supplier and thus better performance.

When reviewing KAM effectiveness in relation to measuring performance, Gounaris and Tzempelikos (2013) also found that KAM orientation influences financial and non-financial performance. The findings confirmed the mediating role of relationship quality and relational capabilities and the importance of integrating an attitude- and behaviour-related set of values towards KAM boosted performance.

In conclusion, measuring performance is complex and client scorecards are a mechanism for measuring performance with KPI's. The scorecards include financial and non-financial metrics that help KAMs understand each stake-holders' requirements, along with shaping them in line with Richardson (2014) views. Nonetheless, while some drawbacks of the balanced scorecard were the potential of having too many performance indicators and too much of a focus on financial performance the balanced scorecards can help KAMs influence what client's value. Richardson (2014) also noted that the client defined the value, they suggested a consultative and relational approach working with the customer to develop solutions were vital, so they could track what the customer valued. The balanced scorecard is also an interactive type of control system supporting a bottom-up approach aiding facilitation of communication between various hierarchical levels, supporting and promoting progress and innovation (Biazzo and Garengo, 2012).

2.5.5. The role of the key account manager and skills, knowledge and attributes

Defining knowledge requirements for KAMs was very challenging and a list included the product, the market, customers and the company. According to Donaldson (1998), product knowledge along with knowledge concerning the company, customers, competitors, markets and territories were highlighted as key requirements in research focused on sales managers. The research concluded that product knowledge was critical for the successful implementation of KAM by KAMs.

Product knowledge often referred to a product that may be tangible, or a service, and whose attributes can be reinforced and differentiated to create and sustain competitive advantage. In addition, understanding competitors' products and services, referred to as competitor knowledge, was vital and included policies, organisation, pricing and promotional tactics. Market knowledge was another key requirement and involved knowledge of market segmentation, conditions and trends, customer knowledge and the ability to develop and maintain ongoing customer relationships; skills included empathy and capability-driven skills that were considered crucial for KAMs, according to Day et al. (2013, p. 928). The term customer knowledge meant understanding customer needs by offering a product and service to suit them; other terms concerning customer knowledge involved reviewing the key account's decision-making unit or its creditworthiness or potential credit problems (McDonald et al., 2000).

Correspondingly, Donaldson et al. (2001) noted that relationship selling required different skills from transactional selling and suggested that conceptual managerial abilities that in the past were associated with the middle- and top-level management of the firm were essential for success, along with the development of a partnership mentality. Similarly, Auh and Menguc (2013, p. 1348) noted that over time, the role and accountability of the salesperson had changed from that of 'order taker' to 'relationship builder', which required skills, knowledge and assets that facilitated value creation with customers. In this respect, sharing customer information with co-workers outside of sales was an important step in improving relationships with key accounts.

Millman and Wilson (1996) suggested that KAMs required competences close to the general management function or senior marketing function. Furthermore, Bradford et al. (1999) described the knowledge required by those fostering relationships as being more strategic than tactical, which was in line with Sengupta et al. (2000), who affirmed that once salespeople have been recruited into key account sales positions, they must be given training to further develop their strategic abilities. This view was supported by Rogers (1999, p. 62), who noted that 'what makes a super key account manager are managerial skills involving both the organising of work and motivating people to do it'. Similarly, McDonald and Roger's (1998) stated that KAMs were indeed managers, and therefore management skills were required, along with customer management skills.

Superior customer focus by a company due to intense training will help support relationship selling, according to Sigauw et al. (1994). Yet Millman and Wilson (1998) noted that companies, as well as management, struggle to understand the concept and potential of KAM. In contrast, Bradford et al. (2012) suggested that the strategic account manager is the key contact and the person ultimately responsible for the customer from the firm's perspective; as the key advocate for the customer, he or she was faced with inherent conflict.

Weitz and Bradford (1999, p. 244) went further, suggesting that ‘managing conflict rather than influencing customers will be the key interpersonal activity of salespeople in a partnering role’. However, managing strategic accounts in a fluid manner is cost-effective, and firms having the flexibility to assign a variety of expertise across a multitude of accounts can leverage intellectual property where it is needed instead of limiting the applicability of the valued resource, according to Bradford et al. (2012, p. 53); the authors also suggested that

[t]he strategic account manager is the central resource for the customer for obtaining firm-level resources (e.g. assigned expertise, access to company knowledge, future product and service directions). As the key advocate for the strategic account, it is imperative that the strategic account manager work to manage the expectations of the strategic customer so that revenues can be generated effectively and efficiently.

In previous studies, Bradford et al. (2000) stated that the skills and competences required of KAMs would be specific to the individual customer relationship and may vary over time. However, the importance of relationship skills and difficulties with uncertainty, trust and commitment when substantiating customer relationships and knowledge management with key accounts was highly regarded by Bengtson et al. (2013). Thus, an enhanced analysis of relationships will require agility to deal with conditions of instability and change. However, Bradford et al. (2000) stated that upon researching KAMs’ roles it was found that only 15% felt they were well selected, trained and effective and developing the company’s KAMs was rated as one of the biggest challenges facing their entire organisation

Durif et al. (2013, p. 1566) undertook research with the aim of gaining an enhanced understanding of how KAM programmes operate and where the KAMs commercial attention lies. The study was implemented in Quebec, Canada, within the banking sector. The authors concluded that ‘financial institutions must seek to render KAM programmes profitable and rigorously select key customer account managers with demonstrated ethical and relationship-based attributes’. Moreover, ‘Cognitive mapping can assist in identifying requisite attributes not only during the traditional recruiting process but also during key customer account manager proficiency training that is already in place within the ranks of many banking institutions.’ This has clear implications for the recruitment, selection and training of KAMs, who require a broad range of skills and attributes to do the job well.

According to Friend and Johnson (2014, p. 655), key account relationships are crucial for organisations involved in B2B sales; managers must know how to cultivate effective relationships with existing key accounts based on their customer-specific goals that support co-creation and social/relational aspects. As managers begin to pinpoint specific strategic initiatives, this provides insights that allow them to understand how their actions are perceived by their customers. These insights are important within the attribution and motivation frameworks ‘because sales managers are presumed to have greater knowledge and expertise, thus more accurately to perceive the linkages between effort and performance. Managers should incorporate the findings within their sales training programs, day-to-day supervision of the sales force, and periodic reviews of their sales force’s expectancy estimates’ (Johnston and Marshall, 2011). Also, knowledge-sharing behaviour and indeed highly networked businesses are important for suppliers if they are highly networked and have access to market intelligence, and thus have a high score in terms of strategic value, according to Songailiene et al. (2011, p. 411). This view is shared by Salojarvi and Saarenketo (2013) who stated that the performance of organisations that used KAM was better if there was a higher perceived level of customer-knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation.

However, to investigate knowledge management, Cordeiro-Nilsson and Hawamdeh (2011) examined how a more lateral style of working reflects a more linear manner of managing organisational knowledge. They authors examined Swedish managed organisations located in Singapore and concluded that a management style that shared information and knowledge in a similar way to transformational leadership was successful. In addition, Flint et al. (2014) suggested that sharing information, integrating resources and knowledge management skills are essential skill requirements for improving marketing effectiveness through SDL for value-creating networks supporting co-creation. Flint et al. (2014, p. 36) confirmed that ‘management of knowledge flow among suppliers within and across organisations is critical’.

Additionally, Cordeiro-Nilsson and Hawamdeh (2011) declared that open discussions, free flow of information and exchange of ideas initiated by senior management support empower the management teams, enabling a shared platform of information to distribute knowledge, which helps leverage sociocultural tacit knowledge to the benefit of the organisation. Furthermore, Lusch et al. (2010) stated similar views, suggesting that value networks are important for co-creation and that knowledge management, relationships and competencies are important for achieving this. Similarly, Razali and Juanil (2011, p. 386) stated that knowledge management can be implemented in companies in Malaysia. They noted that property management companies in Malaysia needed to develop knowledge management strategies as part of their means of improving the success of their business strategy. Furthermore, ‘companies should take the first steps to encourage a sharing culture and enhance their knowledge culture environment.’

However, Daghfous et al. (2013, p. 436) suggested that ‘when contemplating customer development based on the transfer of tacit knowledge, managers may wish to consider only those high-share, loyal customers since there are likely to be less confidentiality issues and fewer obstacles regarding the perceived risk associated with losing one’s competitive advantage’. Similarly, Terho and Jalkala (2017) completed a qualitative field survey study based on customer reference marketing linking knowledge sharing and sales performance; they noted that firms are moving towards a customer-focused selling approach based on in-depth customer value knowledge, which were similar to the views of Blocker et al. (2012, p. 15) who noted that ‘marketing strategy emphasizes the dual processes of creating and appropriating value in exchange for relationships’. In addition, Terho and Jalkala (2017) confirmed that both external and internal theoretical knowledge are critical tools that can be used to achieve knowledge sharing that forms co-creation.

Teau and Protopopescu (2015) noted the importance of collaboration to understanding customer orientation in order to meet customer requirements through service supply. Sharing knowledge to form co-creation is in line with Vargo and Lusch’s (2008a, p. 8) thoughts; the authors wrote a journal article called ‘SDL: continuing the evolution’, noting 10 foundational premises of SDL. Their findings note a transition from goods-dominant to service-dominant logic, with a shift towards voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships among individuals and organisations, which forms co-creation.

Table 2.8. summarises the skill and knowledge requirements pertinent to the role of the key account manager.

Table 2.8. Summarises the skill and knowledge requirements for KAM (source: author).

Skills and attributes	Knowledge
Relationship management, empathy, capability-driven (Day et al. 2013, p.928).	Product, service, company, customer, competitor, markets, territory (Donaldson, 1998, p.47).
Relationship selling, managerial skills with a partnership approach (Donaldson et al. 2001, p.33).	Customer knowledge, credit worthiness (McDonald et al. 2000, p.25).
Relationship skills and knowledge to facilitate value creation (Auh and Mengue, 2013, p.1348).	Understanding intellectual property and valued resources (Bradford et al. 2012, p. 53).
Competences similar to general management and senior marketing (Millman and Wilson, 1996, p.19).	Company knowledge, future product and service (Bradford 2012, p.53).
Strategic skills (Sengupta et al. 2000, p.5).	Knowledge management (Bengston et al. 2013, p.532).
Managerial and organisational skills (Rogers, 1999, p.62).	Knowledge sharing behaviour, highly networked, market intelligence (Songailiene et al. 2011, p.411).
Management and customer management skills (McDonald et al. 1998, p.126).	Customer knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation (Salojarvi and Saarenketo, 2013, p.997).
Relationship selling with customer focus (Siguaw et al. 1994, p.113).	Knowledge management (Razali and Juanil, 2011, p.386).
Relationship management and leadership skills (Bradford et al. 2012, p. 53).	Knowledge management for competitive advantage (Daghfous et al. 2013, p.436).
Managing conflict with key interpersonal and partnership skills (Weitz and Bradford, 1999, p. 244).	Strategic initiatives based on customer insights and knowledge (Johnston and Marshall, 2011).
Relationship management, trust, commitment (Bengston et al. 2013, p.532).	Customer knowledge, knowledge sharing creates value for co-creation (Terho and Jalkala, 2017, p.184).
Knowledge sharing behaviour and social/relational skills (Songailiene et al. 2011, p.411).	Customer knowledge, knowledge sharing creates value for co-creation (Blocker et al. 2012, p.15).
Managing conflict with interpersonal and partnership skills (Weitz and Bradford, 1999, p. 244).	
Knowledge management via SDL for value creating networks for co-creation (Flint et al. 2014, p.34).	
Lateral style similar to transformational leadership (Cordeiro-Nilsson and Hawamdeh, 2011, p.99).	
Relationship and knowledge management and co-creation skills (Lusch et al. 2010, p.21).	
Relationship and knowledge management and co-creation skills (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a, p.8).	
Fostering relationships and being more strategic than tactical (Bradford et al. 1999, p.249).	
Social/relational and co-creation skills (Bradford 2012, p.53).	
Knowledge sharing behaviour and social/relational attributes (Songailiene et al. 2011, p.411).	
Ethical and relationship-based attributes (Durif et al. 2013, p.1566).	
Relationship-based attributes supporting co-creation (Friend and Johnson, 2014, p.655).	
Relationship-based attributes and knowledge sharing for co-creation (Terho and Jalkala, 2017, p.184).	
Relationship-based attributes for customer orientation (Teau and Protopopescu, 2015, p.67).	

In conclusion, the table summarises that the KAM role has developed over the years and an ethical and relationship-based approach as noted by Durif et al. (2013) with increased skills in management, knowledge management, relationship building and sharing customer information and assets, essentially forming co-creation as defined by Auh and Menguc (2013). Friend and Johnson (2014) and Vargo and Lusch (2008a) also noted similar essential attributes. Management skills involving both organising the work and motivating people to do it is a critical component and while competencies may indeed be specific to individual customers in terms of business functions and processes, yet social/relational and co-creation skills may be required and could be deemed personal characteristics rather than skills that are developed during a process.

2.5.6. The relationship between themes and CSFs

The themes identified in the literature as being parts of the KAM role can be mapped across to the CSFs identified earlier as shown in table 2.9. It is interesting to note that the skills, knowledge and attributes needed for KAM according to the literature may be mapped to all the CSFs identified from the definitions of KAM.

Table 2.9. The relationship between literature themes and CSFs for KAM (source: author).

Key themes identified in the literature on role of KAM (Section 2.5)	Relationship to CSFs
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating and planning of business processes
Role conflict, ambiguity and authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating and planning of business processes
Remuneration, reward and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving financial targets
Measuring performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving financial targets • Managing long-term relationships
Skills, knowledge and attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating and planning of business processes • Managing long-term relationships • Customer orientation • Delivery of tailored service • Achieving financial results

2.6. The perception of KAM by procurement

While we understand from the literature that social/relational and co-creation skill requirements could be necessary characteristics of KAMs, the purpose of considering procurement is to examine whether procurement professionals' views of KAM were congruent with KAMs own views.

Rogers (2007) stated that regardless of the relationship between buyers and sellers, both would only be able to monitor their successes or failures if something was measured; for buyers this could be the value of production and the value of delivery, whereas for sales this could be an increase in sales revenue and improved sales productivity. Also, one purpose of performance measurement for buyers was eliminating risky suppliers to provide value of production and value of delivery.

Ryals and Rogers (2006) identified three levels of supplier performance: 1. Measures of transaction, 2. Support factors and 3. Intangible factors.

1. Measures of transaction – In essence, value for money involving price, quality conformance and delivery reliability. Rogers (2007) argued that without satisfaction at this level, the purchaser's perception of product value was minimal and the potential for a long-term relationship was zero.
2. Support factors – This level works closely with level 1. The existence of support factors means that the sellers need to be responsive to enhance satisfaction and this was supported by communications, for example sellers having good interpersonal skills, such as empathy, and resolving queries or concerns or even invoice layouts. Beyond response and support, procurement was interested in sellers 'who can offer process innovation, such as participation in e-procurement and supply chain automation' (Rogers, 2007, p. 44).
3. Intangible factors – Rogers (2007, p. 45) stated that procurement looks favourable on sellers from companies that have a good reputation and are capable of developing business relationships. Sellers' companies were also assessed by procurement for 'longevity, financial stability and technological capability'. Another intangible factor valued for legal or moral reasons was consistency in corporate responsibility.

Rogers (2007) concluded that procurement and sellers need to assess and exchange information regularly to be sure that core value has been delivered.

Furthermore, 'suppliers can demonstrate further commitment to a customer by understanding their goals and anticipating future needs and sharing ideas. At this stage the measurement becomes a joint issue, rather than something that the buyer does to the supplier' according to Rogers (2007, p. 46).

The objective of purchasing, according to Baily et al. (2015), was to supply the company with the required materials and services, ensuring continuity of supply by maintaining effective relationships with existing and new sources. The purpose was to buy efficiently by ethical means at the most cost-effective price while maintaining cooperative relationships internally and updating teams to support the development of staff, policies, procedures and the firm. Similarly, suppliers were being acknowledged as important sources for competitive advantage according to Van Weele (2014).

In addition, purchasing decisions had a huge influence on the company's finance result, and therefore continually reducing the cost of the price of the end product makes purchasing the main strategy while preserving relationships and continuity.

Moreover, Van Weele (2014) noted that procurement teams' strategic focus was one of the following:

1. Cost leadership strategy – continually working at reducing the cost price of the end product to support the company by marketing lower costs than competitors.
2. Differentiation strategy – supporting the company to market products perceived by the customer as unique; this could be in terms of the design, logo or service, among other aspects.
3. Focus strategy – maximising a specific, clearly identified group of customers and understand their needs and operational requirements to provide specific solutions.
4. Supplier development – developing relations with suppliers to understand customer characteristics, which benefits both supplier and buyer companies that support co-creation.

In his study, which researched companies to understand the effects they may have on whether a KAM relationship was considered successful, Van Weele (2014) suggested that other factors, including a product differential, competition, quality and the relational power between buyer and seller, require consideration.

Moreover, the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (2015) echoed similar views, as did Pardo et al. (2014), regarding transformational leadership and management support, noting, 'People are the key and most important resource in the organisation and translate other resources into added value.' Pardo et al. (2014, p. 1138) also stated, 'Organisations achieve their objectives through people therefore strategic and operational management and development of this resource is crucial to ensure people feel valued and businesses retain the right skill set.'

Pardo et al. (2014) also suggested that procurement teams work with KAMs whose role was to coordinate existing resources to support the value co-creation process, linking SDL. Senn et al. (2013) advocated putting pressure on buyers to work more closely with sellers to consolidate, reduce costs and support the management of creating value, therefore reducing associated risks.

This view was shared by Makkonen and Olkkonen (2013), who stated that integration with procurement teams and KAMs was an important factor as these mechanisms facilitate business exchange but also stimulate and steer the adaptation and coordination activities. By the same token, Campbell et al. (2010) suggested that companies developing brands which were less well known or distinctive may prefer integrating their work with that of companies with similar approaches and synergies to their own. Similarly, Ellegaard et al. (2003) completed a study about the characteristics of a Danish supplier network supplying aluminium components and the evolution of one of the industrial buyer-supplier relations. The paper concluded that relationships and synergies between buyers and suppliers were vital for social integration, exchange of resources, and knowledge and innovation that supports co-creation.

Vesalainen and Kohtamaki's (2015) study aimed to understand the mechanisms underlying the relationship integration and performance of buyer–supplier relationships; they researched 246 business relationships of 84 small and medium-sized subcontractors in Finland. The results demonstrated a strong link between relationship integration and relationship-specific operative performance outcomes with synergistic workings and partnerships, in comparison to a structured relationship with a transactional approach. Additionally, in a B2B study focusing on buyer–seller relationships that aimed to understand and resolve major contractual breaches, Johnson and Sohi (2016) noted the importance of an integrative, customer-centric approach that helped to manage issues by using in-depth knowledge to minimise impacts of accruing relational capital.

The importance of investing in buyer–seller relationships was noted by Hewlett and Krasnikov (2016, p. 75): 'strong buyer relationships become critical when specialised knowledge is needed to communicate product benefits.' 'Marketers entering transitional markets with products for which buyers lack experience may find investments in buyer relationships critical for success.' Hewlett and Krasnikov also added that (2016, p.75) 'with more complex products, marketers can enhance buyer behavior by emphasizing building trust as opposed to other components of strong relationships, such as commitment', which resembles SDL and co-creation. Also, Hewlett and Krasnikov (2016, p. 74) further noted: 'Investments in relational market-based assets can enhance relationship quality, which positively influences buyer behavior.' It has also been noted that higher-level relationships between buyers and suppliers, which was where both companies integrate their cooperation, support SDL and value creation, leading to further development in companies, whereas low-level relationships seem to just support the economic stability of companies, according Skapa and Kubatova (2009).

Agreeing with the above, Davies et al. (2007) stated that providers of integrated solutions are becoming less dependent on in-house capabilities such as efforts to integrate service components, consultancy advice, guarantees of systems reliability, responsiveness and services that operate, maintain and finance a product's life cycles. The authors suggested that these aspects were provided by external suppliers offering integrated solutions; this therefore supports the need for value creation and cooperative working, which can only be achieved within high-level relationships. Similarly, Hammervoll's (2014, p. 162) paper explored inter-organisational relationships and examined service provision aimed at co-creation of value. The authors confirmed that 'the exchange economy perspective explains information sharing, adaptation and commitment are important for co-creation of value. Second, the production economy perspective explains how service provision can improve the object of exchange by means of production proficiency, craftsmanship and entrepreneurship.'

Correspondingly, Baumann and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015, p. 308) examined the value of co-creation and identified that commitment, common goals, dialogue and shared interest were essential to enabling co-creative interaction. Furthermore, the buyer and seller co-create value and relationship value in a relational exchange. The authors confirmed that 'customer-salesperson interaction is the nucleus of value co-creation, which is characterised by both parties' sense of commitment to each other and their dealings. This is indispensable, as disclosing (potentially personal) value systems and engaging in value-generating processes are a more complex process than the delivery and consumption of a standard service.' Similarly, Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8) endorsed the 'customer is always the co-creator of value' and wrote a paper that confirmed this; the authors noted that foundational premise 6 of SDL, which refers to co-creation requires the joint application of operant resources among buyers and sellers to create benefit.

Rogers (1999) noted that procurement teams (decision makers) are becoming more knowledgeable and sophisticated but that relationships with KAMs were more complex as a result, which means that it is important that both sellers and buyers acquire the necessary skills to manage and work collaboratively. Additionally, McDonald and Rogers (1998) noted that internationalisation, market maturity and customer power have been driving the collaborative approaches to building the necessary high-level relationships.

In summary, the perceptions of KAM by procurement was similar and congruent with KAMs views. Buyers were interested in purchasing efficiently at the most cost-effective price while maintaining cooperative relationships. The research indicated that SDL and social/relational and co-creational aspects were important partnership factors along with leadership which valued people and business. Baumann and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) confirmed that buyer–seller interaction is the nucleus of value co-creation and is characterised by interactions with a sense of commitment, common goals, dialogue and shared interests that enable co-creation and engagement in value-generating processes, which are more complex processes than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8) agreed, noting that ‘co-creation requires the joint application of operant resources’ by buyers and sellers; and Lusch and Vargo’s (2006, p. 286) description of conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted that ‘the customer is always the co-creator of value.’

2.7. The role of the key account manager and personal characteristics

One of the aims of this research is to determine what the personal characteristics of KAMs are and what social styles KAMs require for successful implementation of KAM.

Many theorists, such as McDonald and Rogers (1998), have suggested that important facets of KAM were processes, procedures and planning, along with the desired personal qualities of KAMs such as selling, negotiating skills and management skills which may be measured and examined by management. Although qualitative aspects were suggested, such as integrity, resilience, persistence, likeability, knowledge and intelligence, there was little research on personal characteristics.

There is a long history of research in this area such as Mayer and Greenberg (1964, p. 124) who conducted research in the US focusing on the personal characteristics of those with direct sales roles; they identified two basic qualities that a successful salesperson requires, the first being ‘empathy’ and the second ‘drive’, which is still considered relevant today.

The authors suggested that the ability to feel as the customer does and the need to conquer the business were essential to make the sale. Yet if the salesperson has lots of empathy without drive, they may lack the ruthless drive needed to close the sale, and lots of drive with low empathy could result in the salesperson having little success due to being brash and obvious.

Following on from this research, Lamont and Lundstorm, (1977) reviewed the personality and personal characteristics of successful industrial salespeople. Like the results of Mayer and Greenberg (1964), the results revealed certain factors like sales ability, territory management, customer services, product and application of knowledge.

Lamont and Lundstorm (1977) identified the following desirable personal attributes:

1. Personal energy and initiative
2. The ability to organise and plan with flexibility
3. A moderate level of educational achievement
4. The ability to adapt to a variety of personalities and behaviours
5. Concern with personal and professional development
6. A desire and need for recognition.

Nearly 20 years later, Davies (1993) listed the following attributes related to KAM:

1. Capable of building long-term relationships
2. Intellectual, usually graduate level
3. A business strategist, numerate and financially literate
4. Good presentation and interpersonal skills
5. Good at building personal relationships
6. Service orientated
7. Understands retailing as a business
8. Understands the motivation of retail buyers
9. Able to coordinate the activities of the manufacturer to suit the retailer's needs
10. Creative and resilient
11. Able to influence senior management of both the manufacturer and the retailer.

However, Churchill et al. (1985) conducted an appraisal of 116 previous studies to evaluate whether there was a link between personal characteristics and sales performance and concluded that performance depends not on any one factor but on a combination of conditions and circumstances. For example, the type of product, the market, the buyer, the buyer organisation, the characteristics of the firm, its culture and ethos, the type of manager and management style and the type of sales personnel all have an influence.

This view is shared by Gillan (1982), who argued that a particular kind of personality is not the key to success in selling, and no particular kind of personality can guarantee success. Donaldson (1998) suggested many desirable characteristics exist, including enthusiasm, confidence, intelligence, self-worth and knowledge relating to the product, competitors, the market, customers, the territory and the company, as well as skills which underpin personality behaviours, such as communication and empathy. More recently, Senn et al. (2013) advocated that KAMs should have the mandate, mindset and skill to act as seasoned leaders who lead interdisciplinary teams and orchestrate resources internally and externally, such that joint value is created and risk gets reduced efficiently and effectively, resulting in new value projects that justify the investment to be made in a collaborative and highly networked manner.

It may be useful to examine the personal characteristics of KAMs through the lens of social styles, first formulated by Merrill and Reid (1981) to Bolton and Bolton's (1984) social style methodology.

2.7.1 Social styles

Rohm (2000, p. 11), a philosopher specialising in social styles, quoted that ‘human behaviour was a science and an art’. It was a science in the sense that it’s observable and repeatable and can objectively be studied, but an art in the sense that it can be experienced and modified according to circumstances and environment. Rohm (2000, p. 11) also suggested that personal characteristics define how individuals operate and are ‘wired’.

The concept of social styles was first formulated by Merrill and Reid (1981), who noted that social styles were defined as a pervasive and enduring pattern of interpersonal behaviour. Bolton and Bolton (1984) affirmed that a person’s social style was their characteristic way of behaving across a variety of situations and influences; they argued that almost everything a person does with other people was because of their social style.

Furthermore, Bolton and Bolton (1984) suggested that people tend to fall into four social styles. Each person has a dominant style that influences the way they talk and interact with others. However, they also made it clear that none of the styles were better or worse than any other and that no one completely conforms to one type; nevertheless, everyone has one style that dominates and was used most frequently because they were the most comfortable with that style, and although some behaviours do change, a person’s dominant social style tends to remain the same.

The social styles in figure 2.2 were defined with keywords describing their motivation and were divided into four quadrants/functions relating to the traits of assertiveness and emotional responsiveness.

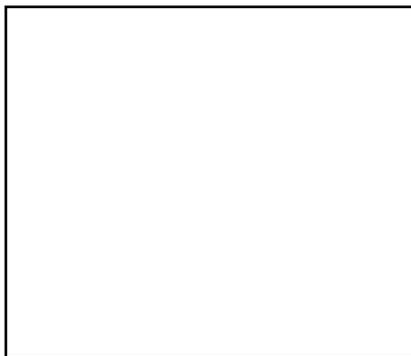


Figure 2.2. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles - Content removed for copyright reasons.

Bolton and Bolton (1984) stated that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style by conventionally recommended methods and that the best way of discovering one’s social style was to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format, or by using specific instruments to identify and confirm it. It must also be noted that although first formulated by Merrill and Reid (1981), Bolton and Bolton’s (1984) social style methodology was explored due to being relevant today, and for the availability and simplicity of the model. Lukas and Lukas (2009) stated that the model noted four basic and easily recognisable personality styles which provided clarity and understanding (figure 2.3).

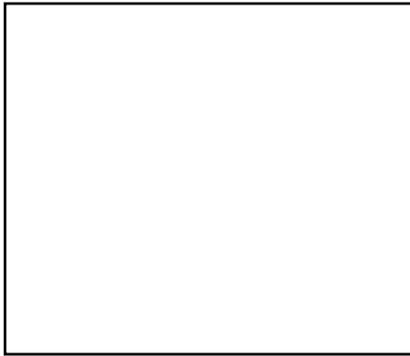


Figure 2.3. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles quadrants - Content removed for copyright reasons.

When reviewing the above figure, Bolton and Bolton (1984) noted the following:

- A. The **Expressive** was considered the most flamboyant; they were action-oriented and combined a high level of assertiveness or dominance with much emotional expression. Expressives tended to look at the big picture, were imaginative and often take a new and novel approach to a problem and were willing to take risks. They were extroverted, spontaneous and enthusiastic and can charm, persuade, excite and motivate. They tended to act quickly based more on feelings than on fact. On the negative side, the Expressive may be considered superficial, excitable and over bearing. They may also be described as manipulative of others to achieve their goals and may be impatient when things do not move according to their expectations, and act impulsively.
- B. **Drivers** tended to have a high degree of emotional self-control (low responsiveness) with a high degree of assertiveness. They were task-oriented people who know what they wanted and where they were going. They get to the point quickly and express themselves succinctly. Drivers were pragmatic, decisive, result-oriented, objective and competitive. They were usually independent, willing to take calculated risks and valued for their ability to get things done. While they have strong social confidence, they interact with others more to achieve their objectives than because they like people. On the negative side, Drivers may be considered aggressive, dictatorial and domineering. They may also be lacking in sensitivity to others and their drive overshadows their empathy. They may be rigid, unbending and unable to look at another point of view.
- C. **Analyst** was process-oriented; they combined a high level of emotional self-control with a low level of assertiveness. They tended to adopt a precise, deliberate and systematic approach to their work. They were questioning, tactical and thorough. They usually gathered and evaluated much data before acting and do not usually allow their emotions to come in the way of their decisions. Analysts are generally industrious, objective and well-organised workers and tended to be specialists in their areas, limiting their interests to a relatively narrow field. On the negative side, Analysts may be considered negative, nit-picking and dogmatic. They were often unable to see the bigger picture and usually introverted, suppress their emotions, were reserved and prefer solitude to socialising.

D. The **Amiables** were people-oriented; they combined a higher than average emotional responsiveness with a comparatively low level of assertiveness. They tended to be sympathetic to the needs of others and are sensitive to what lies beneath the surface behaviour of another person. Of all the social styles, Amiables were the most likely to use empathy and understanding in interpersonal problem solving. Their trust in others may bring out the best in the people with whom they interact. They were receptive, warm, helpful, diplomatic and understanding. Amiables were non-confrontational and lack aggressiveness. On the negative side, they might be considered weak, indecisive and cowardly. They may also be gullible, insecure and hesitate to make firm decisions. Their emotions play a major role in their decisions. They may also lack self-confidence.

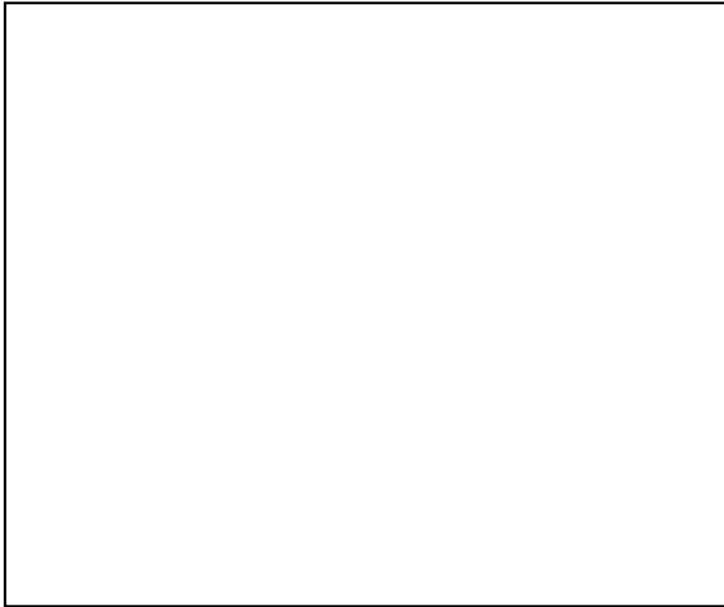
Taking into consideration Bolton and Bolton's (1984) synopsis of social styles, table 2.10. below shows social style motivators, based on each psychological profile.

Table 2.10. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles motivators - Content removed for copyright reasons.



Taking into consideration Bolton and Bolton's (1984) synopsis of social styles motivators, table 2.11. below notes social style aptitudes, based on each psychological profile.

Table 2.11. Bolton and Bolton (1984), social styles context - Content removed for copyright reasons.



It should be noted that Bolton and Bolton (1984) stated that the items listed in table 2.9 were by no means comprehensive and absolute; they were merely indicative. KAM would fit closer to sales and events in table 2.11 and would therefore be classified as Expressive/Driver. Nonetheless, this research requires further investigations for firmer conclusions to be drawn due to the social styles and personality profiles not being specific to KAM. To draw firmer conclusions further investigations are required to examine the views of KAMs in companies practising KAM to identify CSFs and social style profiles, which this research will address.

In summary, the Bolton and Bolton (1984) method which was first articulated by Merrill and Reid (1981) was, and still is considered a simplistic, available and easily recognisable personality style method which provides clarity and understanding. The model is also used currently in professional practice by a company called 'Insights' and may be recognised by KAMs taking part in the research. While there is no specific data on KAM and the tables are merely indicate that KAMs social styles maybe Expressive/Driver, this requires further studies for final conclusions to be drawn. Furthermore, Lukas and Lukas (2009) described this approach as an effective communication method to understanding four basic personality profiles with clarity. This rationale to use this methodology was simplicity, clarity and understanding, along with the fact that the model is currently used in professional practice.

The next chapter will look at the KAM role and SDL due to service being mentioned as an important factor thus far. The research also indicated that KAMs personal characteristics were identified as Expressive/Driver which also involved building and developing relationships from a service centric viewpoint.

2.8. The role of the key account manager and SDL

Many researchers have described a transformation in KAM since 2012 where KAM is seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships (Pardo et al., 2014; AL-Hussan and Fletcher, 2014). While Vargo and Lusch (2004) described a shift in marketing much earlier, they stated this change was from GDL to SDL. The authors noted GDL focussed on the product and process elements, but SDL on the application of competencies where knowledge and skills were used leading to co-production and co-creation. SDL was also considered a proposed thought of theoretical foundation for service economy from a service centric viewpoint.

The underlying idea of SDL is that people apply their competences to benefit others and reciprocally benefit from others' applied competencies through service-for-service exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Also, Lusch and Vargo (2006) noted that there were conceptual transitional aspects to consider as companies move from a GDL concept to an SDL perspective, as table 2.12. below suggests:

Table 2.12. Lusch and Vargo (2006), conceptual transitions concepts - Content removed for copyright reasons.



The conceptual transitions noted the difficulties when measuring and monitoring transitions towards SDL but also stated the importance of service, co-creation of value, value-creation and service orientation. Similarly, Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) established the FP of SDL using techniques of rhetorical and narrative analysis to closely examine the following principles:

Table 2.13. FP of SDL, adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a) - Content removed for copyright reasons.



Contrariwise, Brown (2009) argued that the reality of GDL to SDL was less straightforward in empirical practice than in academic theory and described the research as having rhetorical changes. These views were echoed by Miles et al. (2014) who noted that SDL was greatly supported by persuasive and classical rhetorical techniques used to meet desired outcomes. Hackley (2009) also noted that SDL required further clinical research to support the authors academic theory and argued that SDL reinforced the belief that academic research was not useful for professional practice.

Nonetheless, as already mentioned SDL suggested that the application of competences such as knowledge and skills described as service for the benefit of another party is the foundation of all economic exchange, even when goods were involved which drive economic activity (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a, p.4). The same authors also stated that SDL premises that ‘all economies are service economies and postulate that all businesses are service business liberates marketers to think innovation in new and innovative ways’. Equally, Vargo (2009, p. 378) wrote a further paper reviewing SDL based on a conceptualisation of a relationship that transcends traditional conceptualisations which confirmed that complete value-creation configuration was only possible if understood and dealt with effectively within customer relationship management. The paper also noted that ‘relationships, by any definition, are not limited to dyads but rather were nested within networks of relationships and occur between networks of relationships. These networks are not static entities but rather dynamic systems, working together to achieve mutual benefit (value) by service provision.’

Hammervoll’s (2014, p. 162) paper explored inter-organisational relationships and examined service provision aimed at co-creation of value. The authors confirmed that ‘the exchange economy perspective explains information sharing, adaptation and commitment are important for co-creation of value. Second, the production economy perspective explains how service provision can improve the object of exchange by means of production proficiency, craftsmanship and entrepreneurship.’ Correspondingly, Baumann and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015, p. 308) examined the value of co-creation and identified that commitment, common goals, dialogue and shared interest were essential to enabling co-creative interaction. Furthermore, the buyer and seller co-create value and relationship value in a relational exchange. The authors confirmed that ‘customer-salesperson interaction is the nucleus of value co-creation, which is characterised by both parties’ sense of commitment to each other and their dealings. This is indispensable, as disclosing (potentially personal) value systems and engaging in value-generating processes are a more complex process than the delivery and consumption of a standard service.’ Similarly, Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8) endorsed the ‘customer is always the co-creator of value’ and wrote a paper that confirmed this; the authors noted that foundational premise 6 of SDL, which refers to co-creation requires the joint application of operant resources among buyers and sellers to create benefit.

Similarly, Flint et al. (2014, p. 29) confirmed that ‘in SDL, markets have more to do with finding opportunities for (co) creating experiences with customers than about making and selling units of output, tangible or intangible’. In addition, Flint et al. (2014) stated that SDL required value-creating networks, integrating resources along with knowledge management skills, and other operant resources, including skill requirements, to improve marketing effectiveness. Lusch et al. (2010) agreed with the above views; they applied SDL to supply chain management and discovered the importance of value networks to achieving value creation. The social and economic actors (suppliers) of a value network were bound together by competences, relationships and information. It was vital to recognise and establish value-creation networks by learning to serve and accommodate necessary changes.

Given these long-term goals and in relation to CRM, the links with KAM are clear. Lamberti and Paladino (2013) completed research reviewing and exploring the linkage between SDL theory and current managerial and marketing knowledge in terms of existing conceptual orientations and the conceptual relationships between strategic orientations. The authors discovered that all strategic orientations which included market, resource, learning, service and entrepreneurship orientations have strong conceptual associations with SDL and thus with a service-dominant orientation. SDL therefore acted as a framework where concurrent orientations coexist. In contrast, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) suggested that CRM supported co-creation which was a management initiative, or form of economic strategy, that brings different parties together. The parties included personnel from different companies to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome. The sentiments of this view were accepted by Vargo and Lusch (2008b, p. 284), who noted that ‘co-creation of value and co-production make the consumer endogenous’.

Furthermore, Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8) claimed that the ‘customer is always the co-creator of value’ and argued FP6 of SDL, which refers to co-creation required the joint application of operant resources among buyers and sellers to create benefit. Also, Lusch et al. (2006, p. 11), stated that co-creation embodies the notion that customers and employees jointly created the value that the service delivered to the customer, stating ‘co-creation can occur through shared inventiveness, co-design, or shared production of related goods, and can occur with customers and any other partners in the value network.’ In contrast, it has been suggested that integrating resources across the company means that customers and partners support the co-creation of customer value. This can be assessed to understand how well value promises have been completed, providing opportunities for co-creating value and discovering entirely new markets, according to Bettencourt et al. (2014). Nonetheless, Lusch et al. (2006) confirmed that a new perspective has emerged that focuses on intangible resources such as co-creation of value and relationships to form a new dominant logic for marketing. This approach focused on service provision rather than goods as the fundamental element to economic exchange. Historically, the dominant logic focused on the exchange of goods/manufactured output, with the dominant logic being embedded value and transactions.

Likewise, SDL, according to Vargo and Lusch (2008a), stated that knowledge/skills described as service were the fundamental basis of economic exchange which was reciprocal, and the customer was always the co-creator of value; this verbatim reflects the approach management would need to encourage KAM to be successful. Likewise, Pardo et al. (2014) stated that KAM supported co-creation with relational skills and competencies. Also, SDL, according to Vargo and Lusch (2008a), noted the importance of relational skills and collaborative working, and SDL can be applied to any service system to support a customer as a co-creator of value. Equally, the relational skills and competencies that Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 6) described as service were essential for SDL and customer co-creation; furthermore, although the skills were often not always apparent, they were essential for gaining a competitive advantage and driving competition, which were both difficult to measure and monitor. The same authors stated that the ‘customer-determined benefit and co-creation is inherently customer oriented and relational meaning value is uniquely determined by the beneficiary’. Vargo and Lusch (2014, p. 243) also reiterated this when updating their core ideas, noting; ‘value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary’.

A paper by Fard and Hosseini (2015) presented an empirical investigation to determine important factors influencing customer satisfaction in the after-sales service network in the automotive industry, which were measured according to customer satisfaction. The authors concluded that positive and meaningful relationships and customer satisfaction were greater when companies had good quality of service, were responsive and offered speedy services, had low-cost services and a good quality of after-sales service, which was the same as the findings of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) in their journal article in *SDL: Continuing the Evolution*, which noted 10 FP of SDL.

Terho and Jalkala (2017) completed a qualitative field survey study based on customer reference marketing linked to sales performance; they noted that firms move from product- to service-focused businesses (Sheth and Sharma, 2008) to customer-focused selling based on in-depth customer value knowledge (Blocker et al. 2012). The authors affirmed that both internal and external theoretical knowledge were critical tools that can be used to achieve knowledge sharing that forms co-creation. Their study results also show that measurements were in place that were focused on recruiting reference customers that may be interested in current and upcoming key offerings, customer types/segments, application areas and geographic regions. Similarly, Lusch and Vargo (2006) suggested that firms were moving from GDL to SDL and then to co-creation; they noted conceptual transitions that may be difficult to measure, that is, the transition from product orientation (GDL) to marketing orientation, to marketing with service orientation to SDL. SDL concepts included service, experience, solutions, co-creation of value, financial feedback/learning and value propositions.

Furthermore, sellers can demonstrate commitment to buyers with service in mind, as outlined by Rogers (2007), by understanding their goals and requirements in order to share ideas, necessitating a joint measurement for co-creation. This needed to work alongside customer satisfaction incentives, which Widmier (2002) noted motivated KAMs and Fard and Hosseini (2015) argued produces positive and meaningful relationships. Also, performance should be measured using S.M.A.R.T. KPIs which management can also use with CRM systems for coaching requirements (Teau and Protopopescu, 2015). These views were similar to those regarding Vargo and Lusch (2008a) about the FP of SDL to co-creation and their ideas about the conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL to co-creation (Lusch and Vargo, 2006).

In conclusion, the change in KAM since 2012 seems evident, KAM is seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships (Pardo et al., 2014; AL-Hussan and Fletcher, 2014). While Vargo and Lusch (2004) described a shift in marketing from GDL to SDL, they noted the application of competencies where knowledge and skills were used leading to co-production and co-creation. SDL is also considered a proposed thought of theoretical foundation for service economy from a service centric viewpoint which is parallel to the research findings. Although Hackley (2009) and Brown (2009) suggested that the theory relevant to marketing was not significantly tested so further clinical research was necessary, this study aimed to resolve this and support both practitioners and academics. Recent books also indicated that research was still needed in this area and there were no studies at the time of reviewing existing literature that addressed service, KAM and co-creation, so this study is unique and may contribute to both academic theory and professional practice.

2.9. The role of the key account manager, conclusion

Many areas of KAM have been analysed in this literature review. First, defining KAM as a discipline suggested that SDL, co-creation and social/relational aspects define KAM and that internal alignment rather than aligning with customers is often the first challenge faced by KAM programmes. Another area with a similar conclusion was CRM; the summary illustrated that CRM enables resources like co-creation of value and relationships to form a dominant logic for marketing that is entirely focused on services provision rather than goods as the central element of economic exchange.

The role of KAMs and leadership was also analysed, and the literature review concluded that a transformational leadership approach was necessary for successful implementation and required active participation of senior management while empowering KAMs to make decisions. This approach also supported the role which had several components with variables such as job satisfaction levels and productivity that relied on role clarity, which in turn provide empowerment, especially when working with internal or external teams that support co-creation and social/relational aspects; which therefore reduces possible inherent conflicts.

A salary reward system that supported the company goals was also required that was in line with performance; it needed to relate to measurable short- and long-term objectives. Also, the salary reward system needed to include relational and co-creational aspects of the management of the key account, for example customer satisfaction incentives. Measuring performance was considered complex and client scorecards were a mechanism for measuring performance with KPIs. The scorecards included financial and non-financial metrics that helped KAMs understand each stake-holders' requirements, along with shaping them. While, the client defined the value, a consultative and relational approach working with the customer to develop solutions were vital, so they could track what the customer valued (Richardson, 2014). The balanced scorecard was also an interactive type of control system supporting a bottom-up approach aiding facilitation of communication between various hierarchical levels, supporting and promoting progress and innovation (Biazzo and Garengo, 2012).

The KAM role has developed over the years and an ethical and relationship-based approach as noted by Durif et al. (2013) with increased skills in management, knowledge management, relationship building and sharing customer information and assets, essentially forming co-creation as defined by Auh and Menguc (2013). Friend and Johnson (2014) and Vargo and Lusch, (2008a) also noted similar essential attributes. Management skills involving both organising the work and motivating people to do it is a critical component and while competencies may indeed be specific to individual customers in terms of business functions and processes, yet social/relational and co-creation skills may be required and could be deemed personal characteristics rather than skills that are developed during a process.

While procurements perceptions of KAM were congruent with KAMs, their role remained purchasing efficiently, yet maintaining cooperative relationships indicating an SDL and social/relational and co-creational approach. Baumann and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) also stated that buyer–seller interaction was the nucleus of value co-creation that enabled co-creation and engagement in value-generating processes. The theories of SDL and social styles have also been critically evaluated and it was suggested that these would be useful in analysis in KAM. Lusch and Vargo's (2006) description of conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL to co-creation support this theory. Vargo and Lusch (2008a) further noted that co-creation required the joint application of operant resources by buyers and sellers.

The Bolton and Bolton (1984) method which was first articulated by Merrill and Reid (1981) was still considered a simplistic, available and easily recognisable personality style method which provided clarity and understanding. This approach was considered an effective communication method to understanding four basic personality profiles with clarity (Lukas and Lukas, 2009). Yet, there was no specific data on KAMs and the data merely indicated that KAMs were more Expressive/Driver, which required further research for firmer conclusions.

In summary, the change in KAM since 2012 seems evident, KAM was seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships (Pardo et al., 2014; AL-Hussan and Fletcher, 2014). While, Vargo and Lusch (2004) described a shift in marketing from GDL to SDL, they stated that the application of competencies where knowledge and skills were used leading to co-production and co-creation. SDL was also considered a proposed thought of theoretical foundation for service economy from a service centric viewpoint which is parallel to the research findings. Although, Hackley (2009) and Brown (2009) suggested that the theory relevant to marketing was not significantly tested so further clinical research was necessary, this study aimed to resolve this and support both practitioners and academics.

After the literature review, some themes have been identified that related to the objectives set:

1. The definition of KAM has changed over time towards strategic partnerships forming co-creation of value and may no longer fully encompass the complexity and richness of the role.
2. KAM has evolved from sales management, and while it has a different focus, it must still engage with sales and other areas of the business, and this may lead to role ambiguity and conflict.
3. KAM concerns the building and maintenance of long-term relationships with a transformational leadership approach, yet it was often measured in financial and numerical terms.
4. The difficulties of performance measurement were complex and included financial and non-financial metrics. Yet, the balanced scorecard may have too much of a focus on financial performance meaning that implementation of KAM strategies may need revision, particularly given the broad remit of the role.
5. There was a focus on SDL, which required social/relational and co-creational skills as well as on more traditional leadership and sales management skills.
6. An analysis relative to the two sides of the relationship between KAMs and buyers, focusing on procurement and the power differential was needed.
7. CSFs for KAM as identified in the definitions of KAM can be related to the themes emerging from the literature.

This research project will examine whether social/relational and co-creational skills are required as personal characteristics rather than simply applied to a process that exists and has been developed. This research will attempt to fill this knowledge gap by providing working definitions of social/relational and co-creational skills and personality traits, which will be used to analyse the primary and secondary data that will be collected. The results will lead to the creation of a model for successful implementation of KAM that draws together suggested solutions for the issues raised in the list above.

3. Research design and methodology

The study reviewed various philosophical positions in order to decide which research approach to undertake. Furthermore, the author intended to complete the investigation via various business sectors, including pharmaceuticals, healthcare and banking because personnel from buyer and KAM companies were accessible; nonetheless, deciding what research method to implement was crucial in order to expedite conclusions. The six stages in the generic research procedure which included; philosophies, approaches, strategies, choices, time horizons, techniques and procedures (Saunders et al., 2009) was also taken into consideration to ensure the author achieved the aims and objectives of the study.

3.1. Researcher's knowledge and experience

The author is an experienced practitioner within KAM with more than 20 years' experience in healthcare and pharmaceuticals working mostly in the Midlands and South East of England. The 20 year career of working in KAM which the author considers is a mid-level management role enabled the author to build up a large network of contacts in sales, KAM, purchasing, consultancy and management. The involvement and knowledge attained enabled consciousness of the mismatch between what the job actually is and how it is described in the KAM definitive guide textbook (Woodburn and McDonald, 2011) along with training manuals and job descriptions. The author was also aware that the role in recent years required greater partnership working between KAMs and buyers which meant KAMs needed good social/relational skills but the author had not observed a change in the way the KAMs were judged to be successful, as financial targets remained common. The implications for methodology were that the author was well placed to access professionals in this area for primary research purposes. While this could have led to potential researcher bias in sample selection, no individuals were contacted directly and each participant had an equal chance of being selected via emails from LinkedIn groups. (Collis and Hussey, 2014, see section 3.5).

3.2. Research philosophy

Research philosophy refer to a system of beliefs and assumptions regarding the development of knowledge in a particular field. Figure 3.1 shows the different layers and approaches to research, known as the research onion (Saunders et al, 2012).

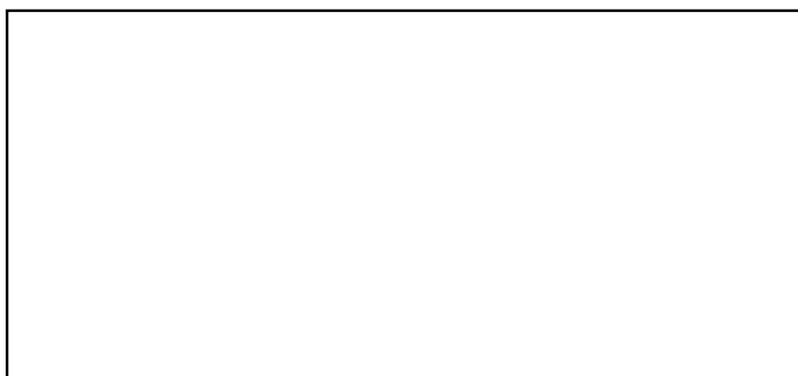


Figure 3.1. Research philosophy, research onion, Saunders et al. (2012) - Content removed for copyright reasons.

3.2.1. Positivism

Positivism, according to Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 43), is a paradigm that originated in the natural sciences: 'It rests on the assumption that social reality is singular and objective, and is not affected by an act of investigating it.' Waite and Hawker (2009, p. 685) noted that the philosophy was a systematic set of 'beliefs stemming from the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence'.

Bryman and Bell (2015) agreed with both authors, suggesting that positivism phenomenon and knowledge can only be used to generate hypotheses to be tested, assessed and evaluated. Furthermore, they noted that knowledge that was attained by gathering facts that provided the basis for laws and science must be conducted in an objective manner that was value free with a clear distinction towards scientific statements.

Positivism required a structured, systematic methodology with a paradigm that is quantitative, objective, scientific, experimentalist and traditionalist to test hypothetical, deductive generalisations that can be observable and non-interpretative known as empirical, meaning that the ideas must be subjected to rigorous testing and there must be an accumulation of facts before they can be considered knowledge, according to Gill and Johnson (2010).

3.2.2. Interpretivism

Interpretivism, also known as phenomenology, in contrast to positivism, is the belief that social reality was not objective but very much subjective as reality was shaped by our perceptions; furthermore, interpretivism was a paradigm focusing on exploring the complexity of social phenomena to advance interpretive understanding (Collis and Hussey, 2014).

As an alternative philosophy to positivism, interpretivism argued that reality was not rigid but a creation of individuals involved in research; it consisted of the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and required social scientists to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

In line with the above, Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p. 28) noted that interpretivism was qualitative, subjective, humanistic and interpretive and

[f]ocuses on the way that people make sense of the world, especially through sharing their experiences with others via the medium of language.

Moreover, the approach is considered a naturalistic, indicative and holistic one that can be used to understand human experience in the context of specific settings, focusing on the meaning; rather than the measurement of social phenomena.

3.2.3. Positivism and interpretivism summary

A positivist philosophy was quantitative; the researcher focused on observable and measurable facts and relationships, whereas an interpretivist philosophy was developed in a qualitative manner 'involving a dialogical process between theory and empirical phenomena'; it allows for the interpretation and a variety of perspectives (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 26).

The following table, developed by Collis and Hussey (2014), confirmed the approaches within the two main paradigms.

Table 3.2. Collis and Hussey (2014), two main paradigms - Content removed for copyright reasons.

--

The following table developed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) summarised the methodological approaches of positivism and interpretivism.

Table 3.3. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), methodology approaches (source: author).

	Positivism	Interpretivism
The observer	Must be independent.	Is part of what is being observed.
Human interests	Should be irrelevant.	Are the main drivers of science.
Explanations	Must demonstrate causality.	Aims to increase general understanding.
Research progress via	Hypotheses and deductive.	Collecting rich data from which ideas are induced.
Concepts	Need to be operational so that they can be measured.	Should incorporate stakeholder perspective.
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to simple terms.	May include the complexity of 'whole' situations.
Generalisation through	Statistical probability.	Theoretical abstraction.
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly.	Small numbers of cases are selected for specific reasons.

The following table developed by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) encapsulated the strengths and weakness of positivism and interpretivism.

Table 3.4. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012), strengths and weaknesses of positivism and interpretivism (source: author).

Philosophy	Strengths	Weaknesses
Positivism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides a wide coverage of the range of situations. 2. Fast and economical. 3. Where statistics are aggregated from large samples, they may be of considerable relevance to policy decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The methods used tend to be rather inflexible and artificial. 2. They are considered not very effective in understanding processes or the significance that people attach to actions. 3. They are not considered helpful in generating theories. 4. They focus on what is, or what has been recently making it difficult for policy makers to infer what changes and actions should take place in the future.
Interpretivism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data gathering methods are considered more natural than artificial. 2. Ability to look at change processes over time. 3. Ability to understand people's meaning. 4. Ability to adjust to new issues and ideas as they emerge. 5. Contribute to theory generation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data collection can be tedious and requires more resources. 2. Analysis and interpretation of data may be more difficult. 3. Harder to control the pace, progress and endpoints of research process. 4. Policy makers may give low credibility to results from qualitative approach.

3.2.4. Assumptions of positivism and interpretivism

Philosophical assumptions underpin positivism and interpretivism beliefs in research; the main concepts are ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological, and all have dissimilar approaches.

Ontology is considered the philosophical study of the nature of reality as well as the basic categories of being and the relationship between them. Ontology raised questions about the assumptions researchers have concerning the way the world operates and the commitment to particular views. There are two diverse aspects of ontology: objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2016). Nonetheless, positivists believed that 'social reality was objective and external to the researcher and that there is only reality and everyone has the same sense of reality' and that only observable and measurable data and matters of fact can be valid within a phenomenon (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 47).

Business and management scholars such as Remenyi et al. (2002, p. 32) have suggested that ontology and positivism tend to treat people and their behaviour as mutually exclusive, noting:

If there is any problem in focusing on these two categories of research, it is because it is not particularly useful to think of them as being entirely distinct ... it is well accepted that what is observed is often and largely a function of the preconceptions that scientists bring to the problem. Thus, empirical research should be fundamentally rooted in theory.

In contrast, epistemology is considered the study of acceptable knowledge and justified belief, according to Saunders et al. (2016), who identified three types of epistemology: positivism, interpretivism and realism, as featured in the 'research onion' in figure 3.1.

Epistemological philosophy focused on the question of what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline, and what knowledge is and how this particular knowledge can be attained (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Furthermore, Miles et al. (2014, p. 311) debated the idea that the words the researcher used to document findings can never accurately be objective - they can only be our interpretation of the reality that exists. With epistemology in mind, interpretivists believe that 'social reality is subjective because it is socially constructed' and 'therefore every person has their own version of reality.' Similarly, Mercier (2009, p. 214) stated, 'Life is not what we live; it is what we imagine we are living.'

Interpretivists believe that 'quantitative research brings the facts, whereas qualitative research determines what should be counted as facts' (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 47); nonetheless, it has been suggested that qualitative research was value laden, but some researchers consider this an advantage to the research process (Sarantakos, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Similarly, interpretivists would argue when questioned about generalisability of epistemology research that it was not of crucial importance given that researchers aimed to discover 'the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them' (Remenyi et al., 2002, p. 35).

While axiological positions were primarily concerned with the role of values, positivists argued in favour of a requirement for researchers to be value free and detached from the phenomena under investigation; however, interpretivists argued that values support the facts and researchers need to be involved with the study. In contrast, rhetorical assumptions were concerned with the language of the study. Positivists argued that the study required a formal style using a passive voice; the position was less clear with interpretivists approaches, which were concerned with research processes. Positivists suggested adopting a systematic and operationalised methodological approach with objective facts and a formulated hypothesis, whereas interpretivists exercised research methods to obtain different perceptions of the study to seek and understand situations.

Table 3.5. summarises the assumptions of positivism and interpretivism (Collis and Hussey 2014).

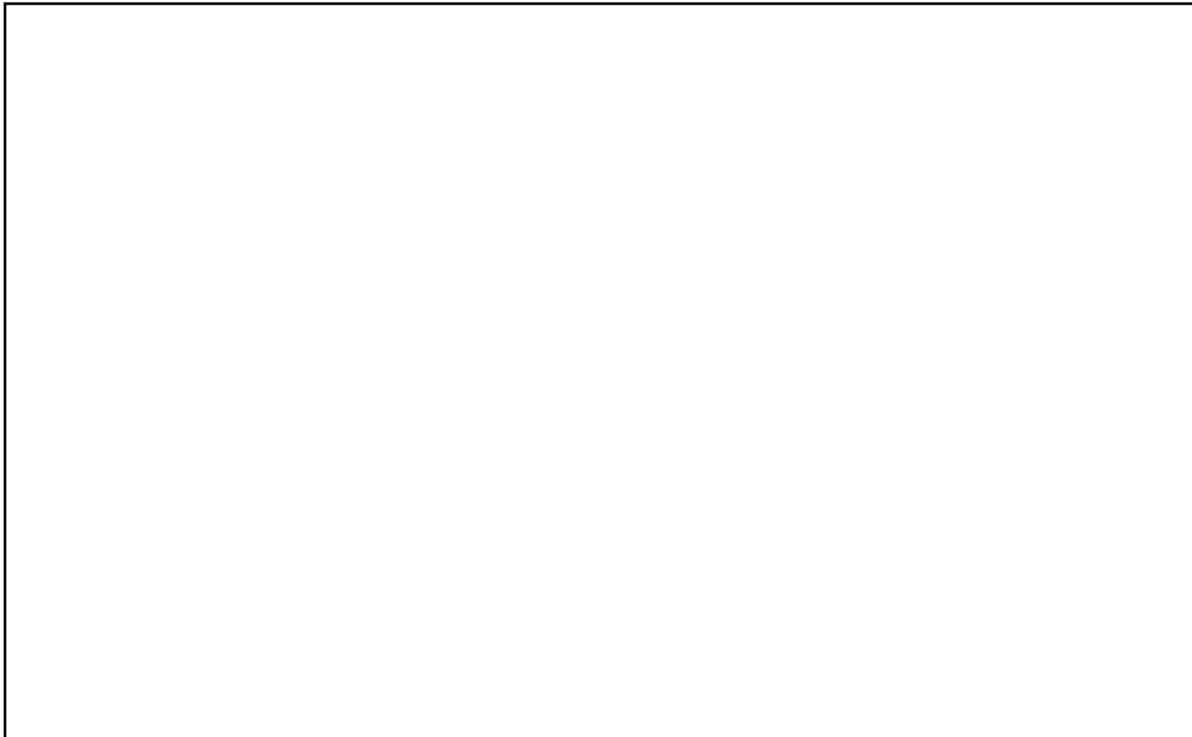
Table 3.5. Collis and Hussey (2014), assumptions of positivism and interpretivism (source: author).

Philosophical assumption	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontological assumptions (the nature of reality)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social reality is objective and external to the researcher. 2. There is only one reality. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social reality is subjective and socially constructed. 2. There are multiple realities.
Epistemology assumptions (what constitutes valid knowledge)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge comes from objective evidence about observable and measurable phenomena. 2. The researcher is distant from phenomena under study. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowledge comes from subjective evidence from participants. 2. The researcher interacts with phenomena under study.
Axiological assumptions (the role of values)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The researcher is independent from phenomena under study. 2. The results are unbiased and value free. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The researcher acknowledges that the research is subjective. 2. The findings are biased and value-laden.
Rhetorical assumptions (the language of research)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The researcher uses the passive voice, accepted quantitative words and set definitions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The researcher uses personal voice, accepted qualitative terms and a limited prior definition.
Methodological assumptions (the process of research)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The researcher takes a deductive approach. 2. The researcher studies cause and effect, and uses a static design where categories are identified in advance. 3. Generalisations lead to prediction, explanation and understanding. 4. Results are accurate and reliable through validity and reliability. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The researcher takes an inductive approach. 2. The researcher studies the topic within its context and uses an emerging design where categories are identified during the process. 3. Patterns and/or theories are developed for understanding. 4. Findings are accurate and reliable through verification.

3.2.5. Quantitative and qualitative data

While we can see that there was little commonality between positivism and interpretivism and that Positivism favours scientific quantitative methods and researchers attempt to be detached to avoid bias, whereas interpretivists support humanistic qualitative methods and researchers become immersed in the situation they were appraising. Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 37) suggested that there was little difference between quantitative and qualitative research apart from the fact that ‘quantitative researchers employ measurement and qualitative researchers do not’. Yet, McNabb (2008) drew on the differences between preferences in table 3.6.

Table 3.6. McNabb (2008), variances between quantitative and qualitative preferences - Content removed for copyright reasons.



Hughes (1990, p. 11) suggested that research methods must not combine quantitative and qualitative methods due to research ‘tools or procedures being inextricably embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and to knowing that world’. However, this view was not shared by Bryman and Bell (2015), who suggested that mixed-methods research can be implemented for studies contrasting quantitative and qualitative research. Moreover, the same authors suggested that mixed-methods research was increasingly used, accepted and successful when conducted in social sciences and business research.

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) argued that three paradigms prevail in the social sciences: quantitative, qualitative and pragmatism; the last also features in the ‘research onion’ layers in figure 3.1. Furthermore, McKercher (2009 p. 6) stated that:

[a]n effective researcher should be flexible enough to be able to work within the most appropriate paradigm given the nature of the research problem under investigation.

Many philosophers, like Curran and Blackburn (2001), suggested ignoring the philosophical debate about reality and the nature of knowledge; they believed that the weakness of one paradigm can be offset with the strengths of another, stating ‘cross the divide between quantitative and qualitative and the positivist and the non-positivist’ (Curran and Blackburn, 2001, p. 123). Creswell (2014) noted that pragmatism is not committed to any one philosophy and reality, and thus no theoretical framework will underpin the methodology. Moreover, according to Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 55), ‘Pragmatism contends that the research question should determine the research philosophy and that methods from more than one paradigm can be used in the same study.’ The authors also noted that a mixed-methods approach from the same paradigm was known as triangulation, affirming, ‘Methodological triangulation is where the research design includes complementary methods from within the same paradigm’ (Collis and Hussey, 2014, p. 55). The next section explores these concepts and philosophies to understand and clarify research approaches.

3.3. Research approach

The two research approaches are called deductive and inductive methodologies. Deductive research is emphasised in positivism and involved gathering specific data about the variables that the theory has identified. The theoretical structure was then developed and tested by empirical observations, whereas inductive research is emphasised in interpretivism and is the reverse to deductive research as it involved statements and general patterns of laws rather than individual observations made about collected data. In essence, the inductive approach is considered developing theory from the observation of empirical reality (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Saunders et al. (2012) showed the comparable approaches in table 3.7.

Table 3.7. Saunders et al. (2012), deductive and inductive approaches (source: author)

Deductive approach	Inductive approach
Scientific principles.	Gaining an understanding of the meaning humans attach to events.
Moving from theory to data.	A close understanding of the research context.
The need to explain the causal relationship among variables.	The collection of qualitative data.
The collection of quantitative data.	A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as research progresses.
The application of controls to ensure validity of data.	A realisation that the researcher is part of the research process.
The operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition.	Less concern with the need to generalise.
A highly structured approach.	
Researchers independent of what is being researched.	
The necessity to select samples of sufficient size to generate conclusions.	

Cohen et al. (2011) suggested that the purpose of the research indicated the kind of approach needed. For example, the research whose purpose was to measure something, a survey or experiment would be appropriate. For research that seeks to understand a situation, ethnographic and interpretive/qualitative approaches were suitable and for research that wanted to find out not only ‘what’ but also ‘why’, as in the present study, a mixed methods approach is suitable. Cohen et al. (2011) captured kinds of research purposes in the following table.

Table 3.8. Cohen et al. (2011), research kinds and purposes (source: author).

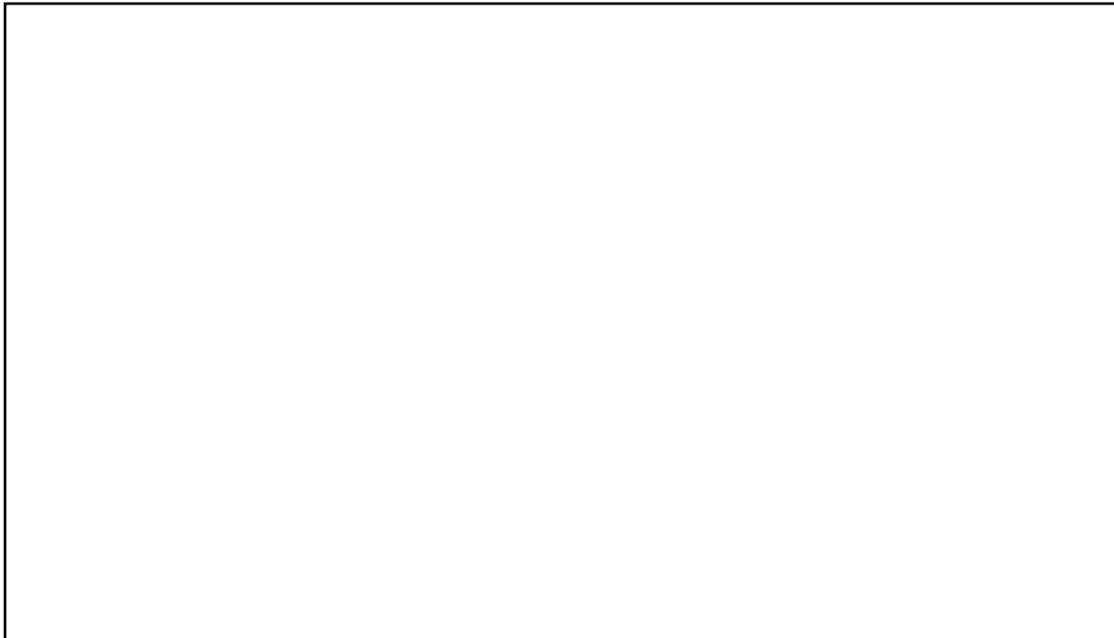
Kinds of research purpose	Kinds of research
Does the research want to test a hypothesis or theory?	Experiment, survey, action research, case study
Does the research want to develop a theory?	Ethnography, qualitative research, grounded theory
Does the research need to measure?	Survey, experiment
Does the research want to understand a situation?	Ethnographic and interpretive/qualitative approach
Does the research want to see what happens if...?	Experiment, participation research, action research
Does the research want to find out ‘what’ and ‘why’?	Mixed methods approach
Does the research want to find out what happened in the past?	Historical research

In conclusion, a pragmatic, mixed methods research approach was adopted which was implemented via various business sectors, including pharmaceuticals, healthcare and banking because personnel from buyer and KAM companies were accessible. The decision to use pragmatism as a research paradigm supported the use of a mix of different research methods as well as modes of analysis and a continuous cycle of abductive reasoning while being guided primarily by the desire to produce socially useful knowledge. Pragmatism offered a strong emphasis on research questions, communication, and shared meaning. The approach makes and recommends a balance between subjectivity and objectivity throughout the research. The approach can also serve as a rationale for formal research design as well as more grounded approach to research.

3.4. Research strategy

When comparing Cohen et al.'s (2011) kinds of research purposes with strategies, Saunders et al. (2016) noted that strategies were comparable to research purposes but were more of a plan to fully answer research questions to achieve the research objectives. Yin (2014) stated that there were five different types of research designs, précised in table 3.9 below.

Table 3.9. Yin (2014), different types of research designs - Content removed for copyright reasons.



The précis noted that an 'experiment' was considered a research method that has emerged from the natural sciences and was used mainly in exploratory and explanatory research. The objective of an experiment was to study causal relationships between two or more variables, and the simplest form of an experiment was to examine whether there was a link, pattern or association between the two variables, using the strategy to answer 'how' and 'why' questions and focusing on controlled behavioural and contemporary events (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, Krysik and Finn (2013) defined survey research as a systematic way of collecting data from many respondents. The method has also been linked with the deductive approach and was considered the most popular method of business and management researchers to answer 'who', 'what', 'where', 'how many' and 'how much' questions (Saunders et al., 2016).

Krysik and Finn (2013) also suggested that surveys were used widely within exploratory and descriptive research and were a method that enables large amounts of data to be collated from a manageable population size. Also, the survey was used to collect quantitative data; however, the data collected was unlikely to be wide-ranging in comparison to those collected using other research strategies. In addition to the use of the survey method, Saunders et al. (2016) stated that the archival research method was also used to answer 'who', 'what', 'where', 'how much' and 'how many' questions. The authors suggested that this method focused on changes over time, was exploratory or descriptive and used recent and historical records and documents as the main sources of data.

Collis and Hussey (2014) concurred with these views and stated that an archival analysis was an empirical study using publicly available data; all the same, Saunders et al. (2016) affirmed that ‘history’ research strategies can also be part of archival research based on historical records and documents.

Finally, a case study which was considered to be an empirical inquiry examined a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, according to Yin (2014). Yin (2014) also suggested that this method of study was most appropriate for answering ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ questions but results in the researcher having little or no control. Equally, Saunders et al. (2016) stated that the case study strategy was frequently employed in explanatory and exploratory research. On the other hand, Punch (2009) suggested that with case studies it was fundamental to understand the case, otherwise it was difficult to provide a clear and specific answer to the question. Furthermore, the author asserts that the aim of case studies was to understand a case in depth and recognise its strategy and method.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011, p. 83) described the approach used in this research ‘as being a convergent parallel design that includes simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data that have equal priority’. The resulting analyses were then compared and merged to form an integrated whole. The authors also stated, ‘This method also involves triangulation exercises, to compare the two sets of findings, and also situations in which the researcher aims to offset weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research by capitalising on the strengths of both methods.’

In summary, pragmatism as already outlined in its simplest sense was a practical approach to a problem and has strong associations with mixed methods research. The pragmatist strategy to answer the question ‘what’ was completed by quantitative surveys. Yet, to answer the question ‘why’ was completed by qualitative interviews, using semi-structured interviews, as an interview method.

Finally, the pragmatist philosophical approach supported the evaluation of primary and secondary research with KAMs and buyers in order to identify CSFs for KAM and the personal characteristics sought in the KAM role. The approach was also instrumental in developing a KAM model and approach to implementation, and addresses the ‘what’ and ‘why’ questions.

3.5. Research sampling

A sample is considered a subset of a population, according to Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 51); they described a population as being a precise, defined body of people or objects that were under review for statistical purposes and described a random sample as follows:

An unbiased subset of the population that is representative of the population because every member had an equal chance of being selected.

The location where the research was conducted might, for positivists, be designed around an experiment in a laboratory, for example, to isolate and control the variables being examined; however, if the research was conducted from an interpretivist’s perspective in an artificial setting, the research problems regarding controlling the influence of variables that may impact the results would have to be considered (Collis and Hussey, 2014).

Qualitative research typically focus on in-depth and relatively small samples, whereas quantitative research characteristically focuses on larger samples selected randomly, according to Patton (1990), who is cited by Kuzel (1999). Likewise, Mason (1996) noted that samples in qualitative research were small but the number of units selected needed to be sufficient to enable a meaningful comparison. Conversely, Henn et al. (2006) argued that quantitative researchers predominantly assumed a positivist world view. The same authors noted that a quantitative research emphasised the importance of generalisability and reliability. This view was shared by Guba and Lincoln (1994), who proposed that the positivist approach was superior to methods of enquiry in research. Similarly, De Vaus (2002) noted that qualitative research had often been criticised for lacking generalisability and being too reliant on the subjective interpretations of researchers.

The research sample intention of this study was for between 60 and 75 responses to the survey to yield quantitative data. The author envisaged a 25%–30% response rate so the author contacted a minimum of 250 KAMs from the author’s personal LinkedIn network. The exploratory survey process was also project-managed using SurveyMonkey and contacts were emailed and followed up by telephone and subsequent email. Once the exploratory survey was concluded, the data was analysed to investigate the responses of 12 KAMs and 3 prospective buyers by means of semi-structured interviews. The buyers input to the study provided triangulation, along verification pertinent to KAMs social style characteristics.

The interviews combined a predetermined set of open questions based on the survey; this also provided an opportunity for the interviewer (the author) to explore particular themes or responses using qualitative data offering a ‘meaningful comparison’. Mason (1996, p. 104) suggested that the sample needed to be of a sufficient size to enable a ‘meaningful comparison’ and therefore the sample selected must be ‘practical and reasonable’ to allow saturation. Riley (1996, p. 21-40) stated that most studies achieved saturation at between 8 and 24 interviews, depending on the topic focus. In the same way, saturation was when the researcher was fully engrossed in and comprehends the project (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 221) and Leininger (1994, p. 106) acknowledged that once the ‘meaning in context’ was confirmed to and understood by the informants studied within holistic contexts and there was a recurrent pattern, for example experiences, expressions, behaviours or actions, saturation had occurred.

Recruiting candidates was extremely challenging due to arbitrary related constraints relating to time and confidentiality concerns rather than the purity of the validity of the study, and it was a matter of considered opinion as to when some degree of ‘theoretical saturation’ occurred (Riley, 1996, pp. 21-40). While many industries and companies have been targeted for sample selection, the aim was to provide rich data from numbers that equally represent what is considered theoretical saturation and is appropriate and valuable to the topic. Yet, Goulding’s (1998, p. 55) views were also considered: ‘leaving the field too early’ may lead to under-analysis; this was because of time and employment conditions, which have been noted as restrictive factors.

The sampling selection for each phase of the research commenced with a survey. The exploratory survey based on quantitative methods included demographics and social style questions, followed by survey questions formulated from the literature review findings. The final study which was called the main study survey was based on social style and demographic questions, followed by semi-structured interviews with KAMs and buyers. The findings were also compared and contrasted with recent job advertisements for analysis, by desk research.

3.6. Data collection methods

The type of research employed focused on a mixed-method approach, adopting both qualitative and quantitative approaches and using questionnaires and interviews to collect data so that there was confidence in the results and that they were considered to be valid and to achieve the research objectives. The mixed-method approach combined methods in the same study and can generate advantages and different methods for different purposes in a study (Saunders et al., 2012). Secondary and primary data collection methods were also used in this research.

3.6.1. Secondary data

Collis and Hussey (2014) asserted that data collected from an existing source was known as secondary data. This study included many sources of secondary data: books, journals, e-journals, technical journals, archives, commercial databases and internal records of organisations and job descriptions.

3.6.2. Primary data

In contrast to secondary data, Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 196) suggested that primary data was ‘data you have generated by collecting them from an original source, such as an experiment or survey.’ With this in mind, the authors confirmed that several methods can be developed to gather primary data; however, available resources and the skill of the researcher would need to be taken into consideration, along with the choice of method, which was often dependent on the purpose of the research investigation.

To avoid bias and enrich data collection it was essential to use clear and understandable methods, according to Kumar (2011). The two main methods implemented for this study was a self-administered questionnaire and semi-structured interviews because both were relevant to the research objectives.

3.7. Questionnaire for exploratory survey

The questionnaire used to answer the ‘what’ question was a quantitative survey submitted to 259 LinkedIn key account manager contacts. While statistics for online surveys suggest that response rates are typically around 10%, which would have been 25 responses (Hamilton, 2003; Yun and Trumbo, 2000), a response rate of 29% was achieved. All the surveys in this research were self-administered. Questions pertinent to demographic, social style characteristics and Lusch and Vargo’s (2006) conceptual transitions concepts were answered via tick boxes. Other questions, based on Vargo and Lusch’s (2008a) revised FP of SDL used Likert scales.

The online questionnaire site SurveyMonkey was selected to process the quantitative data on the basis that it had the ability to cope with the amalgamation of the responses and the ability to manage data from sophisticated surveys. SurveyMonkey enabled researchers to send out questionnaires via emails, the internet and social media channels and also supported the project management of the research.

The nine steps of questionnaire development recommended by Wrenn et al. (2007) which was considered in the process of developing the questionnaire were as follows:

1. Identify the sort of data that is required to be collected to achieve research objectives
2. Determine the source of the required information
3. Define the way of administration that suits the required data and the source of data
4. Specify the types of questions to be used
5. Word the questions appropriately
6. Determine the sequence of the questions and the length of the questionnaire
7. Pre-determine coding
8. Pre-test the questionnaire
9. Develop the final questionnaire form

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part was the covering letter as shown below in figure 3.14, which explained the purpose of the questionnaire and clarified why the researcher desired the respondents to complete the questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2016).

Exploratory survey, part 1 (Appendix A)

Participant Information and Consent Form

From Key Account Management (KAM) to Strategic Partnerships: Critical Success Factors for Co-Creation of Value.

Introduction: This is an exploratory study examining links between KAM, and procurement to identify potential integrated processes, KAM personal characteristics along with critical success factors to develop a new KAM model and approach to implementation. It is part of a PhD research project for the University of Derby.

Information and Purpose: The project is a part of a research study that is focused on an investigation into key account managers and procurement practices. The researcher is interested in processes/procedures that have been introduced by KAM organisations to support and develop sales. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of KAM and procurement, particularly KAM characteristics and critical success factors.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of a survey lasting approximately 15 minutes. You will be asked questions about KAM along with work experiences and personal characteristics. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the survey that you would like to stop. There is no penalty for stopping.

Benefit and Risks: The benefit of your participation is to contribute information regarding critical success factors and personal characteristics of KAM. This may assist future KAM and companies should a paper be published based on this study. There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All your information and survey responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisor.

Withdrawal: If, following completion of the survey, you wish to withdraw from the study, please email me at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk by 31st July 2017. I will use your personal identifier to retrieve and destroy your data.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk

I confirm that I have read and understand the above information and am happy to participate.

Please give the first two letters of your surname and the last two numbers of your year of birth: This is your personal identifier. I will need this to remove your data from the study, should you decide to withdraw.

Figure 3.14. Exploratory survey, part 1 (source: author).

The second part as shown in figure 3.15. examined the demographic factors and collected general information regarding characteristics of KAMs from different companies, such as gender, age, experience, education, managerial level and regional area, and consisted of six questions. Question seven was also included for exploratory purposes, this question was based on Bolton and Bolton's (1984) personality style methodology, to explore KAMs social styles.

Exploratory survey, part 2 (Appendix A)

1. I am male female

2. I am aged 18-39 40-59 60 or over

3. My highest level qualification is school level university degree postgraduate degree

4. I have worked in Key Account Management for less than 10 years 10 years or more

5. I am a manager at this level junior middle senior director/executive/board

6. I work in this region North East North West Midlands South East South West Wales Scotland
 Northern Ireland I don't work in the UK

7. Which of these lists best describes what motivates you at work? Please tick one box.

List 1: Results Orientated	List 2: Fun Orientated	List 3: Friendship Orientated	List 4: Precision Orientated
<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independence Power & Authority Prestige & Status Results Wealth 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fun & Enjoyment Independence Power & Authority Prestige & Status Material Comfort 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance Recognition of Feelings Job Satisfaction Security & Safety Love 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job satisfaction Recognition of Expertise Approval Perfection Correctness

Figure 3.15. Exploratory survey, part 2 (source: author).

The third, and final parts as shown in figure 3.16. and 3.17. used FP-based questions designed to link with Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) revised FP of SDL along with questions based on Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concept. The purpose of linking this research to these questions were to understand if KAM had moved from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value, and to understand what CSFs and skills are required for successful KAM implementation.

Exploratory survey, part 3 (Appendix A)

8. Please read the following statements and show how far you agree or disagree with them on a scale from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 6 for Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The specialised skills we offer are most important to our customers						
The tangible products we offer are most important to our customers						
The quality of service we offer is most important to our customers						
The relationships our customers have with our staff						
The sales are more important in KAM						
The relationship is more important in KAM						
Factors other than sales and the relationship are more important in KAM						
Tangible goods are most important when the customer evaluates our overall provision						
The way we do business (our service) is most important when the customer evaluates our overall provision						
Overall, tangible goods are more important than our service						
The knowledge we have is the fundamental basis of our competitor advantage						
The knowledge we gain through interaction with our clients is the fundamental basis of our competitive advantage						
My organisation's economy is based on transactions of goods						
My organisation's economy is based on service and the way in which we offer it						
It is the company's role to create value for the customer						
The customer is always the co-creator of value						
We can deliver value without the customers' help						
Without the customers' collaboration, we can only offer value propositions (rather than actual value)						
Our dealings with customers are based on transactions						
Our dealings with customers are based on relationships						
What we offer is fundamentally based on what customers want or need						
The supply chain is important to how we do business in a purely transactional way						
The value added by those in our supply chain is important to how we do business						
Value is added to what we offer by organisations/factors outside our supply chain						
Value is determined/judged by the organisation						
Value is determined/judged by the customer						

Figure 3.16. Exploratory survey, part 3 (source: author).

9. Which of these lists best describes your approach to KAM? Please tick one box.

List 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	List 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	List 3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Goods	Services	Service
Products	Offerings	Experiences
Feature/attribution	Benefit	Solution
Value-added	Co-production	Co-creation of value
Value-in-exchange	Value-in-use	Value-in-context
Profit maximization	Financial engineering	Financial feedback/learning
Price	Value delivery	Value proposition
Equilibrium systems	Dynamic systems	Complex adaptive systems
Supply chain	Value-chain	Value-creation network/constellation
Promotion	Integrated Marketing Communications	Dialog
To Market	Marketing to	Marketing with
Product orientation	Market orientation	Service orientation

Figure 3.17. Exploratory survey, part 3 continuation (source: author).

3.7.1. Demographic factors/characteristics and associations

The demographic factors and characteristics of respondents that were referred to in questions were gender, age, education, management level and regional area; however, the focus in the survey was on when KAM implemented SDL and began to move to co-creation of value. The purpose of the surveys was also not to reach conclusions about demographics or gender as this required a further study.

Table 3.10. Demographic factors (source: author).

Construct	Statement	Measurement
Gender	Gender	Nominal Scale (1. Male, 2. Female)
Age	Age	Ordinal Scale (1. 18–39, 2. 40–59, 3. 60+)
Education	Education	Nominal Scale (1. School leaver, 2. University degree, 3. Postgraduate degree)
Experience	Years of experience	Nominal Scale (1. Less than 10 years, 2. 10 years or more)
Management	Management level	Nominal Scale (1. Junior, 2. Middle, 3. Senior, 4. Director/Executive/Board)
Regional area	Regional area	Nominal Scale (1. NE, 2. NW, 3. Midlands, 4. SE, 5. SW, 6. Wales, 7. Scotland, 8. NI, 9. Outside of UK)

3.7.2. SDL and FP-based questions and associations

The exploratory survey was developed based on the FP of SDL from Vargo and Lusch (2008a). The FP-based approach to question design ensured a clear link with the theory and the survey included questions that were linked to Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts that depicted a move from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value. Table 3.11 described the FP of SDL from Vargo and Lusch (2008a), and included survey questions that aimed to test the theory; the questions have also been tested for internal validity by academics rather than Cronbach's (1951) alpha tests. The questions were also checked by forwarding Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) questionnaire and interpreted survey questions in appendix A, to academic professionals at University of Derby. The examination of the questions ensured that the survey stood up to the test of reliability and could easily be understood.

Table 3.11. FP-based exploratory survey question descriptions (source: author).

Premise number	Foundational premise (FP)	Survey questions based on FP that have internal validity
FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange. (Economic exchange involves providing mutual service.)	1. Why do customers choose your organisation? I. The specialised skills we offer II. The tangible products we offer III. The quality of service we offer IV. The relationships our customers have with our staff
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange. (Exchanging competencies for the competencies of others; exchanging service for service).	2. What is important in KAM? I. The sales are important II. The relationship is more important III. Factors other than sales/relationship are important
FP3	Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision. (SDL, the basis of exchange, always involves service provision; goods are used for service.)	3. Goods or service, what is most important? I. Tangible goods are most important when the customer evaluates overall provision II. The way we do business (our service) is most important when customer evaluates our overall provision III. Overall, tangible goods are more important than our service
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage. (Operant resources are usually intangible and dynamic. SDL provides a refocus by shifting to value-creation processes.)	4. Importance of knowledge? I. The knowledge we have is the fundamental basis of our competitive advantage II. The knowledge we gain through interaction with our client is the fundamental basis of our competitive advantage
FP5	All economies are service economies. (SDL is service-centered thinking, an increase in knowledge and the ability to exchange information.)	5. Service or goods economy? (the environment in which your company operates) I. The economy is based on transactions II. The economy is based on service and the way in which we offer it

FP6	The customer is always the co-creator of value. (Co-creation of value describes the process of joint application of operant resources among companies and customers to create benefit.)	6. The company's role? I. It is the company's role to create value for the customer II. The customer is always the co-creator of value
FP7	The enterprise cannot deliver value, but can only offer value propositions. (The company cannot make and deliver value due to the collaborative requirements of value creation. The firm can only make value propositions.)	7. Value? I. We can deliver value without the customer II. Without the customer's collaboration, we can only offer value propositions (rather than actual value)
FP8	A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational. (SDL, relationships underpin how value is created in service-for-service exchange to form value-creating processes.)	8. Customer orientation? I. Our dealings with customers are based on transactions II. Our dealings with customers are based on relationships III. What we offer is fundamentally based on what customers want or need
FP9	All social and economic actors are resource integrators. (Networking with many organisations or individuals and combining resources from multiple parties to create value.)	9. Supply chain and environment creating value? I. The supply chain is important to how we do business in a purely transactional way II. The value added by those in our supply chain is important to how we do business III. Value is added to what we offer by organisations/factors outside our supply chain
FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).)	10. Who determines value? I. Value is determined/judged by the organisation – Somewhat Agree II. Value is determined/judged by the customer

The FP-based questions (Vargo and Lusch's, 2008a) along with conceptual transitions concepts (Lusch and Vargo's, 2006) also showed a clear link with the CSFs findings in the literature review. The CSFs identified two sections based on CRM and the role of KAMs:

1. Customer relationship management (CRM)
2. The role of the key account manager
 - I. Leadership
 - II. Role conflict, role ambiguity and authority
 - III. Remuneration, reward and performance methods
 - IV. Measuring performance
 - V. Skills and knowledge
 - VI. The perception of KAM from procurement
 - VII. Personal characteristics/social styles
 - VIII. SDL

While the above theories including CRM and the role of the key account manager identified a distinct move from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value similar to Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) FP findings, the review required further research to develop firmer conclusions.

In summary, the literature review conclusions were parallel to the SDL paradigm and the move towards contemporary marketing thought, in which marketing was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships among individuals and organisations. Also, Vargo and Lusch (2008a), confirmed the 10 FP of SDL, which was pivotal to this study; the authors suggested that the term ‘foundational premise’ meant a statement that was assumed to be true and upon which theory is built. The FP of SDL theory (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a), was also comparable to the conceptual transitions’ concepts developed by Lusch and Vargo (2006) which showed a change from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value. The results were also comparable to the conclusions in the literature review noting the evolutionary changes in KAM from 1983 to 2011 when there was a high proportion of business/functional aspects, including process elements that defined KAM. Yet from 2012 onwards there was a distinct change in focus from GDL to SDL towards co-creation, involving social/relational aspects which now seemed to define KAM.

3.8. Interview methods

An interview is a method for collecting primary research in which samples of interviewees were asked questions to find out what they think, do or feel (Collis and Hussey, 2014). In addition, Myers (2009) noted that this method was an important data-gathering technique for qualitative researchers, particularly in business and management.

A major advantage of interviewing was its adaptability; unlike a questionnaire, a skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings (Bell, 2010). The interviewer can also observe the body language and emotions of the interviewee, allowing a greater understanding of the context in which the answer was given (Brassington and Pettit, 2005). Yin (2014) advocated that interviews were valuable techniques for obtaining data, particularly regarding qualitative case study approaches. However, a disadvantage of conducting an interview was that the process may be costly and time-consuming. De Vaus (2002) noted that interviews provided rich data about real-life people and situations but that thought must be given to developing clear, unambiguous and valuable questions.

Malshe and Sohi (2009, p. 210) suggested that interviews were conducted to code and analyse data that was based on emerging categories to get a deeper understanding of the themes and of new information. This back-and-forth process of interviewing and collecting data and comparing data to emerging categories constitutes the ‘constant comparative method’, meaning that the data has reached ‘theoretical saturation’ when the themes were constant and no further insights emerge from the data collected. Similarly, Edwards and Talbot (1999) suggested that the application of case studies using qualitative research interviews revealed patterns and themes in systems, which when yielding consistent results, offer confirmed explanations. Also, Warren (2002) noted that qualitative interviews were often selected as the appropriate method to establish common patterns or themes between types of respondents.

Gillman (2000) acknowledged that the overwhelming strength of face-to-face interviews was the richness of the communication process. Also, face-to-face interviews involved open questions most the time and required extended responses via prompts and probing. The depth of meaning was also central to confirming typicality (Gillman, 2000). Mitchell and Jolly (2001) stated that during interviews the researcher can follow up on ambitious, interesting responses, which was a great asset in exploratory studies for identifying important variables.

Philosophers, including Charmaz (2009, p. 10), suggested that qualitative research and interviews provided opportunities to meet people and to experience and understand what was occurring, noting that ‘we are part of the world we study and the data we collect’. It was also noted that the drawbacks include travelling to the location of the interviews and not having enough time to conduct them. While, telephone interviews were considered an alternative method, they also had drawbacks, including the loss of non-verbal signs made during conversation, such as body language and the ethical issues regarding taping a telephone conversation. However, Mitchell et al. (2001) argued that the loss of non-verbal signs made during conversations could also be considered an advantage because it prevented bias by preventing subtle visual clues. However, Marshall and Rossman (1999) suggested that since the interviewer had no preconceived expectations, the notion of potential bias was difficult to see and that for interviews to be a success, outstanding listening skills were required, along with personal interaction skills for questioning and probing to gain elaboration.

Furthermore, many philosophers agreed with Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 210) who declared:

Interviews share common features, such as the elicitation of information by the interviewer from the interviewee and the operation of rules of varying degrees of formality or explicitness concerning the conduct of the interview.

In summary, the study embraced a multiple-method strategy using both quantitative and qualitative data, however the qualitative interview method was fundamental. While, Davis et al. (2011, p. 473) stated that ‘multiple methods research offers a promising avenue for advancing the marketing discipline by providing robust findings that overcome the considerable risk of method bias’. The qualitative research approach used interviews which provided opportunities to meet people and to experience and understand what was happening in person, therefore limiting potential bias due to the authors listening skills, along with personal interaction skills for questioning and probing (Charmaz, 2009).

3.8.1 Appreciative inquiry

Having decided to conduct interviews the approach to these was considered. Most business research is ‘problematised’, that is the research question[s] were phrased as problems needing investigation in order to solve a problem. A potential drawback of this ‘deficit model’ was that interviews may feel under scrutiny and/or that the research was looking to attribute blame for problems. This may discourage participants from fully sharing their experiences.

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) developed AI and stated that the problem-based approach limited the creation of new ideas and of new theory. Also, Cooperrider et al. (2003, p. 13) proposed that AI involved the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential, citing ‘AI is a form of transformational inquiry that selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate the life-giving forces of an organisation’s existence.’ Similarly, Lewis et al. (2008) noted that encouraging people to talk about positive experiences and dreams using an approach that provided flexibility and adaptability would be more useful and suggested AI as a methodology. This view was also shared by Bushe (2007, p. 33), who agreed that ‘AI generates new ideas’ and that the approach was a good fit for focus, flexibility and inclusivity even though the method was not often associated with business research.

AI has also been described as the method which captured stories representing the key activities of the discovery phase which is about discovering the organisation or team's key strengths and appreciating the 'best of what is'. This phase is about understanding what gives life to the group and what has brought it this far or to this point in history (Lewis et al., 2008, p. 176). Lewis et al., (2008), also cited that 'questions do more than generate information, they are an important social process that directs our attention (2008, p.177).'

Stavros et al. (2016, p. 106) who also cited:

Appreciative interviews are designed to collect rich qualitative information in the form of stories that carry a wealth of meaning, and often a powerful emotional change, rather than dry quantitative data consisting of figures and statistics.

Furthermore, Stavros et al. (2016, p. 64) also stated that 'AI is about the search for the best people, their organisations, and the strengths-filled, opportunity-rich world around them. AI is not so much a shift in the methods of organisational change, but AI is a fundamental shift in the overall perspective taken throughout the entire change process to see the wholeness of the human system and to inquire into that system's strengths, possibilities and successes.'

What AI interviewers needed to understand, according to Watkins et al. (2011, p. 173), was that belief, rather than doubt, was the proper stance for interviews. The authors argued that it was not a time for scepticism, or for questions that imply a need for 'proof'. The trust that developed from simply listening with interest and acceptance has a major positive effect on this process, and therefore provided verified information. Dewar (2017) gives an example of AI in action through a study developing caring conversations in care homes; the author stated that the AI technique supported researchers to look more closely at their conversations, recognising those they valued which had positive outcomes in future interactions. Furthermore, Dewar (2017) suggested that AI provided a unique focus, understanding and supported co-creating strategies.

Day and Holladay (2012) noted that AI was often an approach that concentrated on past successes to influence future successes and has the underlying assumption that a positive approach can lead to positive outcomes. Also, Kelly (2010) noted the first step in the process of AI was choosing an inspiring theme or topic that sets the context for the purpose and emphasis of the study. Also, Scott and Armstrong (2019, p. 123) argued that understanding a topic through the lens of AI helped 'release a new vocabulary which may empower innovation and creativity.' The same authors cited Calabrese (2006, p. 175) AI quote stating, 'the art and practice of asking unconditional positive questions that have the potential to strengthen an organization's capacity to name, envisage, and increase its positive potential.'

In summary, AI was used in the study due to the approach growing in popularity during the last 25 years, the method may also enhance both the development experience and post event experience (Lewis et al., 2008). AI was also a technique that was not usually used in business settings, the approach also looked more closely at conversations, recognising those they valued which had positive outcomes in future interactions (Dewar, 2017).

3.9. Types of interviews

Saunders et al. (2016) stated that an interview was considered to be a structured conversation with a degree of formality and control between an interviewer and interviewees. The aim of an interview was to provide reliable, relevant, insightful and useful information. There are three interview types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured.

Structured interviews used questionnaires essentially based on a predefined and standardised set of questions. This method was categorised as interviewer-administrated questionnaires by Saunders et al. (2016). Hartas (2010) suggested that structured interviews included procedures and content which were prepared in advance, with questions which were primarily closed, meaning that the interviewer offered the interviewee two or more fixed-response alternatives to choose from.

Interviewing using structured approaches was used to collate quantifiable information; this method was referred to as quantitative research interviewing according to Saunders et al. (2016). Kvale (1996, p. 126) affirmed that structured interviews were inflexible due to interviewees being provided with a limited number of responses which may guide them into giving responses that do not reflect their real feelings about the subject. Mitchell and Jolly (2001) defined a structured interview as one in which respondents were asked a systematic and standard set of questions, which was considered in effect a verbally administered questionnaire, according to Gillman (2000b). Also, Patton (1990, p. 289) observed 'structured interviews provided little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances. Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 2) noted that this method 'hinders discovery'.

This type of interview is a poor fit with the research approach and research questions and with AI, so was considered inappropriate for this study.

Unstructured interviews on the other hand, are a formal technique used to explore areas in depth. Saunders et al. (2016) noted that the approach was referred to as in-depth interviewing and involved direct interaction between the interviewer and one interviewee, or more. Unlike structured interviews, as observed by Trochim and Donnelly (2006), this method had no predetermined set of questions, only some initial guiding questions, and a formal approach was used as a structured instrument.

Saunders et al. (2016) suggested that the interview may move in any direction to a point of interest. Consequently, each interview tended to be unique and hence the approach was often described as a non-directive interview. Hartas (2010, p. 231) reiterated this by stating that the questions were more likely to be open ended than closed, free flowing and less likely to include predetermined specific questions; also, the questions would not be asked in any systematic order. Mitchell and Jolly (2001) shared similar views but described the information gained via this methodology as usually too disorganised for analysis and as being best used as an exploratory device.

Unstructured interviews were deemed inappropriate for this study due to data analysis and organisational issues associated with the methodology.

Semi-structured interviews, according to Saunders et al. (2016), included a list of themes and questions; the order of questions and the questions themselves may differ from interview to interview. The interviewer may also combine the use of close-ended and open-ended questions. Klenke (2015) noted that an interview protocol may be developed based on a list of themes and topics without fixed wording or ordering questions.

De Vaus (2002, p. 97) noted that ‘attention must be given to developing clear, unambiguous and useful questions. To do this the wording of the questions is fundamental.’ Krysik and Finn (2013) agreed with this and suggested that this method means asking open-ended questions in person and asking participants to respond in their own words rather than choosing predetermined responses. Principally, the same authors suggested that the interviewer was permitted to clarify questions and then follow up on respondents’ answers systematically.

The AI, semi-structured interview approach was therefore considered to be the best fit with the research philosophy and research questions, thus, an interview schedule was developed.

Klenke (2015) discussed the advantages and disadvantages of structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, which can be seen in table 3.12.

Table 3.12. Klenke (2015), advantages and disadvantages of interview types (source: author).

Interview type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Structured	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on given issues. 2. Gain detailed information that is comparable and easy to code. 3. Clear directions. 4. High reliability. 5. The reduction of interviewer effects of bias. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offer little flexibility. 2. Standardised wording of questions may restrict naturalness and relevance of questions and answers. 3. Limited predetermined responses may not reflect the true feelings of respondents. 4. Lack of validity.
Unstructured	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine complex themes. 2. Provide a good understanding of a problem or when little is known regarding it. 3. Provide insight into general problem-solving methods. 4. Provide guidance to future issues that are not covered. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attention not focused on given topic. 2. Provide very little information. 3. Time-consuming. 4. Less detail is provided on general concepts.
Semi-structured	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide positive rapport between interviewer and interviewees. 2. High reliability. 3. Clarify and address complex themes. 4. Reduce pre-judgement on part of interviewees. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reliance on interviewer’s skills and ability to formulate questions during the interview as well as the ability of interviewee to articulate answers. 2. Expensive and time-consuming. 3. Difficult to analyse in-depth information. 4. Lack of validity.

The ensuing paragraphs demonstrate how each question was designed to explore a FP of SDL.

FP1. – Service is the fundamental basis of exchange. (Economic exchange involves providing mutual service.) Why do customers choose your organisation?

8. Considering your time as an employee at your organisation working with customers, can you recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved or most excited about your involvement in the organisation?
 - a. What made it an exciting experience? What gave it energy?
 - b. What was it about your company's unique qualities that contributed to the exchange?
 - c. What were the most significant factors?
 - d. Why were they significant?
 - e. In what ways did your organisation contribute to the creation or support of this exchange?
 - f. What were the most important factors in your organisation that helped to make it a meaningful experience (e.g. specialist skills, tangible products, quality of service, relationships our customers have with our staff)?

FP2. – Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange. (Exchanging competencies for the competencies of others; exchanging service for service.) What is important in KAM?

9. Let's consider for a moment the things you value deeply. Specifically, the things about 1) your role 2) the nature of your work; and 3) your organisation.
 - a. Without being humble, what do you value the most about your role, the nature of your work and your organisation?
 - b. When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value about the task itself?
 - c. What is it about your organisation that you value?
 - d. What is the single most important thing the organisation has contributed to your success?

FP3. – *Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision. (SDL, the basis of exchange, always involves service provision; goods are used for service.)* **Goods or service, what is most important?**

10. Your organisation builds on ‘proven strengths’ and has a history of being a pioneer in a wide number of areas. In your opinion, what is the most important achievement that you recall that best illustrates this spirit of ‘being the best’?

FP4. – *Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage. (Operant resources are usually intangible and dynamic. SDL provides a refocus by shifting to value-creation processes.)* **Importance of knowledge?**

11. Can you think of a time when there was an extraordinary display of cooperation between individuals or groups at your organisation giving competitive advantage?
- a. What made such cooperation possible (e.g. planning methods used, communications systems or process, leadership qualities, incentives for cooperation, skills, team, development techniques)?
 - b. How could these lessons be applied to your team?

FP5. – *All economies are service economies. (SDL is service-centered thinking, an increase in knowledge and the ability to exchange information.)* **Service or goods economy (the environment in which your company operates)?**

12. In your mind, what is the common mission or purpose that unifies everyone, is it goods or service economy?

FP6. (Conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL question) – *The customer is always a co-creator of value. (Co-creation of value describes the process of joint application of operant resources among companies and customers to create benefit.)* **The company’s role?**

13. How does the customer help to create value?

FP7. – *The enterprise cannot deliver value, but can only offer value propositions. (The company cannot make and deliver value due to the collaborative requirements of value creation. The firm can only make value propositions.)* **Value?**

14. If you could continue, develop or transform your organisation in any way you wished to develop value, what would you suggest could offer value to customers?

FP8. – *A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational. (SDL relationships underpin how value is created in service-for-service exchange to form value-creating processes.)* **Customer orientation?**

15. What has been your best customer experience as a key account manager, and why do customers choose to work with your organisation?
 - a. What's really important about this experience? What do you value most about dealing with customers?
 - b. What do you value most about your work as a key account manager and is the role focused more on goods or service?
 - c. Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself and the way that you do your work?

FP9. – *All social and economic actors are resource integrators. (Networking with many organisations or individuals and combining resources from multiple parties to create value).* **Supply chain and environment creating value?**

16. Think back through your career concerning the environment in which you operate with service or goods. Locate a moment that was a high customer point, when you felt most effective and engaged. Describe how you felt, and what made this situation possible?
 - a. When you are feeling best about your work, what do you feel the customer role is regarding value?
 - b. What is value? Can organisations deliver value to customers without customers' help or collaboration?
 - c. Can you think of a time when there was an extraordinary display of cooperation between customers and your organisation?

FP10. – *Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).)* **Who determines value?**

17. What's really important about value, and who determines the value?
18. Without being modest about yourself what do you think makes a good key account manager?

In summary, the semi-structured, AI interview questions identified in the literature review consisted of 10 questions based on research assumptions to see whether the CSFs required were aligned with the move from GDL to SDL towards co-creation. The FP highlighted in 'italic green' were followed by questions which have been tested for internal validity by academics rather than Cronbach's (1951) alpha tests. The questions were checked by academics to ensure that the questions were reliable and could be understood clearly; Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) FP-based questions and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts questions were sent to them, as well as interpreted AI semi-structured interview questions.

3.9.1. Reliability and validity of data

While positivists supported the scientific quantitative methodology and researchers stated that to avoid bias this approach was necessary, Patton (2002) asserted that there were two factors which needed to be considered when doing qualitative research: analysing results and judging the quality of the study for reliability and validity.

3.9.1.1. Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of the study were repeatable; the word was often used regarding questions about whether the measures that were devised for concepts in business and management were consistent (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Similarly, Saunders et al. (2012) also stated that reliability meant consistent findings and conclusions, should other researchers repeat the process.

Likewise, Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 52) stated that reliability referred to the 'accuracy and precision of the measurement and absence of differences in the results if the research was repeated'. Rubin and Babbie, (2010) also supported this view and noted that reliability referred to whether a particular research technique would produce the same results if applied frequently to the same subject.

While the term reliability was often used for evaluating quantitative research, the concept was often used in all types of research, according to Golafshani (2003). As noted by Lewis (2009), there was concurrence about the need for trustworthiness, accuracy and dependability of research findings. Nonetheless, Jenkins et al. (2010) argued that it was challenging to demonstrate reliability in qualitative research because data was based on interviews, personal accounts, real-life experience and face-to-face encounters.

In summary, careful attention to process, planning, data collection, data analysis and data presentation was adhered to for the issues of reliability, validity and bias. The quantitative-based surveys required such processes to support and defend the accuracy and reliability of the findings. The qualitative-based interviews were also carefully considered and justification for each participant was gained to defend the accuracy of the findings and conclusions.

3.9.1.2. Validity

Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 53) stated that ‘validity is the extent to which a test measures what the researcher wants to measure, and the results reflect the phenomena under study. Research errors, such as faulty procedures, poor samples and inaccurate or misleading measurement, can undermine validity.’ These views were shared by Bryman and Bell (2015), who affirmed that validity was concerned with the integrity of the data gathered and the conclusions developed from it. Saunders et al. (2012) also noted that reliability was the extent to which data collection methods accurately record and measure what was intended.

It has been argued by many philosophers, such as Daymon and Holloway (2011), that validity in all research was fundamental to its trustworthiness, thoroughness and attention to detail. However, Klenke (2015) suggested that both reliability and validity have different meanings in qualitative paradigms. Thompson and McClintock (2000, p. 2) suggested that the term credibility corresponds with the internal validity, or the extent to which the results were credible or believable from the participant’s point of view. Whereas, ‘external validity corresponds with the term transferability, or the extent to which the results can be transferred to other contexts’.

In summary, the quantitative-based surveys followed a systematic process, regarding planning, data collection, data analysis and data presentation to support and defend the accuracy and validity of the findings. The qualitative-based interviews also followed a process and each participant was carefully considered and justification gained to defend the integrity of the data gathered and the findings and conclusions from it.

3.9.2. Interview methods in the main study

The survey in phase I was designed to support the main study; it was again submitted online using SurveyMonkey via the author’s LinkedIn network. Prior to questionnaires being completed, participant information and consent forms were submitted, together with the survey questionnaire. Once the survey was completed in phase I and the results analysed in phase II, phase III commenced, which involved a further sample of 12 KAMs and 3 prospective buyers who agreed to participate from the initial exploratory survey.

The main study interview questions were designed to explore the FP of SDL pertinent to Vargo and Lusch (2008a) SDL theory, along with Lusch and Vargo (2006) conceptual transitions concept that stated a move from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value. The main study survey was divided into three parts and is shown in figure 3.19 and 3.20. The AI, semi-structured interviews were completed once the surveys had been completed. The location for all interviews was a 3-star hotel in Birmingham; the interviews took place in a quiet meeting room so that the author could experience and understand what was happening in person. The interviews were organised to limit potential bias due to the author’s listening skills, along with personal interaction skills for questioning and probing (Charmaz, 2009). The interviews were also recorded, upon agreement by the participants. The same format of interview questions were used for KAMs and prospective buyers. However, the questions were modified for the buyers so they answered the questions based on their perceptions of the KAM role.

The first part of the survey was the covering letter that explained the purpose of the survey and interview and clarified why the researcher desired the respondents to complete the survey.

Main study survey, part 1 (Appendix B)

Participant Information and Consent Form

From Key Account Management (KAM) to Strategic Partnership: Critical Success Factors for Co-Creation of Value.

Introduction: This is an exploratory study examining links between KAM, and procurement to identify potential integrated processes, KAM personal characteristics along with critical success factors to develop a new KAM model and approach to implementation. It is part of a PhD research project for the University of Derby.

Information and Purpose: The project is a part of a research study that is focused on an investigation into key account managers and procurement practices. The researcher is interested in processes/procedures that have been introduced by KAM organisations to support and develop sales. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of KAM and procurement, particularly KAM characteristics and critical success factors.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of a small survey and an interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked questions about KAM along with work experiences and personal characteristics. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the survey that you would like to stop. There is no penalty for stopping.

Benefit and Risks: The benefit of your participation is to contribute information regarding critical success factors and personal characteristics of KAM. This may assist future KAM and companies should a paper be published based on this study. There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All your information and responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than your procurement contact, and the research supervisor.

Withdrawal: If, following completion of the interview and survey, you wish to withdraw from the study, please email me at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk by 31st March 2018. I will use your personal identifier to retrieve and destroy your data. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk

I confirm that I have read and understand the above information and am happy to participate. Participant Signature Date _____

Please give the first two letters of your surname and the last two numbers of your year of birth: This is your personal identifier. I will need this to remove your data from the study, should you decide to withdraw.

Researcher Signature Date _____

Figure 3.19. Main study survey, part 1 (source: author).

The second part of the process asked questions about the demographic factors and aimed to collect general information regarding characteristics of KAMs from different companies, such as gender, age, experience, education, managerial level and regional area. Question seven was included for exploratory purposes, this question was again based on Bolton and Bolton's (1984) personality style methodology, to explore KAMs social styles.

Main study survey, part 2 (Appendix B)

1. I am male female

2. I am aged 18-39 40-59 60 or over

3. My highest-level qualification is school level university degree postgraduate degree

4. I have worked in Key Account Management for less than 10 years 10 years or more

5. I am a manager at this level junior middle senior director/executive/board

6. I work in this region North East North West Midlands South East South West Wales Scotland
 Northern Ireland I don't work in the UK

7. Which of these lists best describes what motivates you at work, please show how far you agree or disagree with them on a scale from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 6 for Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Fun and enjoyment						
Acceptance						
Independence						
Job Satisfaction						
Power and authority						
Recognition of feelings						
Recognition of expertise						
Prestige of expertise						
Approval						
Security and safety						
Results						
Perfection						
Material comfort						
Love						
Wealth						
Correctness						

Thank you for your time and contributions to the study, the interview will now commence.

Figure 3.20. Main study survey, part 2 (source: author).

3.9.3. Interview preparations and considerations

To commence semi-structured interviews using AI as a method, the sample selected were practicing KAMs well known to the author and each contact was located on the author's personal LinkedIn network. The decided buyers were also practicing and were also known to the author, and both KAMs and buyers worked in business sectors which included pharmaceuticals, healthcare and banking. The surveys and interviews used the same criteria, so the sampling was classified as purposive sampling. It must also be noted that the interview numbers were relatively small with 12 KAMs and 3 buyers, so statistical generalization was not a relevant concern.

The author also considered the following:

1. Contacting the selected respondents and explaining the aims of the interview.
2. Obtaining their informed consent in advance.
3. Arranging an appointment and determining a suitable location for the interview.

Preparations for the interview centred around the interview guidelines sheet which noted the title, introduction, information and purpose, interviewee participation, benefit and risks, research confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study. The researcher also clarified the priorities of interview questions, along with the use of audio recording equipment.

When commencing interviews, the researcher introduced himself to the respondents and provided a brief explanation of the research purpose and the purpose of the interview. The interview started with a general open-ended question and then moved to a deeper level by querying interviewees about KAM.

At the end of the interview, time permitting, the researcher provided the respondents with a 1-2-minute summary of what they had answered, for verification, and to add additional context if required. The buyers verified the responses from the KAMs survey and interview responses by looking at the transcripts of the interview given by the KAMs with who they worked with and by looking at the survey results. Finally, the researcher thanked the interviewee for participating and mentioned that the results would be sent to him/her once the research was completed.

3.10. Data analysis and interpretation

The conversion of data into information depended on the use of suitable data-handling methodology, which required managing (Clarke et al., 2012). Furthermore, Clarke et al. (2012) proposed that the researcher must check the data for verification purposes. Robson (2011, p. 466) also noted that 'there is no clear and universally accepted set of contentions for analysis corresponding to those observed with quantitative data', and therefore data analysis was exploratory; data was investigated and required confirmation, and the analysis aimed to establish what was expected to be found. Data analysis was also defined as a process that was conducted to reduce, organise and give meaning to the data, according to Burns and Grove (2005). Similarly, Merriam (2009, p. 97) suggested that a researcher used a methodological analysis of 'description-reduction-interpretation' to interpret an individual's experience.

In this study, description related to the data collected through transcribed interviews and job advertisements; these formed descriptions which related to ‘reduction’, which involved finding emergent themes in the descriptions of the respondents. Thematic analysis was also used as a qualitative analytical method which focused on themes identified by means of coding (Guest et al., 2012). The issue of coding was completed by computer-aided qualitative data analysis using NVivo which was considered the UK market leading software.

NVivo software was considered useful for data storage, retrieval and analysis, while researchers could design and construct a language-based database. The drawback with NVivo was that the design and set up may be laborious. Nonetheless, NVivo included sample software along with sufficient online training. The training explained that transcripts with reference codes could be completed in line-by-line format; in each case each line was numbered, which enabled researchers to reference specific areas and key words from the transcript. Following the process regarding general guidance on good practice and the participant information and consent form allowed and demonstrated rigour and robustness.

The authors justification for using the thematic approach with NVivo was to understand KAM, CSFs and social style characteristics of KAMs along with developing a KAM model and new approach to implementation based on the research themes re-emerging. NVivo was also good for storing data and useful in adding rigour to the process to cross-check interpretations, thus, preventing bias as noted by Longbottom and Lawson (2017). Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2013, pp. 202-3) suggested that thematic analysis was composed of seven stages as shown in table 3.13. The stages begin with transcription and culminate in report writing and this approach was used in this study, with all seven stages followed which also guarded against bias in interpretation of the data.

Table 3.13. Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis, seven stages (source: author).

Stage	Transcription	Thematic analysis description
1	Transcription	Turning audio data into written text (or transcripts) by writing down what was said and how it was said so the data can be systematically coded and analysed.
2	Reading and familiarisation	Reading and re-reading the data to become intimately familiar with the content.
3	Coding	Identifying aspects of the data that relate to the research questions.
4	Searching for themes	Identifying salient features that capture something important about the data in relation to the research question; this may represent some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset.
5	Reviewing themes	Determining whether candidate themes fit well with the coded data, themes should tell a story that rings true with the data, essentially representing quality control in relation to the analysis.
6	Defining and naming themes	Defining themes by stating what is unique and specific about each one, useful because it forces researchers to define the focus and boundaries of the themes by distilling to a few short sentences of what each theme meant.
7	Writing the report	Writing the report by selecting compelling vivid examples of data extracts and relating them back to the research question and literature.

An example of the first transcript called T1 (GH68) that was imported into NVivo for thematic analysis can be seen in appendix c, the interview lasted 30 minutes and 22 seconds. This interview was the first interview and transcript out of a total of 15 interviews (12 KAMs and 3 buyers). The data concluded that while some themes were predetermined, some emerged from the NVivo coding. The specifics can be viewed in chapter 5.

3.11. Ethical considerations

With research considerations in mind, Bryman and Bell (2015) gathered a list of principles taken from published ethical guidelines, which were as follows:

- Harm and participants – the need to avoid potential harm through research process and the need to ensure physical and psychological wellbeing of research participants, the researcher and others
- Dignity – the requirements to respect the dignity of research participants, researchers or others and avoid causing discomfort or anxiety
- Informed consent – the need to ensure the fully informed consent of research participants
- Privacy – the need to protect privacy of research subjects or avoid invasions of privacy
- Confidentiality – the requirement to ensure confidentiality of research data whether relating to individuals, groups or organisations
- Anonymity – the protection of anonymity of individuals or organisations
- Deception – the potential for deception during the research process, either through lies or through behaviour that is misleading
- Affiliation – the need to declare any professional or personal affiliations that may have influenced the research, including conflicts of interest and sponsorships, and information about the source of the research funding
- Honesty and transparency – the need for openness and honesty in communicating information about the research to all interested parties, including the need for trust
- Reciprocity – the research should be of mutual benefit to researcher and participants or some form of collaboration or active participation should be involved
- Misrepresentation – the need to avoid misleading, misunderstanding, misrepresenting or falsely reporting the research findings.

Collis and Hussey (2014, p. 32) concurred with the principles, noting that research must not cause direct or indirect harm to the researcher or participant, including physical harm, harm to self-development, self-esteem or career or employment prospects. In addition, ‘participants must not be encouraged to perform immoral, illegal or other reprehensible acts’. Collis and Hussey (2014) affirmed that participants must be informed of the purpose of the study, the fact that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any stage during the process and their right to confidentiality and anonymity. Also, researchers must not invade a person’s privacy or abandon respect for the values of others during the research process.

The University of Derby business research ethics committee approved the study; a copy of the survey/interview schedule was submitted along with participation information and the consent form, which was also approved.

3.12. Limitations and methodology summary

A pragmatic, mixed methods approach was adopted, employing qualitative and quantitative methods enabling triangulation of results for comparison. The mixed method strategy added robustness to the research design. The design also used thematic analyses with NVivo to design and construct a language-based database. The decision to use pragmatism helped the use of a mix of different research methods by the desire to produce socially useful knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2012). Yet, the drawback with NVivo was that the design and set up was arduous.

While, pragmatism offered a strong emphasis on research questions, communication, and shared meaning along with recommending a balance between subjectivity and objectivity. The method also served as a rationale for formal research design as well as more grounded approach. However, considered research limitations for this strategy included gaining speedy answers by using a mixed method approach, particularly, with survey questions, and detailed answers using AI semi-structured interviews. Another considered limitation was using the Bolton and Bolton (1984) social style method to recognise KAMs social styles, although the method was simplistic and considered in sales and procurement settings to help personnel recognise social styles, the authors confirmed that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style and that the best way of discovering one's social style was to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format, which was not possible with the exploratory survey but would be investigated in the main study.

Finally, the number of buyers envisaged in the main study was also a considered limitation. While the research focused on KAMs and these numbers had a meaningful number for comparison, the number of buyers' were insufficient for a meaningful comparison. Yet, the buyers' role was predominantly to validate KAMs' responses, but also to add their input to the main survey and interviews for exploratory purposes.

In summary, the limitations concerning the Bolton and Bolton (1984) social style method would be investigated more in the main study to gain structured feedback from buyers to alleviate this limitation. Increasing the interview numbers of buyers in the main study may also enable a meaningful comparison. However, it is also worth commenting on the plans to include diversity of industries that KAMs in the study would come from: healthcare, pharmaceutical, medical devices, financial services and IT. The plans to use different industries may benefit the study, rather than just focusing solely on one industry type, such as pharmaceuticals. While this research does have limitations, there were no studies at the time of reviewing existing literature that addressed whether SDL-based KAM formed co-creation of value, so this study contributes to both academic theory and professional practice.

4. Exploratory survey, questionnaire synopsis

The exploratory survey questionnaire was conducted to test and develop greater in-depth questions to improve the final research design, in the main study. The survey was submitted online to 256 professional LinkedIn KAMs, via the author's personal network contacts through SurveyMonkey. The analysis showed that 7 opted out, leaving 249 potential responses.

While statistics for online surveys suggested response rates were typically around 10%, which would have meant 25 responses (Hamilton, 2003; Yun and Trumbo, 2000), the survey managed to gain 71 responses out of the potential 249, as shown in appendix 1, yielding a 29% response rate and surpassing minimum expectations by the author by 8 replies.

One of the respondents did not fully complete the survey because question 8 was missed. The average time for completion of the survey was 6 minutes and 22 seconds.

4.1. Exploratory survey, response volume

The online questionnaire site SurveyMonkey was selected and 92% of the responses were received within the first 8 weeks of sending them; the monthly response volumes are shown in figure 4.1.

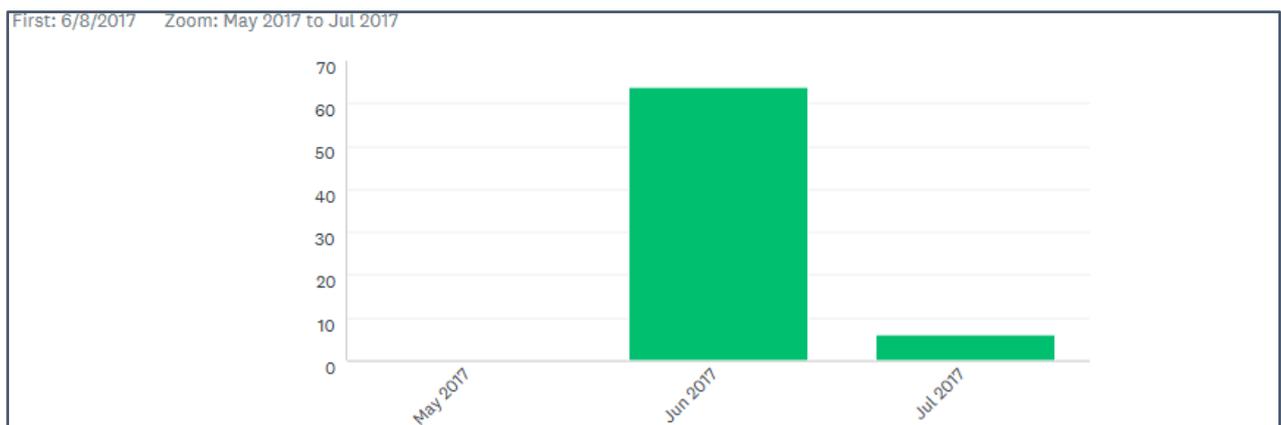


Figure 4.1. Exploratory survey, response volume (source: author).

4.2. Exploratory survey, results

The results depicted in the histograms were rounded up but are as accurate as possible due to the number of responses received, which was 71. The individual response rates also included a blip with the data recorded from SurveyMonkey because there was a missing response, MO80. Nonetheless, all the data is within the results.

The results were rich regarding demographics and with KAMs' personal characteristics; the questions were also pertinent to the FP of SDL of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions model showing movement from GDL to SDL and then towards social/relational aspects of co-creation.

In order to simplify the complexities of the results, the detailed conclusions are summarised in four areas pertinent to the following: 1. Demographics, 2. Personal characteristics, 3. Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) FPs of SDL and 4. Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions table associated with moving from GDL towards SDL and co-creation.

4.2.1. Exploratory survey, demographic results

The first section in the survey commenced with demographic factor questions, numbered 1 to 6, that were pertinent to gender, age, qualifications, KAM experience, management level and geographical/regional areas worked in.

An example histogram in figure 4.2. represented gender, and the chart shows the opening question of the survey; the responses show that although 25% of the surveys were sent to females, the response rate was lower, with 21% answering. The results also confirm that males statistically contributed 5% more responses than females; out of 188 surveys sent to males, 56 participated, demonstrating a 30% response rate, whereas 61 surveys were sent to females and 15 answered, representing a 25% reply rate.

The histogram in figure 4.2. represented the exploratory survey's opening question regarding gender.

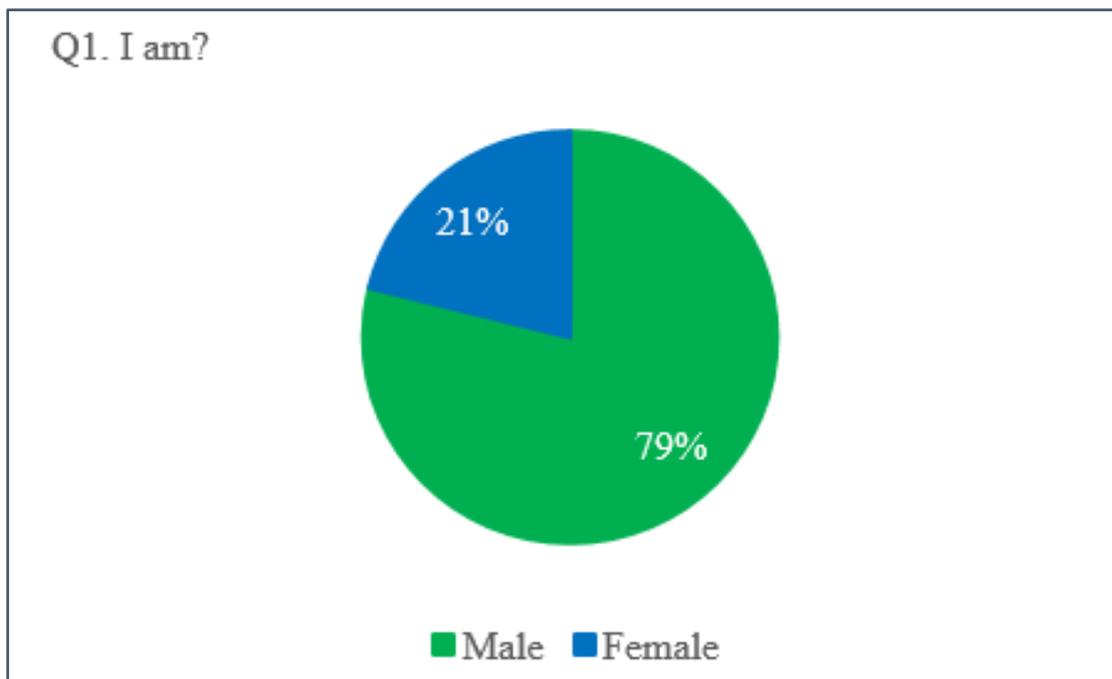


Figure 4.2. Exploratory survey, opening question results, histogram example (source: author).

For verification purposes, a table summary has been developed pertinent to the same to highlight the findings more succinctly.

The following table in 4.3 summarises the demographic results of the exploratory survey.

Table 4.3. Exploratory survey, demographic results summary (source: author).

No.	Question	Options	Results Summary
Q1.	I am?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	The overall results stated that males statistically contributed 5% more responses than females; out of 188 surveys sent to males, 56 participated, signifying a 30% response rate, whereas 61 surveys were sent to females and 15 participated, representing a 25% response rate.
Q2.	I am aged?	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60+	The results showed that 45 out of 71 responses, representing over 63%, were between the ages of 40 and 59. Gender response trends were also comparable with similar response patterns emerged.
Q3.	My highest qualification is?	<input type="checkbox"/> School Level <input type="checkbox"/> University Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Post Grad Degree	<p>The results showed that over 63% of respondents had a university/postgraduate degree, yet, when comparing genders, 73% of females had a university/postgraduate degree in comparison to 61% of males, showing a 12%+ differential.</p> <p>Furthermore, when reviewing age groups, the data showed that 50% of males, between the ages of 18 and 39 had school-level qualifications, which was equal to the 60+ age group. Even so, there was a difference when comparing those with postgraduate degrees, as 6 of respondents, which was 10% in the age bracket 18–39 years had them, compared with 33% in the 60+ age bracket. The data also revealed that 71% of those aged 40–59 had a degree, leaving 29% with school-level qualifications.</p>
Q4.	I have worked in KAM for?	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 10 years or more	The results stated that over 63% of respondents had more than 10 years' experience, although the sample selected were well-known, experienced practitioners in KAM. The data also revealed that gender and qualifications were comparable, and an age pattern emerged associated with 10+ years' experience: the older the age brackets, the more the respondents suggested they had 10+ years' experience.
Q5.	I am a manager at this level?	<input type="checkbox"/> Junior, <input type="checkbox"/> Middle <input type="checkbox"/> Senior <input type="checkbox"/> Director+	<p>The results showed that over 90% of respondents considered themselves to be in middle- to director+ level roles, with the largest cohort being middle-level roles, at 32%, followed by senior roles at 31%. Nonetheless, when reviewing gender, 67% of females considered themselves to be in middle-level roles, as opposed to only 16% of males. In contrast, 74% of males considered themselves to be in senior to director+ level roles.</p> <p>In addition, 76% of those in senior to director+ level positions had 10+ years' experience. In contrast, the results indicated that 42% respondents in senior to director+ level positions had less than 10 years' experience.</p>

			<p>Also, 50% of those in the age bracket 18–39 noted that they were in junior to middle positions, and a further 50% were in senior and director+ level roles, which was the same as 60+ age bracket, whereas no participants in the age bracket 40-59 indicated that they had a junior position; still, 29% suggested they had middle-level positions. The remainder percentage, which was 71%, suggested that they were in either a senior or a director+ level position.</p> <p>The data also noted that 61% of school leavers were in senior to director+ level roles, which was a similar percentage to those with a university degree. Of those with a postgraduate degree stated that they were in senior to director+ level positions, which accounted for 75% of participants.</p>
Q6.	I work in this region?	<input type="checkbox"/> North East <input type="checkbox"/> North West <input type="checkbox"/> Midlands <input type="checkbox"/> South East <input type="checkbox"/> South West <input type="checkbox"/> Wales <input type="checkbox"/> Scotland <input type="checkbox"/> N. Ireland <input type="checkbox"/> Out of UK	<p>The results showed that over 58% of responses, totalling 41 respondents, derived from the Midlands/South East; regarding gender, 80% of females and 51% of males were based in the Midlands/South East. However, given that the author lives in the Midlands and has worked in the South East, the response results were not surprising.</p> <p>The data for age brackets, experience, qualifications and even job seniority levels was very much comparable with the Midlands/South East being the main locations. While the data captured provided a good overall synopsis of the situation in the UK, it must also be noted that 11% of the data was taken from respondents working overseas.</p>

Exploratory survey demographic conclusions

The demographic results from the survey were very interesting; in summary, the sample were predominantly male, aged between 40 and 59, held a university degree and had more than 10 years' experience. Also, they considered their role to be a middle- to director-/exec-/board-level role and the majority worked either in the Midlands or in the South East.

While the results were factual, it must be noted that although the survey sample was primarily male, this may be because the sample network used canvassed 76% of males, equating to 188 out of 249 requests. Nonetheless, the results for gender age brackets were comparable; however, the results for qualifications showed that 73% of females had a university/postgraduate degree in comparison with 61% of males, showing a 12%+ differential, which requires further investigations in the main study.

The results also showed that over 63% of respondents had more than 10 years' experience, though, the sample selected were well-known, experienced practitioners in KAM. The data also revealed a pattern emerging from those in older age brackets, which showed percentages for this length of experience increasing as the age brackets increased. In addition, the results confirmed that those with a postgraduate degree were more likely to be in senior to director+ level positions, according to the survey.

Congruently, over 90% of the respondents considered themselves to be in middle- to director+ level roles. Yet 67% of females considered themselves to be in middle-level roles, as opposed to only 16% of males, which requires further investigations. Regarding the results concerning regional locations, over 58% of those responding work in Midlands/South East; however, given that the author lives in the Midlands and has worked in the South East as already noted, the response results were not entirely surprising.

4.2.2. Exploratory survey, KAMs’ personal characteristics

Question 7 was based on Bolton and Bolton’s (1984) synopsis of social styles; the answer choices relate to social style motivators, based on each psychological profile. The Bolton and Bolton (1984) approach was used due to the method being simplistic and considered in sales and procurement settings to help personnel recognise social styles, to use that knowledge to manage others more effectively and to set goals, make plans and increase creativity. However, it must also be noted that the authors stated that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style and that the best way of discovering one’s social style is to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format, which was not possible with the exploratory survey but will be investigated in the main study.

Table 4.4. Exploratory survey, KAMs’ personal characteristics results summary (source: author).

No.	Question	Options	Results summary
Q7.	Which of these lists best describes what motivates you at work?	<input type="checkbox"/> Results <input type="checkbox"/> Precision <input type="checkbox"/> Fun <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship	<p>The results showed that over 86%, totalling 61 out of 71 participants ‘self-reported’ as results or precision orientated. Results accounted for 44%, with 31 responses, and precision 42% with 30 responses. Moreover, when reviewing the demographic factors, gender was comparable. However, regarding age demographics, those in the 60+ age bracket were predominantly self-reported as results orientated, at 67%; similarly, the majority of the 18–39 age bracket were also self-reported as results orientated, at 45%, yet 49% of the 40–59 age bracket was precision orientated. Interestingly, the remainder of the 60+ age bracket, representing 33%, was self-reported as precision orientated.</p> <p>Of respondent’s with less than 10 years’ experience, 46% were self-reported as results orientated, followed by precision orientated at 34%; however, 47% of participants with 10+ years’ experience was self-reported as precision oriented, followed by results oriented at 42%. When reviewing education, the results showed that those with school-level qualifications were self-reported as precision orientated, at 54%, followed by results orientated at 23%. Yet the majority of those with a degree was self-reported as result oriented, at 55%, followed by precision oriented at 31%.</p> <p>Furthermore, the results for management-level roles stated that those with junior, senior or director+ level positions were predominately self-reported as results orientated, with the highest percentage here being senior level at 50%, followed by director+ level at 48% and then junior at 42%.</p>

			<p>However, this trend was not apparent with middle-level roles; the dominant social style motivator here was self-reported as precision, at 63%, followed by results at 32%. When taking a closer look at the trends, particularly with the junior level we can see that precision and fun orientated were ‘self-reported’ and equal second at 29%, whereas both senior and director+ level positions were mainly self-reported as precision orientated.</p>
--	--	--	---

Exploratory survey, KAMs’ personal characteristics conclusion

The results showed that over 86%, totalling 61 out of 71 participants, were self-reported as results or precision orientated. Results orientated accounted for 44%, with 31 responses, and precision for 42% with 30 responses. While there were anomalies within certain demographics, often the numbers were too small for a meaningful comparison. However, the percentages for results and precision orientated were a surprise given that these social styles were drivers and analytical types and not a usual fit for SDL requirements for social/relational aspects; even so, the data makes interesting reading and the outcomes will be compared against the main study for further analysis.

There were anomalies; for example when analysing age demographics, which established that 67% of those aged 60+ said results orientated, followed by 33% of those that were precision orientated. Similarly, 45% of those 18–39 age bracket said results orientated, followed by 30% of those that were precision orientated. Yet 49% of those in age bracket 40–59 was self-reported as precision orientated, followed by 40% of those that were results orientated. In addition, respondents with less than 10 years’ experience were self-reported as results orientated with 46% followed by 34% of those that were precision orientated, whereas 47% of those with 10 or more years’ experience were self-reported as precision orientated, followed by 42% of those that were results orientated.

The analysis showed that those with school-level qualifications said precision orientated followed by results orientated, whereas those with a degree were results orientated followed by precision orientated. Additionally, those with junior, senior or director+ level roles self-reported as results orientated, followed by precision orientated, though those in junior positions had fun orientated equal second with precision orientated. Nonetheless, those in middle-level positions had a greater percentage, 63% self-reported as precision orientated, followed by results orientated at 32%.

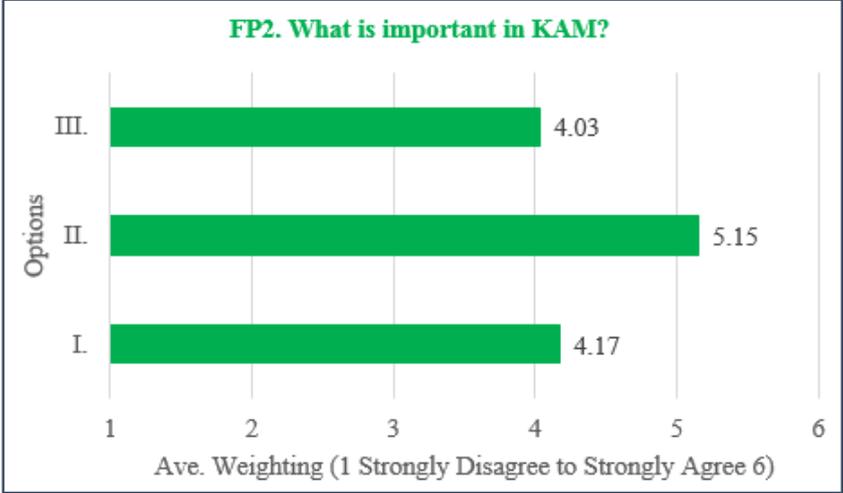
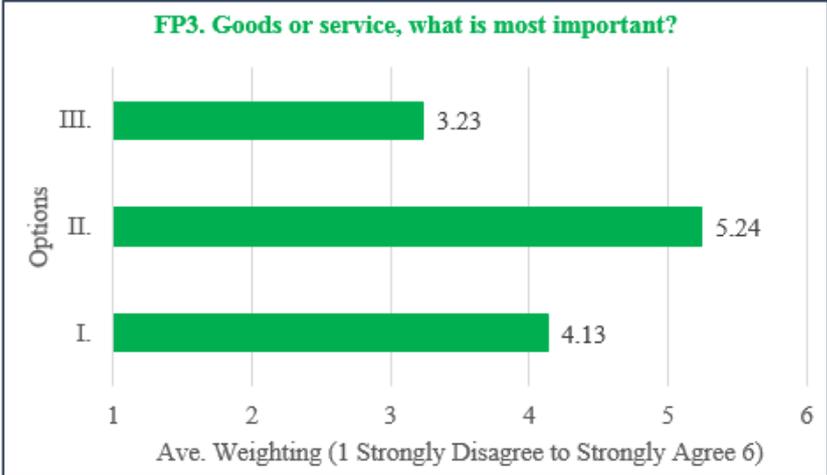
4.2.3. Exploratory survey, FP of SDL, from Vargo and Lusch

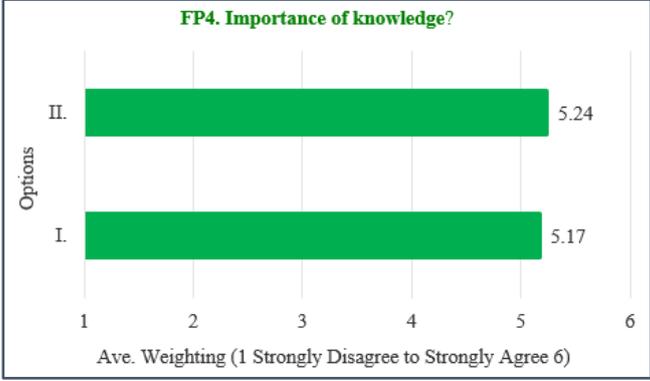
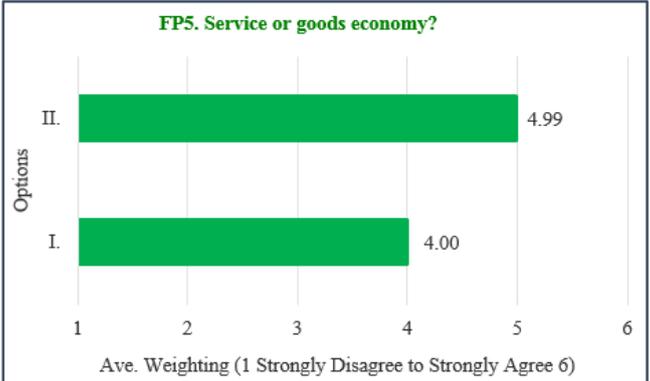
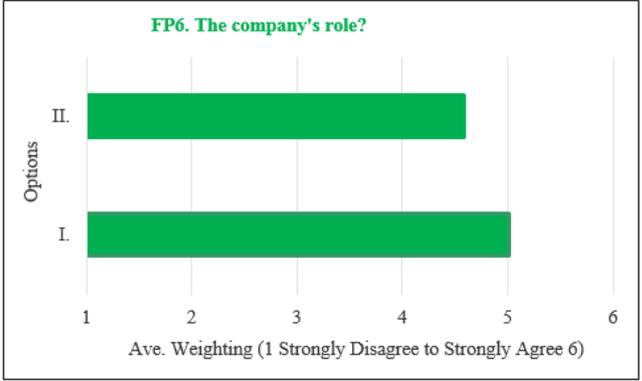
The second section in the exploratory survey commenced with question 8, which was based on Vargo and Lusch’s (2008a) 10 FP of SDL, which were pivotal to this study. The term ‘foundational premise’ means a statement that was assumed to be true and upon which theory is built, and to collate the data the FP were simplified and tested for internal validity by academics rather than Cronbach’s (1951) alpha tests. The questions were checked by academics; they were forwarded Vargo and Lusch’s (2008a) FP of SDL, and Lusch and Vargo’s (2006) conceptual transitions concepts with interpreted AI semi-structured interview questions to ensure that the questions stood up to reliability tests and could easily be understood. The results were based on a Likert scale weighting, from 1 for ‘Strongly Disagree’ to 6 for ‘Strongly Agree’.

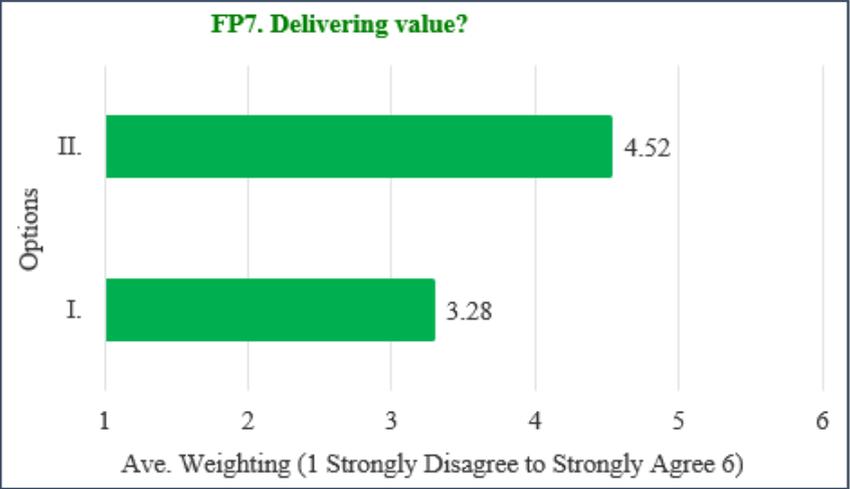
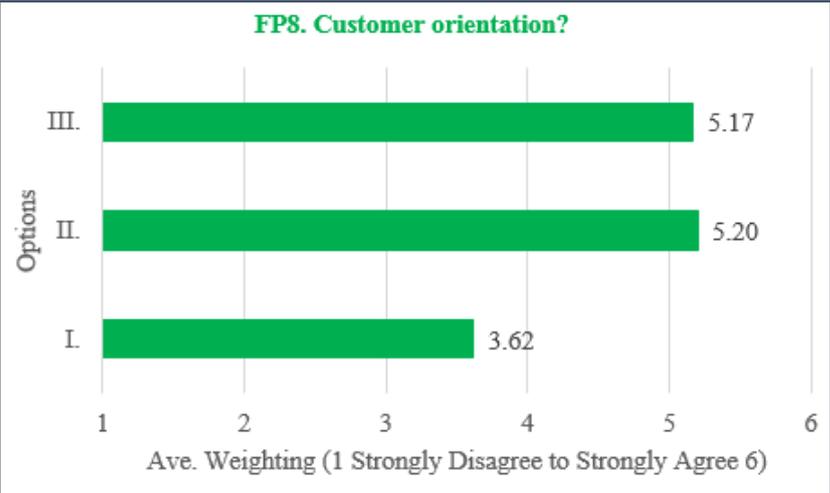
Table 4.5. shows the results for question 8 and their link with each FP, together with an average weighting graph to demonstrate them.

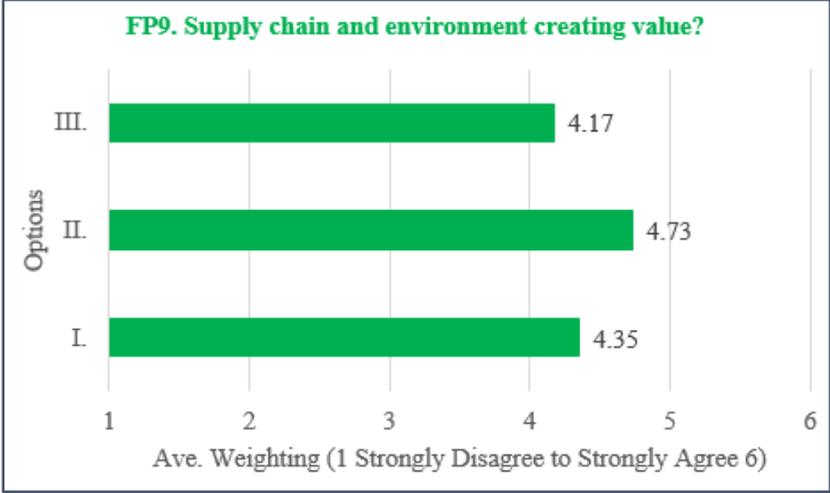
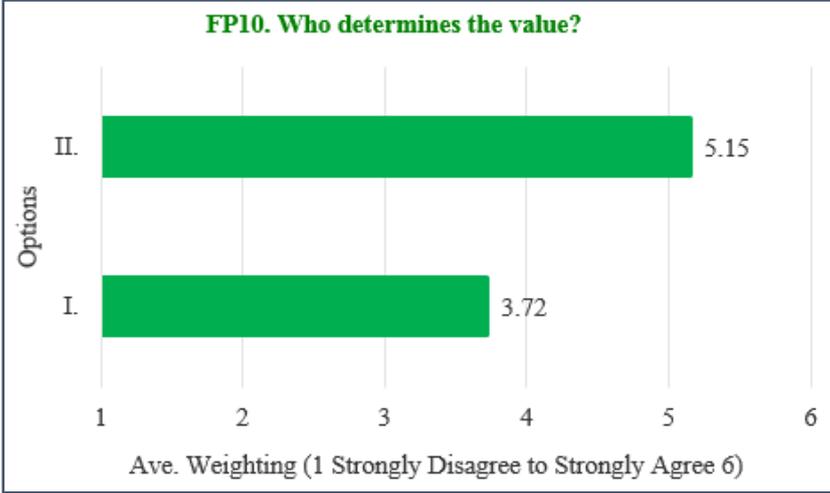
Table 4.5. Exploratory survey, FP-based questions results summary (source: author).

No.	FP of SDL, Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8)	FP-based study questions and results (results based on Likert scale weighting, 1 for Strongly Disagree and 6 for Strongly Agree)										
Q8.	<p>FP1. Service is the fundamental basis of exchange. (Economic exchange involves providing mutual service.)</p>	<p>FP1. Why do customers choose your organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. The specialised skills we offer – Agree 5.18 II. The tangible products we offer – Agree 4.90 III. The quality of service we offer – Strongly Agree 5.61 IV. The relationships our customers have with our staff – Agree 5.26 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: green;">FP1. Why do customers choose your organisation?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I</td> <td>5.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II</td> <td>4.90</td> </tr> <tr> <td>III</td> <td>5.61</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IV</td> <td>5.26</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I	5.18	II	4.90	III	5.61	IV	5.26
Options	Ave. Weighting											
I	5.18											
II	4.90											
III	5.61											
IV	5.26											

<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP2. Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange. (Exchanging competencies for the competencies of others; exchanging service for service.)</p>	<p>FP2. What is important in key account management?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. The sales are important – Somewhat Agree 4.17 II. The relationship is more important – Agree 5.15 III. Factors other than sales/relationship are important – Somewhat Agree 4.03  <table border="1"> <caption>FP2. What is important in KAM?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I</td> <td>4.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II</td> <td>5.15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>III</td> <td>4.03</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I	4.17	II	5.15	III	4.03
Options	Ave. Weighting									
I	4.17									
II	5.15									
III	4.03									
<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP3. Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision. (SDL, the basis of exchange, always involves service provision; goods are used for service.)</p>	<p>FP3. Goods or service, what is most important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Tangible goods are most important when the customer evaluates overall provision – Somewhat Agree 4.13 II. The way we do business (our service) is most important when the customer evaluates our overall provision – Agree 5.24 III. Overall, tangible goods are more important than our service – Somewhat Disagree 3.23  <table border="1"> <caption>FP3. Goods or service, what is most important?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I</td> <td>4.13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II</td> <td>5.24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>III</td> <td>3.23</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I	4.13	II	5.24	III	3.23
Options	Ave. Weighting									
I	4.13									
II	5.24									
III	3.23									

<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP4. Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage. (Operant resources are usually intangible and dynamic. SDL provides a refocus by shifting to value-creation processes.)</p>	<p>FP4. Importance of knowledge?</p> <p>I. The knowledge we have is the fundamental basis of our competitive advantage – Agree 5.17</p> <p>II. The knowledge we gain through interaction with our client is the fundamental basis of our competitive advantage – Agree 5.24</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>FP4. Importance of knowledge?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>5.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II.</td> <td>5.24</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I.	5.17	II.	5.24
Options	Ave. Weighting							
I.	5.17							
II.	5.24							
<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP5. All economies are service economies. (SDL is service-centered thinking, an increase in knowledge and the ability to exchange information.)</p>	<p>FP5. Service or goods economy (the environment in which your company operates)?</p> <p>I. The economy is based on transactions – Somewhat Agree 4.00</p> <p>II. The economy is based on service and the way in which we offer it – Agree 4.99</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>FP5. Service or goods economy?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>4.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II.</td> <td>4.99</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I.	4.00	II.	4.99
Options	Ave. Weighting							
I.	4.00							
II.	4.99							
<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP6. The customer is always a co-creator of value. (Co-creation of value describes the process of joint application of operant resources among companies and customers to create benefit.)</p>	<p>FP6. The company's role?</p> <p>I. It is the company's role to create value for the customer – Agree 5.01</p> <p>II. The customer is always the co-creator of value – Agree 4.59</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>FP6. The company's role?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>5.01</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II.</td> <td>4.59</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I.	5.01	II.	4.59
Options	Ave. Weighting							
I.	5.01							
II.	4.59							

<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP7. The enterprise cannot deliver value, but can only offer value propositions. (The company cannot make and deliver value due to the collaborative requirements of value creation. The firm can only make value propositions.)</p>	<p>FP7. Delivering value?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. We can deliver value without the customer’s help – Somewhat Disagree 3.28 II. Without the customer’s collaboration, we can only offer value propositions (rather than actual value) – Agree 4.52  <table border="1"> <caption>FP7. Delivering value?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>II.</td> <td>4.52</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>3.28</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	II.	4.52	I.	3.28		
Options	Ave. Weighting									
II.	4.52									
I.	3.28									
<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP8. A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational. (SDL relationships underpin how value is created in service-for-service exchange to form value-creating processes.)</p>	<p>FP8. Customer orientation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Our dealings with customers are based on transactions – Somewhat Agree 3.62 II. Our dealings with customers are based on relationships – Agree 5.20 III. What we offer is fundamentally based on what customers want or need – Agree 5.17  <table border="1"> <caption>FP8. Customer orientation?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>III.</td> <td>5.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II.</td> <td>5.20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>3.62</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	III.	5.17	II.	5.20	I.	3.62
Options	Ave. Weighting									
III.	5.17									
II.	5.20									
I.	3.62									

<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP9. All social and economic actors are resource integrators. (Networking with many organisations or individuals and combining resources from multiple parties to create value.)</p>	<p>FP9. Supply chain and environment creating value?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. The supply chain is important to how we do business in a purely transactional way – Somewhat Agree 4.35 II. The value added by those in our supply chain is important to how we do business – Agree 4.73 III. Value is added to what we offer by organisations/factors outside our supply chain – Somewhat Agree 4.17  <table border="1"> <caption>FP9. Supply chain and environment creating value?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>4.35</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II.</td> <td>4.73</td> </tr> <tr> <td>III.</td> <td>4.17</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I.	4.35	II.	4.73	III.	4.17
Options	Ave. Weighting									
I.	4.35									
II.	4.73									
III.	4.17									
<p>Q8.</p>	<p>FP10. Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).)</p>	<p>FP10. Who determines the value?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Value is determined/judged by the organisation – Somewhat Agree 3.72 II. Value is determined/judged by the customer – Agree 5.15  <table border="1"> <caption>FP10. Who determines the value?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Options</th> <th>Ave. Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I.</td> <td>3.72</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II.</td> <td>5.15</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Options	Ave. Weighting	I.	3.72	II.	5.15		
Options	Ave. Weighting									
I.	3.72									
II.	5.15									

Exploratory survey, FP-based question ranking results summary

Table 4.6 below notes the highest mean average rankings specific to each FP-based study question and result, in the exploratory survey. The ranking determined which question received the highest mean average based on adding the individual scores and then dividing by the number of responses. The author decided to use the mean average as this was usually used with Likert scales. Dawes (2007) completed an experiment exploring data characteristic changes using similar Likert-type scales and only used the mean because it was considered ‘one of the most basic summary data characteristics’ (p. 63). Similarly, the rationale to use this approach was to compare and contrast similar questions used in the main study to identify the relative importance of each FP for further analysis. Having a mean for comparison purposes was more useful than giving the number of respondents who selected each number on a scale.

Table 4.6. Exploratory survey, FP-based questions ranking results summary (source: author).

Rank	FP of SDL, Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8)	FP-based study questions and results in rank order	Results based on Likert scale score (1 for Strongly Disagree and 6 for Strongly Agree)
1	FP1	The quality of service we offer.	5.61
2	FP3	The way we do business (our service) is most important when the customer evaluates our overall provision.	5.24
2	FP4	The knowledge we gain through interaction with our customer is the fundamental basis of our competitive advantage.	5.24
3	FP8	Our dealings with customers are based on relationships.	5.20
4	FP2	The relationship is more important.	5.15
4	FP10	Value is determined by the customer.	5.15
5	FP6	It is the company’s role to create value for the customer.	5.01
6	FP5	The economy is based on service and the way in which we offer it.	4.99
7	FP9	The value added by those in our supply chain is important to how we do business.	4.73
8	FP7	Without the customer’s collaboration we can only offer value propositions (rather than actual value).	4.52

The results showed that the question linked to FP1, which related to service being the fundamental basis of exchange (economic exchange involves providing a mutual service) has the highest average score and is ranked 1 with a 5.61 mean average. However, when comparing the results with the CSFs in the academic literature, managing long-term relationships (CRM) was ranked 1 and related to FP4.

However, the table shows that FP3 and FP4 followed with 5.24, ranked 2. These questions related to goods being a distribution mechanism for service provision (SDL, the basis of exchange, always involves service provision; goods are used for service) and the idea that operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage (operant resources are usually intangible and dynamic; SDL provides a refocus by shifting to value-creation processes). Comparable scores apply for the FP8 question, ranked 3; the question here related to ‘a service-centered view is inherently customer orientated and relational (SDL relationships underpin how value is created in service-for-service exchange to form value-creating processes)’.

This question was closely followed by FP2 and FP10, both ranked 4, with 5.15 average weighting. These questions related to the idea that indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange (exchanging competencies for the competencies of others; exchanging service for service) and that value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9)).

FP6, it is the company’s role to create value for the customer is ranked 5, with an average weighting of 5.01, slightly ahead of the score for the same question which answered the customer is always a co-creator of value (co-creation of value describes the process of joint application of operant resources among companies and customers to create benefit). This is followed by FP5, ranked 6 with an average score of 4.99. The question here related to the statement that ‘all economies are service economies (SDL is service-centered thinking, an increase in knowledge and the ability to exchange information)’.

FP9 is ranked 7, with a 4.73 average score. This question linked to the statement that ‘all social and economic actors are resource integrators (networking with many organisations or individuals and combining resources from multiple parties to create value)’. It was followed by FP7, ranked 8 with 4.52. This question related to the statement that ‘the enterprise cannot deliver value, but can only offer value propositions (the company cannot make and deliver value due to the collaborative requirements of value creation; the firm can only make value propositions)’.

In summary, the higher average scores and therefore higher-ranked FP-based study questions indicated strong links with SDL and a move towards co-creation of value that aligns with the views of Vargo and Lusch’s (2008a) 10 FP of SDL and Lusch and Vargo’s (2006) conceptual transitions concepts. Nonetheless, the findings and context will now be analysed in greater depth.

Exploratory survey, FP of SDL from Vargo and Lusch (2008a) conclusions

The average score criteria adopted within the survey, with question 8 based on the FP of SDL, from Vargo and Lusch (2008a), is discussed below. Each FP was considered, as were the demographics and social styles of the participants personal characteristics.

FP1 conclusion

FP1 related to why customers chose to work with their organisations; the results indicated that service is regarded as the fundamental basis of exchange, with participants stating that the quality of service is why customers chose to work with their organisations as opposed to relationships with customers, specialised skills and the tangible products offered. However, when reviewing the demographics, the only anomalies related to the 60+ age bracket, which had a higher average score for specialised skills, and those in director+ level roles, whose highest score was for the relationships their customers have with their staff.

FP2 conclusion

FP2 indicated that the relationship was more important than sales and other factors. All the demographics data corresponded with the findings, although it appeared that the lowest average score was for factors other than sales and the relationship; this was down to those in junior positions, however, who disagreed with all other positions who 'somewhat' or 'agreed' with it.

FP3 conclusion

The FP3 question concerns goods being a distribution mechanism for service provision. The respondents suggested that the way they do business with service was most important when customers evaluated their overall provisions as opposed to tangible goods. The demographic details were all similar; there was nothing to the contrary apart from respondents with school-level qualifications having a slightly higher average score for tangible goods, as opposed to those with a university or postgraduate degree.

FP4 conclusion

FP4 questions whether operant resources were a fundamental source of competitive advantage; the greatest average score related to the knowledge respondents gain through interaction with customers being the fundamental basis of competitive advantage, rather than the knowledge they possess themselves. However, the average scores were very similar in terms of scores and further research is required here for firm conclusions to be made. Even so, when reviewing specifics there were few disparities, although females, along with those in the 60+ age bracket and those working in the Midlands/South East strongly agreed. Males, those in age brackets 18–39 and 40–59 and those working in other locations 'agreed' but with lower scores.

FP5 conclusion

The FP5 question related to whether the respondents' company had a service or a goods economy; the answers showed that the economy was based on service and the way in which the companies offer it, rather than on transactions. The demographics and social style data was all similar; the only anomalies related to differences in scores, with the 60+ age bracket 'strongly agreeing', whereas those in the 18–39 and 40–59 age brackets 'agreed'. It was also apparent that those with postgraduate degrees 'somewhat disagreed' with the concept that their organisation was based on transactions of goods, whereas those with school-level qualifications or degrees or even some of those in junior, senior or director+ level positions 'somewhat agreed'. Some of those in middle-level positions also 'agreed', although the percentages were less in comparison to other positions.

FP6 conclusion

The answers to the FP6 question showed that participants ‘agreed’ that their company’s role was to create value for the customer, which received the highest average scores; however, the results also indicated that the respondents agreed that the customer is always the co-creator of value. Following a review of the demographic and social style details, it could be argued that the question was not understood by the respondents, given that those in age brackets 40–59 and 60+ ‘agreed’ with both answers. In addition, those in middle-, senior and director+ level roles, those with school-level qualifications or postgraduate degrees and those with 10 or more years’ experience ‘agreed’ that the customer is always the co-creator of value. In contrast, those in the age bracket 18–39 strongly agreed that it was the company’s role to create value but also ‘agreed’ that the customer is the co-creator of value, leaving further ambiguities and a requirement for further research to firm up the conclusions.

FP7 conclusion

FP7 stated that without the customer’s collaboration, participants can only offer propositions rather than actual value; respondents were questioned about whether their enterprises deliver value. The results showed that overall participants ‘somewhat disagreed’ with the idea that they can deliver value without the customer’s help. There were stronger average weightings regarding needing customers’ collaboration, and these results were significant but there were a few minor disparities when involving females and those with school-level qualifications who ‘somewhat agreed’ that respondents can deliver value. However, the author must stress that these averages were less than for customer collaboration. It must also be noted that males and those with a university/postgraduate degree also ‘somewhat disagreed’ that respondents can deliver value.

FP8 conclusion

FP8’s highest average scores were similar regarding dealings with customers being based on relationships and what respondents offer being fundamentally based on what customers want or need, as opposed to dealings with customers being based on transactions. When analysing the demographics, there appeared to be anomalies within the 60+ age bracket and for those in junior and senior roles working in the South East, who ‘somewhat disagreed’ with this idea. However, those in age brackets 18–39 and 40–59 with 10 or more years’ experience in middle- to director+ level roles with school-level qualifications or working in the Midlands ‘somewhat agreed’. Those with less than 10 years’ experience and with a university or postgraduate degree, however, ‘agreed’.

FP9 conclusion

The FP9 question related to the supply chain and environment creating value; the results overall showed that the value added by those in their supply chain was important to how respondents do business, as opposed to doing business with the supply chain in a purely transactional way, or relying on value-added offerings outside of their organisations or factors outside their supply chain. There were a few anomalies in the demographics results, females and those in middle-level roles or working in the Midlands agreed that the supply chain was important in a purely transactional way. Males and those with a degree or in a junior, senior or director+ level role or working in the South East, however, ‘somewhat agreed’.

Nevertheless, those in age brackets 18–39 and 40–59, those with a degree or school-level qualifications or in middle, senior or director+ level roles ‘agreed’ that the value added by those in the supply chain is important to how they do business.

FP10 conclusion

The FP10 question was about who determined the value, and this was ‘agreed’ by a majority and most ‘agreed’ that the customer determined or judged the value, as opposed to the respondents organisations. While there was a minor disparity concerning demographics, age brackets 18–39 and 40–59 ‘agreed’ and those in the 60+ age bracket ‘strongly agreed’.

FPs final conclusion

The results for question 8 of the exploratory survey, whose questions relate to Vargo and Lusch’s (2008a) FP of SDL demonstrated evidence of the FP of SDL that caused a move to co-creation; almost all of the FP showed strong scores for these findings, and the higher average scores in the author’s view captured a shifting contemporary thought about KAM, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships, similar to those described by Maclaran et al. (2009, p. 222) regarding marketing; Vargo and Lusch (2004a) stated:

S-D Logic captures shifting contemporary marketing thought, in which marketing is seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships among individuals and organisations.

However, the findings thus far have also showed that not all the FP were conclusive like FP4 and FP6. When reviewing the average scores and specific responses at demographic or even social style data level, it was clear that the answers to some questions were too alike to draw meaningful comparisons and required further investigations. While all FP have been simplified, it was possible that not all the respondents fully understood the questions, which may explain the similarities in some of the answers. The context was often broad and required a more in-depth explanation to ensure participants fully understood the terminology of GDL, SDL and co-creation, and this understanding will be fully explored by qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews and using AI as a methodology in the main study.

4.2.4. Exploratory survey, conceptual transitions concepts theory

The last question was question 9 in the survey. It was about the conceptual transitions concepts from goods-dominant logic (GDL) to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The literature review noted the evolutionary changes in KAM from 1983 to 2011 when a high proportion of business/functional aspects, including process elements, defined KAM and GDL. However, from 2012 to 2014 there was a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move towards SDL, and the answers to this question may explain this in principle.

The chart in figure 4.7. below shows the results for question 9, which is based on Lusch and Vargo’s (2006) conceptual transitions concepts, which is shown in full in appendix 3.

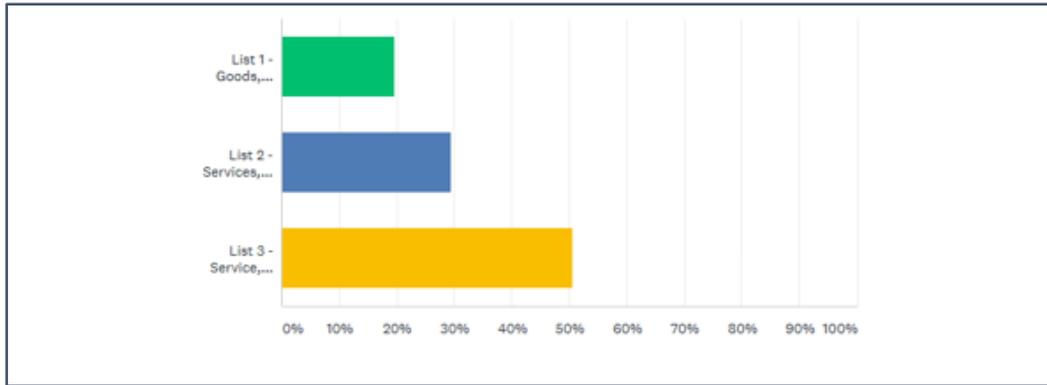


Figure 4.7. Conceptual transitions concepts question, histogram result (source: author).

Table 4.8 below shows the results for question 9, which was based on Lusch and Vargo’s (2006) conceptual transitions concepts and which is shown in full in appendix 3.

Table 4.8. Conceptual transitions concepts question, results summary (source: author).

No.	Question	Options	Results summary
Q9.	Which of these lists best describes your approach to KAM?	<input type="checkbox"/> List 1 (GDL) <input type="checkbox"/> List 2 (SDL) <input type="checkbox"/> List 3 (SDL & Co-creation)	<p>The results showed that 51% of the sample in the survey ‘agreed’ with list 3 and that KAM has moved to SDL and co-creation, which aligns with list 3.</p> <p>The results for the demographic factors, including characteristics, were the same. However, it must be noted that when reviewing working locations only the Midlands and the South East were considered due to a lack of numbers to make a meaningful comparison.</p> <p>The demographic analysis also revealed that the results for the 60+ age bracket differed from the usual trend; their highest percentage was 50%, for list 2, followed by list 3 at 35%, and then list 1. Nonetheless, the numbers were small, with only 6 participating, so did not reflect a meaningful comparison. Also, a larger percentage of those with a postgraduate degree chose list 3 – 7 out of 16, totalling almost 44%. Yet there were glitches with list 1, which had a slightly higher percentage due to having 1 more response than list 2.</p> <p>The data pertinent to junior roles was also interesting as the cohort had an equal percentage for lists 2 and 3. Even so, both were considerably higher in comparison to the percentage for list 1. Middle-level and senior roles had equal percentages for lists 1 and 2, yet both had strong results for list 3 which showed a move to SDL and co-creation, as did those in director+ level roles.</p>

Exploratory survey, conceptual transitions concepts, Lusch and Vargo (2006) conclusion

The results were strong regarding the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation as affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The conclusions revealed evolutionary changes and there appeared to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. It must also be noted, though, that although 36 out of 71 respondents confirmed a move towards list 3, there were still 14 who agreed with list 1 (GDL) and 21 who agreed with list 2 (SDL) so these results required full investigation in the main study to ensure future participants fully understood the questions and terminology surrounding GDL, SDL and co-creation, which may explain the reasons behind the outcomes. This can also be achieved with in-depth and rich qualitative interviews.

4.3. Exploratory survey, concluding comments

In summary, the exploratory survey had been a success with 71 responses (figure 4.1, p. 88); the dominant demographic of the sample was male respondents, aged 40–59 years with a university degree. In addition, the majority of the sample had 10 or more years' experience and worked in a middle- to director+ level role. The average participant also worked in the Midlands or the South East and their social style characteristic was 'self-reported' as results or precision orientated.

While the sample was obtained from the author's professional LinkedIn network via SurveyMonkey, it must be noted that 76% of the respondents canvassed were male rather than female. Nevertheless, the rationale for this was because the author has more male respondents in his LinkedIn network than females. However, the gender and age bracket results were comparable, yet the results for qualifications showed that 73% of females had a degree in comparison with 61% of males, showing a 12%+ differential which required further investigations. Moreover, the results confirmed that over 63% of respondents had greater than 10 years' experience. The data also revealed a pattern that emerged in the older age brackets, which showed that the percentages increased as the age brackets increased. Also, there was strong evidence to show that those with a postgraduate degree were more likely to be in a senior to director+ level position, although over 90% of respondents considered themselves to be in middle- to director+ level roles. Even so, 67% of females considered themselves to be in middle-level roles, while 16% of males considered themselves to be in senior to director+ level roles. Regarding regional locations, around 58% of responses derived from the Midlands and the South East; however, given that the author lived in the Midlands and has worked in the South East, the response results were not surprising. The results also confirmed that over 86% of participants, totalling 61 out of 71, were self-reported as results or precision orientated. Results orientated accounted for 44%, with 31 responses, and precision orientated 42% with 30 responses.

Additionally, Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) FP of SDL that caused a shift to co-creation verified the evidence capturing shifting contemporary thought about KAM, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships. However, the findings thus far also showed that not all the FP are conclusive like FP4 and FP6. The results regarding specific responses at the demographic or even social style data level were too alike to draw meaningful comparisons and required further investigations. Also, the context was broad and required a more in-depth explanation to ensure participants fully understood the vocabulary of GDL, SDL and co-creation.

It appeared that greater understanding may be required, which the main study will focus on and fully explore by using AI semi-structured interviews as a methodology.

Finally, the results were again strong regarding the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006) which again linked well along with the FP of SDL by Vargo and Lusch (2004). The CSFs findings matched the literature confirming the importance of CRM, leadership, role clarity, remuneration, measuring performance, skills, knowledge and attributes, personal characteristics and social styles along with SDL towards co-creation of value. The conclusions again noted evolutionary changes and there appeared to be a distinct change in focus towards defining KAM in terms of co-creation and social/relational aspects and a move to SDL. It must also be noted, though, that although 51% of respondents chose list 3, 49% still chose list 2 (SDL) and list 1 (GDL), which required further investigations. It also appeared that the main study will need to ensure a full understanding of the questions and terminology surrounding GDL, SDL and co-creation, which can be achieved with in-depth and rich AI semi-structured interviews. The author also intends to take out the prescriptive headings from Bolton and Bolton's (1984) social style listings to reduce bias and to include the word National in the demographics questions concerning working locations in response to verbal feedback received from those taking part in the exploratory survey.

5. Main study survey synopsis

The main study was divided into two parts; the first section commences with a survey examining demographics and personal social style characteristics, as does the exploratory survey. However, to reduce bias the social style listings from Bolton and Bolton (1984) were altered to take out prescriptive headings; the demographic questions also included National as a location in response to numerous verbal requests received from participants in the exploratory survey.

The second part of the study commenced after the survey in part 1 had been completed. This second part was based on AI semi-structured interviews in order to provide a full understanding of the questions and terminology surrounding GDL, SDL and co-creation. The questions were based on 10 FP that suggested a move towards SDL and co-creation from Vargo and Lusch (2008a), and there were also questions pertinent to Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation; these aspects were the same in the exploratory survey.

Furthermore, part 1 of the main study survey and the AI semi-structured interviews in part 2 were developed to compare the findings with those from the exploratory survey and to provide new thinking about KAM, but also to ensure the questions were fully understood and verified by prospective buyers. The participants were selected via the author's personal network of LinkedIn contacts, and in total 15 participants completed both parts of the process – 12 KAMs and 3 prospective buyers. In addition, each buyer completed the surveys and interviews with the questions modified to suit their perspectives in order to give their perceptions of the KAM role for triangulation and to add value to the study overall.

The process specific to parts 1 and 2 took around 35 minutes to complete, excluding pleasantries; the process commenced with surveys and then, upon completion, the interviews commenced, forming part 2.

5.1. Main study, response volume

The surveys started to be completed on 7th February 2018 and the interviews commenced on that date too. All 15 interviews and surveys were completed by 8th March 2018, taking just over 4 weeks. While response times varied, on average completion of the main study survey took around 5 minutes and the interview times were around 30 minutes, so this was a significant commitment for each of the participants involved as the total time taken on average was around 35 minutes.

While the number of KAM respondents was sufficient for comparison, the author was aware that for a meaningful analysis specific to the buyers the number was lacking at 3; nonetheless, the number was adequate for verification and exploratory purposes. It must also be noted that the main purpose of involving buyers was to verify KAMs responses which the buyers did by separating each of the KAMs survey responses, particularly regarding social styles, Bolton and Bolton (1984) had shown that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style and the best way of discovering one's social style was from other people through feedback.

Table 5.1. shows the participants from parts 1 and 2 of the main study.

Table 5.1. Participants in the main study, parts 1 and 2 (source: author).

Transcripts (T) from interviews	Gender	Age bracket	Job role (level)	Highest qualification	KAM experience	Region	Company
T1	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	U/Degree	10+ Years	National	Pharma
T2	Male	18–39	KAM (Middle)	U/Degree	-10 Years	National	Office Supplies
T3	Male	40–59	KAM (Middle)	School Level	-10 Years	SW	Pharma
T4	Female	18–39	KAM (Senior)	School Level	-10 Years	National	Pharma
T5	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	U/Degree	10+ Years	O/S UK	Pharma
T6	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	U/Degree	10+ Years	Midlands	Healthcare
T7	Female	40–59	KAM (director+)	U/Degree	10+ Years	National	Pharma
T8	Male	40–59	KAM (Middle)	Postgrad Degree	-10 Years	SE	Pharma
T9	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	School Level	10+ Years	SE	IT/Software
T10	Male	60+	KAM (Senior)	School Level	10+ Years	SE	IT/Software
T11	Male	60+	Buyer (Senior)	School Level	10+ Years	SE	Finance
T12	Female	40–59	KAM (Director+)	Postgrad Degree	10+ Years	National	Healthcare
T13	Male	40–59	Buyer (Director+)	U/Degree	-10 Years	Midlands	Pharma
T14	Female	40–59	KAM (Director+)	School Level	10+ Years	National	Pharma
T15	Male	60+	Buyer (Director+)	School Level	10+ Years	National	Pharma

For verification and triangulation purposes, each buyer respondent was connected to the KAM respondents, shown in table 5.2.

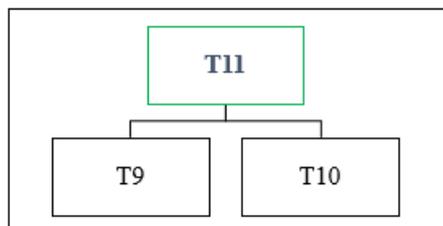


Figure 5.2. T11 buyer, prospective KAMs T9 and T10 (source: author).

T11 was a buyer of IT software in a large banking institution operating internationally and located in Canary Wharf, London. T9 and T10 were KAMs who had worked with the buyer for more than 3 years.

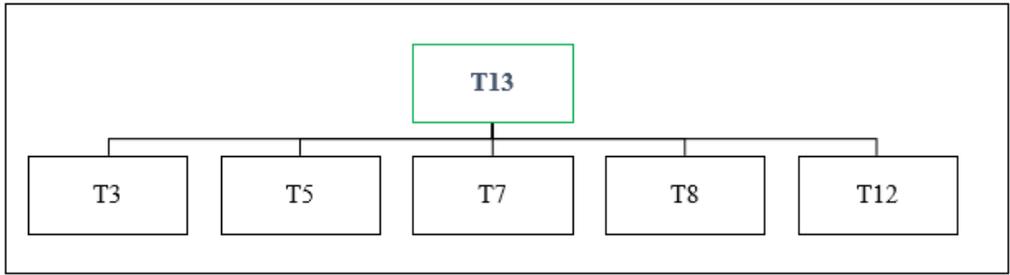


Figure 5.3. T13 buyer, prospective KAMs T3, T5, T7, T8 and T12 (source: author).

T13 was a buyer in pharmaceutical and healthcare training services operating nationally and located in Northamptonshire. T3, T5, T7, T8 and T12 were KAMs who had worked with the buyer for no less than 3 years.

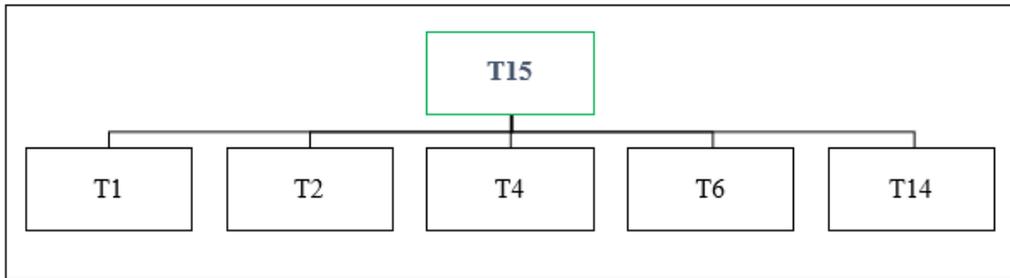


Figure 5.4. T15 buyer, prospective KAMs T1, T2, T4, T6 and T14 (source: author).

T15 was a buyer in pharmaceutical and healthcare services operating nationally and located in Devon. T1, T2, T4, T6 and T14 were KAMs who had worked with the buyer for no less than 3 years.

5.2. Main study, part 1, survey results

The first part of the main study commenced with the survey examining demographic and personal social style characteristic in questions from one to seven; the questions related to gender, age, qualifications, KAM experience, management level, regional location and personal social style characteristics.

Appendix D, table 5.7 shows the demographic results from question one to six which is useful for future studies but not relevant to the research questions. Example histograms in figure 5.5 for KAMs and in figure 5.6 for buyers show gender comparison charts for the opening question in the main survey. Male participants made up 67% of total participants, which accounted for 8 KAMs out of 12, and all 3 buyers were male. However, when examining KAMs responses further, females’ responses were 10% higher than for the exploratory survey. The results depicted were also rounded up and were as accurate as possible.

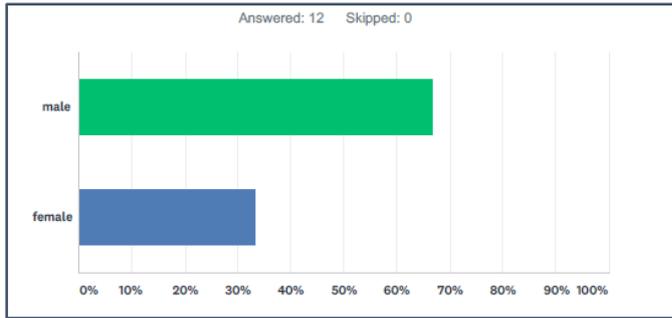


Figure 5.5. Main study, KAMs, gender comparison results (source: author).

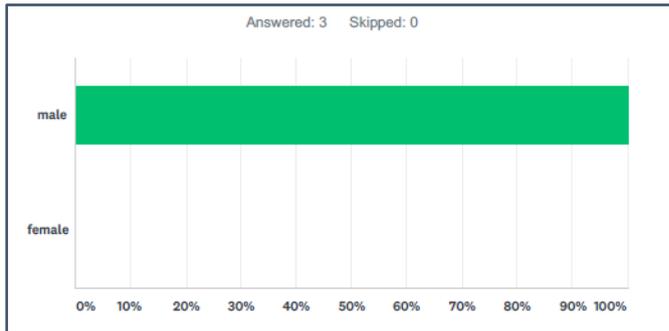


Figure 5.6. Main study, buyer, gender comparison results (source: author).

The social style results from question 7, main study survey, part 1 features in table 5.7.

Table 5.7. Main study survey, part 1, social style results synopsis (source: author).

No.	Question	Options	Results summary														
Q7.	Which of these lists best describes you at work? Please show how far you agree with them on a scale from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 6 for Strongly Agree.	<input type="checkbox"/> Results <input type="checkbox"/> Precision <input type="checkbox"/> Fun <input type="checkbox"/> Friendship	<p>A Likert scale weighting and Bolton and Bolton's (1984) social style listings without the prescriptive headings were applied to the results, which showed that for KAMs the top 5 average weightings were results, job satisfaction, recognition of expertise and finally acceptance and independence, as seen in table 5.8.</p> <p>Table 5.8. Main study, KAMs' social style highest ave. weightings.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Overall KAMs' highest average weightings</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Motivations</th> <th>Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Results</td> <td>5.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Job Satisfaction</td> <td>5.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Recognition of Expertise</td> <td>5.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Acceptance</td> <td>5.17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Independence</td> <td>5.17</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Overall KAMs' highest average weightings		Motivations	Weighting	1. Results	5.50	2. Job Satisfaction	5.33	3. Recognition of Expertise	5.25	4. Acceptance	5.17	4. Independence	5.17
Overall KAMs' highest average weightings																	
Motivations	Weighting																
1. Results	5.50																
2. Job Satisfaction	5.33																
3. Recognition of Expertise	5.25																
4. Acceptance	5.17																
4. Independence	5.17																

			<p>The results stated similar findings to those in the exploratory survey, which were that KAMs main social style characteristics were self-reported as results orientated and precision orientated. However, it must also be noted that when examining each of the respondent's surveys' in greater detail and considering all the answers, not just the top 5 highest average weightings, the results indicated that social style was self-reported more as precision/results/amiable orientated, so the results were not conclusive.</p> <p>Nonetheless, it must be noted that the survey was exploratory and further research was required to draw a conclusion due to Bolton and Bolton's (1984) admission that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style by conventionally recommended methods and that the best way of discovering one's social style was to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format or by using specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles. However, the buyers did verify each of their prospective KAMs responses.</p> <p>Moreover, the results highlighted inconsequential disparities regarding demographics and sometimes the chronological order varied with each demographic question, the overall findings were similar, resulting in the top 5 highest average weightings affirming the preference 'driver' with results and independence. This was followed by 'precision' with job satisfaction and recognition of expertise. This was then followed by 'amiable' with acceptance, and finally 'expressive', with independence.</p> <p>The exploratory survey showed that over 86% of participants, totalling 61 out of 71, were self-reported as results or precision orientated. The survey concluded that 44% were self-reported as results orientated, with 31 responses, and 42% were self-reported as precision orientated, with 30 responses. The only difference between the main survey and the exploratory survey was that the main survey included buyers to verify KAMs social style survey responses. Also, prescriptive headings were taken out to limit bias, which in the author's view helped support the conclusions; nonetheless this made the process more complicated because interpretation was more difficult to define. Finally, when reviewing the procurement analysis, all 3 male buyers' highest average weightings were for independence, job satisfaction, acceptance, correctness, fun, enjoyment and prestige of expertise, followed by recognition of expertise, as shown in table 5.9.</p> <p>Table 5.9. Main study, buyer social style highest ave. weightings.</p>
--	--	--	--

			<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Overall buyers' highest average weightings</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Motivation</th> <th>Weighting</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Independence</td> <td>5.67</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1. Job Satisfaction</td> <td>5.67</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Acceptance</td> <td>5.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Correctness</td> <td>5.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Fun and Enjoyment</td> <td>5.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Prestige of Expertise</td> <td>5.33</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Recognition of Expertise</td> <td>5.33</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In summary, precision orientated was the self-reported social style preference for the procurement sample, with key factors being job satisfaction, correctness and recognition of expertise. Driver followed, with independence and prestige of expertise, and expressive came next, with independence and fun and enjoyment. Amiable followed, with acceptance. Nonetheless, the demographics highlighted minor differences and sometimes the chronological order varied with each demographic question, but overall, the findings were similar; this was also the case when examining each of the respondent's surveys in greater detail and considering all survey answers, not just the top 5 highest average weightings. However, the sample for buyers was too small to make a meaningful comparison; the data was gathered merely for exploratory purposes and to add value to the study.</p>	Overall buyers' highest average weightings		Motivation	Weighting	1. Independence	5.67	1. Job Satisfaction	5.67	2. Acceptance	5.33	2. Correctness	5.33	2. Fun and Enjoyment	5.33	2. Prestige of Expertise	5.33	2. Recognition of Expertise	5.33
Overall buyers' highest average weightings																					
Motivation	Weighting																				
1. Independence	5.67																				
1. Job Satisfaction	5.67																				
2. Acceptance	5.33																				
2. Correctness	5.33																				
2. Fun and Enjoyment	5.33																				
2. Prestige of Expertise	5.33																				
2. Recognition of Expertise	5.33																				

Main study survey, part 1 conclusion

The results of the main survey for demographic and personal social style characteristics involved a total of 15 participants, which included 12 KAMs and 3 buyers. In summary, the KAMs sample was predominantly male, aged between 40 and 59, held a university or postgraduate degree and had more than 10 years' experience. The majority of KAMs also considered themselves to be in senior to director+ level roles as opposed to in middle- to director+ level roles; this was also stated in the exploratory survey.

The social style motivators reinforced the findings in the exploratory survey that KAMs were results/precision-orientated; this orientation was in the top 5 highest average weightings. However, after reviewing each respondent in detail the results were not conclusive and the mean average merely reflected precision/results/amiabile-orientated. Bolton and Bolton (1984) admit that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style so in order to verify KAMs self-reported social styles the buyers were asked to state whether the social style reported was true for that key account manager. It must also be noted that it could be argued that social styles that appeared in the findings do not fully fit with SDL and co-creation as their self-reported social style was driver/analytical which is noted by Bolton and Bolton (1984), figure 2.10 (p. 46), as less responsive and task oriented which may also suggest an evolutionary change in approach. The social styles associated with being more responsive and people oriented is expressive/amiabile which suggests that identifying social styles is more complex than first thought.

When analysing the results further, anomalies were recognised, one of which contradicted an area in the exploratory survey indicating that 67% of females suggested they were in middle-level roles compared to only 16% of males, with 74% of males considering themselves in senior to director+ level positions. Nonetheless, the main study showed a similar figure to the exploratory survey regarding males; however, the main study, in contrast to the exploratory survey, showed that all females stated they were in senior to director+ level roles. Another interesting anomaly occurred with participants holding school-level qualifications, which showed that 80% were in senior to director+ level roles and that 60% of those had 10 or more years' experience. Of those with a degree, 71% were in senior to director+ level roles, and 71% had 10 or more years' experience. Moreover, an anomaly occurred relating to working location; the results indicated that 83% of KAMs worked nationally, which was not an option in the exploratory survey but was included in the main study, mainly due to receiving feedback from participants who completed the exploratory survey. While the anomalies identified were interesting and required further investigations, the role level will be examined again during interviews along with the analysis of KAM job descriptions. The working location was not considered a major factor in the study; nonetheless, it is an interesting subject and a pattern emerged regarding with seniority level and a National working location, but this required more in-depth research to enable conclusions to be drawn.

Regarding the buyers' demographics and characteristics, they tended to be males aged 60 or over with school-level qualifications but with 10 years' or more experience, working at senior to director+ level roles. Their regional location could not be defined, but their self-reported social style was predominantly precision orientated. However, it must be noted that this sample was too small for a meaningful comparison and therefore gathering this information was done for exploratory purposes only. In addition, Bolton and Bolton (1984) stated that the best way of discovering one's social style was to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format or by using specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles. As stated earlier, it must also be noted that it could be argued that current social styles for the buyers noted in the findings do not fully fit with SDL and co-creation.

5.3. Main study, part 2, AI interview synopsis

Part 2 of the main study is centred around questions based on the 10 FP of SDL of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and questions relating to the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006). While these forms of questions were pivotal to this study, some questions asked for opinions on CSFs from both KAMs and buyers. The transcript of the interview with T1 appears in appendix C.

To reduce bias, Nvivo was used for thematic analysis and each interview was recorded and transcribed and then downloaded into Nvivo; the nodes selected were used as a framework and for simplicity were based on the FP of SDL created by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). In addition to the 10 FP, question 11 was included merely to understand what, according to the participants, makes good KAMs. Table 5.10 shows the interviewees and the number of Nvivo nodes used for analysis.

Table 5.10. Main study, part 2, AI interview synopsis (source: author).

Transcripts (T) from interviews	Gender	Age bracket	Job role (level)	Highest qualification	KAM experience	Company	Nodes (references)
T1	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	University Degree	10+ Years	Pharma	41
T2	Male	18–39	KAM (Middle)	University Degree	-10 Years	Office Supplies	29
T3	Male	40–59	KAM (Middle)	School Level	-10 Years	Pharma	43
T4	Female	18–39	KAM (Senior)	School Level	-10 Years	Pharma	31
T5	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	University Degree	10+ Years	Pharma	45
T6	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	University Degree	10+ Years	Healthcare	47
T7	Female	40–59	KAM (Director+)	University Degree	10+ Years	Pharma	54
T8	Male	40–59	KAM (Middle)	Post Grad Degree	-10 Years	Pharma	50
T9	Male	40–59	KAM (Senior)	School Level	10+ Years	IT/Software	60
T10	Male	60+	KAM (Senior)	School Level	10+ Years	IT/Software	32
T11	Male	60+	Buyer (Senior)	School Level	10+ Years	Banking	38
T12	Female	40–59	KAM (Director+)	Post Grad Degree	10+ Years	Healthcare	41
T13	Male	40–59	Buyer (Director+)	University Degree	-10 Years	Pharma	41
T14	Female	40–59	KAM (Director+)	School Level	10+ Years	Pharma	55
T15	Male	60+	Buyer (Director+)	School Level	10+ Years	Pharma	39
						Total	646

The table in 5.11 displays the number of nodes (references) pertinent to each FP along with question 11; most of the nodes received were from question 11, FP1, FP2, FP8 and FP4.

Table 5.11. FP-based questions and number of nodes (references) obtained (source: author).

FP no.	FP question	Number of nodes
FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.	100
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.	79
FP3	Goods are a distribution mechanism for service.	47
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage.	59
FP5	All economies are service economies.	35
FP6	The customer is always the co-creator of value.	35
FP7	The enterprise cannot deliver, but can only offer value propositions.	29
FP8	A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational.	65
FP9	All social and economic actors are resource integrators.	35
FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.	38
Q11.	What makes a good KAM?	124
	Total	646

5.4. Main study, KAMs AI interviews, thematic analysis

T1 interview, themes identified (full transcript p. 211)

The thematic analysis clearly showed parallels with the literature regarding the definition of KAM changing over time; T1 noted that pharmaceutical companies 20-30 years ago focused on ‘legacy brands, or established brands’ whereas the last 2 years focused more on partnership working with customers. The new way of working provided solutions with customers by joint working and being empowered by senior management to make decisions. T1 noted that customers tended to work with them due to the quality of service, which was underpinned by partnership working and arriving at a solution together to best suit customers. The respondent was also keen to establish that the company they worked for empowered them and that their role was to develop concepts and ideas that aimed to grow the business. They emphasised that they were business led and that marketing and other functions were there to support their plans with customers to drive the business.

T1 indicated that the relationship with customers was more important than transactional sales in KAM, as was coming up with simple solutions to complex problems that are often historical or even inherited. The respondent elaborated regarding the importance of freedom, having empowerment and the spiritual part of belonging to the organisation, describing this as a ‘real labour of love’.

While T1 indicated that compensation was important, the values of the company and recognition from the company, along with other people listening, supporting and contributing, were too. He added:

Empowerment is probably the most important but then running a close second is level of compensation and then people you work with. I don't necessarily have a manager, I have a reporting line that gives me empowerment.

T1 described the spirit of the company and the way it did business in terms of agility and nimbleness being the fundamental basis of its competitive advantage, which reflected the exploratory survey regarding goods being a distribution mechanism for service provision.

It was clear when reviewing operant resources that, as in the exploratory survey, cooperation with the customer was important because it added value by giving a competitive advantage. T1 reaffirmed the importance of the partnership and empowerment, enabling innovation and creativity, to deliver value propositions, with the customer's input and often cross-functional teams supporting the process. T1 also suggested that the economy was based on service and that the four pillars are patience, trust, reputation and business, which according to T1 fitted in well with their moral compass and their spirituality. He went on to say:

I do not talk market share to customers, I talk share of patients, because patients are the people we are helping and there is nothing more warming when you find a patient who is receiving our drug and getting better with a drug that your company made.

While T1 stated that the customer creates the value, they added that they design campaigns that aimed to enable them to talk to customers and to work together to achieve the same aligned objectives/outcomes. Furthermore, the respondent stated that:

The value created is more of a value to them in terms of how they feel about the product and what it does. The value to us is growth and increased access; the value to the patient is that they are given something that has been prescribed for the right reasons.

Similar to the findings in the exploratory survey, T1 noted that the product or service they were selling dictated the quality of the strategic relationship. Also, the role gets more complex the higher up the company the project gets and selling in and implementation becomes more difficult. T1 also noted that value was determined by the customer, that the customer creates the value and that they work with the customer to find the true value, noting that 'the value has to be seen as what is the outcome the customer is looking for'.

T1 stated that having empowerment and the ability to make decisions at a higher level was important for KAMs, along with working cross-functionally within internal/external teams. T1 observed that it was also important to be able to put together business cases with value-added services that were developed with customers, to be self-motivated, ingenious, engaged, and business like and to ask the customer what it was they wanted or needed. Furthermore 'you might be great at building relationships but if you're not adding value the customer will stop seeing you at some point. You might be great at presenting business processes or business cases, external or internal, but you may be no good at implementation, so you are really a small businessman.'

Table 5.12. T1 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T1 Themes identified - Male, 40-59 yrs, senior, degree, pharma, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Self-motivated, empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative, cross-functional and partnership approach and have the ability to build relationships and work within cross-functional teams. The ability to work with commitment, transparency, innovation, passion, ingenuity, fairness, honesty, agility, perseverance and integrity must be underpinned by a drive for results.
Company themes	A transparent, innovative company working in a fair, honest and agile way with integrity, underpinned by a supportive environment offering good compensation. A supportive leadership, like those described as transformational, supports service and co-creational approaches and embraces partnership working.
T1 social style	Results/precision-orientated.

In summary, T1's responses were comparable to those in the exploratory survey which showed the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation noted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The interview captured a shifting contemporary thought about KAM, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships. FP4 and FP6 were also clear to see regarding knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the view that the customer created the value.

The results revealed evolutionary changes and there appeared to be a distinct change in focus to co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move towards SDL also defining KAM. The survey findings in part 1 regarding social styles showed that results- and precision-orientated motivators were the most common, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required for firmer conclusions to be drawn.

T2 interview, themes identified

T2 affirmed that the quality of service they offered was unique because they offered supply consolidation solutions along with efficiencies, reducing overall costs, deliveries and invoicing. Congruently, T2 worked in partnership with the customer to find their requirements and then adapted innovative solutions to support them. Compensation was also important to T2; their sales incentives were directly linked to their salaries, and though good relationships and partnership working was vital, T2 was drawn to the company by the flatline management structure that provided an open and honest culture and a support network.

T2 stated that customers had confirmed, when they evaluated overall provision, that the way the company does business was the most important thing and that they listen to and understand customers' needs and put in place bespoke solutions to include 'fantastic' offerings, supporting customer requirements. In addition, T2 confirmed that their company had a special division that can source any product for their customers, giving them a competitive advantage; nonetheless, it was also suggested that their company's flat management structure and supportive leadership styles provided the same advantage.

T2 also stated that the company's service economy was underpinned by their own individual KPIs, which interlinked with other functions within their business structure. In essence, all the company's systems, processes and people were geared towards its customers. While T2 suggested that their sales force was trained to ask the right questions to secure business opportunities and create value, it was also apparent that without their customers' collaboration, they could only offer value propositions;

Having service-level agreements (SLA) was a process used by T2's company to add value in the supply chain, along with developing bespoke reporting. However, value, according to T2, was determined/judged by the customer and could only be of benefit if it was coupled with collaborative working. Furthermore: 'you can present a value-added proposition to them, but they will look and decide what value they require.'

T2 explained that autonomy, empowerment, collaborative working and building good relationships were essential for KAMs. T2 indicated that fully understanding customer requirements was vital, together with developing solutions and having a supportive manager who empowered, mentored and guided.

Table 5.13. T2 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T2 Themes identified - Male, 18-39 yrs, middle, degree, office supplies to pharma, -10 yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative, cross-functional and partnership approach and have the ability to build relationships and work within cross-functional teams with KPIs. The ability to work with commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, agility, perseverance and integrity must also be underpinned by a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with a flat management structure. Compensation and KPIs in the form of scorecards were primarily linked to sales. The line manager had a supportive leadership approach, the company had a supportive environment. Service and a co-creational approach embraced partnership working and a good support network.
T2 social style	Results/precision-orientated.

In conclusion, T2's statements were analogous to those of T1 and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL noted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) that caused a move towards co-creation. Also, FP4 and FP6 were conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being vital to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value. KPI's and scorecards were also mentioned which also supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

To conclude, the interview suggested that there was a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The finding regarding social styles that were in part 1 of the main survey was that results- and precision-orientated motivators were the most common, but this part was exploratory, and further research would be required for robust conclusions to be drawn.

T3 interview, themes identified

The thematic analysis again showed similarities with the themes revealed in the exploratory survey. According to T3, they provided a good quality of service and distribution, had comprehensive knowledge, excellent leadership and a cross-functional setting, which promoted openness and transparency. T3 reiterated the importance of autonomy in a multifaceted role. It was clear that a good relationship with the customer and being trusted by the company were important and empowered them, and that they had full support from senior management; this describes a leadership style like that described as transformational. Moreover, T3 stated that 'no one wins, unless everyone wins'.

In addition, T3 stated that cross-functional working and supporting their overall service provisions was essential; this included support for the product, the service and partnership. Also, in-depth knowledge gained through planning and being flexible and agile, along with interactions with customers, provided the company with a competitive advantage. T3 suggested that the economy was based on service and the way the company offered the service, but stated that the customer dictated the solution/requirements and was therefore the co-creator of value. T3 also suggested that providing a bespoke service with integrity, loyalty and honesty was important.

T3 confirmed that the value added by those in the supply chain was important to how business was conducted. T3 also confirmed the importance of knowing, understanding and appreciating where the customer was and emphasised the importance of collaboration between internal and external teams. In addition, T3 stated that value was determined/judged by the customer and noted the importance of relationships with the customer and working collaboratively to support and understand where the value specifically was for the customer.

T3 also stated that having empowerment, experience, in-depth knowledge and being able to deliver business plans in a collaborative and cross-functional working environment were essential for KAMs. T3 also indicated the importance of a supportive manager and described the necessary management style as that like that of a transformational leadership style that supported decisions made, noting that it was essential to have 'the ability to stand back sometimes. You don't become a good key account manager because you can't foster relationships and you're not trusted.'

Table 5.14. T3 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T3 Themes identified - Male, 40-59 yrs, middle, school level qualifications, pharma, -10 yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative, cross-functional and partnership approach and have the ability to build relationships and work within cross-functional teams with commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, agility, perseverance and integrity, which should be underpinned by a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and loyalty. There must also be a supportive leadership approach and a supportive environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T3 social style	Precision/results-orientated.

In summary, T3's responses were comparable to those of T1 and T2 and all responses in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL created by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) that caused a move towards co-creation. Similarly, FP4 and FP6 were conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value, and also supported the conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

The conclusions showed a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The social style survey findings in part 1 indicated precision- and results-orientated; nonetheless, further research would be required for firmer conclusions to be drawn.

T4 interview, themes identified

Corresponding with their answers in the exploratory survey, T4 stated that the quality of service the company offered included cross-functional and collaborative working with an empowering culture. The relationship with the company was important in KAM and having empowerment and accountability supported the process of building a relationship, along with working with honesty and integrity and being trusted to carry out the role. T4 added that it was also important that: 'Trust and making sure that the communication is there along with the empowerment and engagement.'

According to T4, service and co-creation were important facets, not just commercial and financial ones; they also involved finding new ways of working, engaging and persevering with joint offerings adding value. Cross-functional working and 'thinking outside of the box' supported knowledge and helped gain a competitive advantage.

T4 also stated that the economy was based on service and it was a service economy. Furthermore, the value was driven by the customer, and therefore the customer was the co-creator of value and T4's role was to engage and provide solutions. In addition, T4 affirmed that when delivering value 'we need to broaden our strategy to give customers more value', and while their dealings with customers were based on relationships, ultimately, trust, engagement, understanding and joint working were fundamental.

T4 suggested that the supply chain environment was important but that engagement and cross-functional and collaborative working underpinned this. Furthermore, value was determined/judged by the customer, adding: 'you must adapt as a company to what the customer needs, but then it's what the customer needs that determines the value.' Also, T4 stated that good communication skills, trust and the ability to work collaboratively in cross-functional teams were important to be successful as a KAM. T4 reiterated that knowledge about the company, the product, the market and the competition were also important, along with believing in the company that you are working for.

Table 5.15. T4 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T4 Themes identified - Female, 18-39 yrs, senior, school level qualifications, pharma, -10 yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. They should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative, cross-functional and partnership approach and have the ability to build relationships and work within cross-functional teams with commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, agility, perseverance and integrity, which should be underpinned by a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and loyalty. A supportive leadership approach and environment along with service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T4 social style	Precision/results-orientated.

In conclusion, T4's responses were comparable to those of T1, T2 and T3 and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that lead to co-creation drafted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). FP4 and FP6 were also conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value.

The conclusions suggested that there has been a change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The findings regarding social styles in part 1 of the initial survey indicated that precision- and results-orientated motivators were the most common, but this survey was exploratory and further investigations would be required for robust conclusions to be drawn.

T5 interview, themes identified

T5 stated that the strategy was important for delivering products along with a high level of service and communicating the right message; however, a good quality level of service and availability was also paramount. Also, the relationship with the customer was important in KAM as was delivering on promises made to the customer. T5 also noted that autonomy and doing the job correctly in line with business plans satisfactorily was important, that is, delivering according to the plans and expectations of the customer and, essentially, delivering the service and business in collaboration with the customer.

Furthermore, T5 suggested that knowledge, experience, management skills and a supportive flatline management structure helped gain a competitive advantage. Also, agreeing business plans developed with the customer’s input and contributions aids joint working implementations. He noted: ‘having the right plan, that suited customer needs, working out the strategy to achieve that and basically disseminating that strategy, and what the result would look like, and what had to be done to achieve that through sales force activity.’ Additionally, T5 noted that the economy was based on service; while the role entailed creating the service and delivering on what the customer required, it was underpinned by a service economy and the customer was always the co-creator of value. He said that ‘the customer has to create the value’ as the customer is the co-creator of value.

T5 also noted that trust, partnership and joint working to deliver value were about constantly adapting to the customer’s environment and ‘working with them with more collaboration’. The same applied to customer orientation, according to T5, along with having no hidden agenda regarding developing relations. T5 also stated that the supply chain and the environment creating value were reliant on collaborative and joint working and value was determined/judged by the customer, although most of the time this was achieved in a subliminal collaborative manner. Moreover, T5 confirmed that trust, autonomy, listening skills, enthusiasm and the ability to work collaboratively and to develop customer relationships were essential for KAMs. Also, T5 noted that leadership skills, knowledge, experience and expertise, along with the confidence to challenge customers appropriately were also necessary.

Table 5.16. T5 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T5 Themes identified - Male, 40-59 yrs, senior, degree, pharma, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. They should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen and negotiate. They also need to be able to work using a collaborative, cross-functional and partnership approach and have the ability to build relationships and work within cross-functional teams with commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, agility, perseverance and integrity, which should be underpinned by working experience and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and loyalty. A supportive leadership approach and environment along with service and a co-creational approach to embrace partnership working.
T5 social style	Results/precision-orientated.

In summary, T5's responses were comparable to those of T1 to T4 inclusive, and although an excerpt from T5's interview quoted earlier noted that they thought the customer has to create the value, therefore the customer was in contrast to the notion of co-creation, later on in the interview T5 confirmed that value was determined/judged by the customer but that most of the time this was achieved in a subliminal collaborative manner by working together, and this, like the exploratory survey findings, supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation described by Lusch and Vargo (2006). FP4 and FP6 were decisive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value.

To conclude, there seemed to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The findings regarding social styles in part 1 of the survey was results- and precision-orientated, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required to draw firmer conclusions.

T6 interview, themes identified

Corresponding with the answers given in the exploratory survey findings T6 stated that customers chose to work with their company based on the quality of service, trust, honesty, meeting customer expectations arising from collaborative working and meeting customer needs; developing customer relationships supported this last process. Moreover, he observed:

You can have a product that the customer wants, but if they don't like you, you're not able to build a good rapport, the chances are they are not going to take the product from you. You've got to be able to get on well with the customer, understand them; listening, that's probably one of the most important things, listen to the customer.

According to T6, the relationship with the customer was important in KAM; to support the process of building this relationship it was vital to have autonomy, trust, confidence and good management support, such as a mentor to look up and aspire to; this description of management is similar to the style described as transformational in the literature. T6 also noted that confidence in the product, service and company was important, as was the way they do business, with input from customers, noting that 'service always has to be there regardless of the type of goods; it has to be a certain level, it's a given'. Also, T6 stated that cross-functional working internally supported knowledge and interactions with customers that led to competitive advantage.

T6 noted that he worked in a service economy and that there were a great deal of competitors, so service was essential and the customer was the co-creator of value, observing that 'the customer is king.' T6 stated that listening to customer requirements, tailoring solutions to meet these and working together to provide solutions were essential. The same applied to delivering value; this can only be achieved with trust, understanding and close relationships. Equally, T6 noted that good relationships support dealings with customers and stated that integrity and managing customer expectations, along with working within the bounds of ethics, improve outcomes, citing that 'if customers get on with you, and trust you, they will work with you'. T6 also confirmed that the supply chain and environment were important and being able to provide a service competitively was vital, observing that 'you're able to reach out and work to the pinnacle of your role as a KAM'.

Furthermore, T6 stated: ‘you have to make sure you are able to supply what the customer wants and if you can’t supply what the customer wants then you haven’t got a business.’ T6 also suggested that value was determined by the customer and noted that listening skills, planning, trust, developing relationships and the ability to work collaboratively were essential for KAMs. Furthermore, cross-functional working and knowledge about competitors, working with integrity and having a manager who mentored and supported and one that a key account manager can aspire to be like was also vital, according to T6. The leadership style described by T6 was similar to that defined as transformational.

Table 5.17. T6 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T6 Themes identified - Male, 40-59 yrs, senior, degree, healthcare, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. They should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative and relational working style involving cross-functional and partnership working and have the ability to build relationships and work within internal and external teams with commitment, confidence, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance and integrity, which should be underpinned by working experience and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and loyalty. A supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T6 social style	Precision/amiable-orientated.

In conclusion, T6’s responses were comparable to those of T1 to T5 inclusive and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation defined by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). Furthermore, the context described by the respondents supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006) and reinforced the fact that the customer was the co-creator of value, and that it was important to gain knowledge through interaction with the customer to gain a competitive advantage.

The conclusions suggested that there has been a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The findings regarding social styles showed that precision- and amiable-orientated motivators were the most common, which was different from previous respondents who stated results- and precision-orientated; nonetheless, this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required to draw firmer conclusions.

T7 interview, themes identified

T7 stated that providing a good quality of service involved working collaboratively to help customers achieve their overall objectives by uncovering customer values and requirements and fulfilling their needs. Furthermore, T7 confirmed that they were a provider of a service rather than just selling; it was more about working together. T7 stated:

The customers see the benefits that you can actually bring to their organisation and then they actually ask for your help to roll that out.

In addition, T7 affirmed the importance of trust, having empowerment and working in partnerships to develop relationships underpinned KAM. T7 also noted that their organisation enabled autonomy and trusts the decisions made because of KAMs’ integrity, honesty and values. T7 also stated that adaptability and listening skills were important for KAM, along with cross-functional and partnership working abilities, including interpersonal skills and working with empathy, empowerment and innovation. T7 also reiterated that the way they do business revolved around service, finding the customers’ requirements and adapting to them, working with people with honesty and integrity, and ‘living up to expectations’.

T7 stated that cross-functional working internal and external to the company, along with partnership working, aided innovation and ideas supported knowledge and that the economy which was based on service and working together. According to T7, the customer was the co-creator of value. T7 stated that their company could deliver provided their customers provided input and worked with them in partnership. In addition, T7 noted that customer orientation meant adapting to customers with integrity and applying SDL, observing, ‘I want them to get value, in return for their time.’ T7 also confirmed that partnership working with integrity in a collaborative manner supported their supply chain environment. They also stated that value was determined/judged by the customer, adding that ‘it’s their ideas, and it works’. Even so, T7 also indicated that KAMs bring ingenuity to the customer.

Table 5.18. T7 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T7 Themes identified - Female, 40-59 yrs, director+, degree, pharma, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative style involving cross-functional and partnership working and have the ability to build relationships and work within internal and external teams with commitment, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance and integrity, which should be underpinned by a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and loyalty. A supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T7 social style	Results/precision-orientated.

In summary, T7's responses were analogous to those of T1 to T6 inclusive and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). Moreover, the interview and the context of T7's work supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

To conclude, there seemed to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the survey showed that results- and precision-orientated motivators were the most common, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required to draw meaningful conclusions.

T8 interview, themes identified

T8 confirmed that joint working with empowerment and the company having a good reputation and being nimble and agile regarding process and action explained why customers chose to work with them. Furthermore, according to T8, the relationship with the customer was important in KAM and 'building good relations with customers' and service flexibility was vital. T8 went on to say that cross-functional and collaborative working with internal/external teams was important, as was the way they did business within the service economy. Additionally, cross-functional working supported knowledge transfer within departments with key individuals. T8 noted:

We have to work with a partner with the local health economy so it's not just about providing the goods, but it's a wrap around service, so patient education as well and medical education for doctors and nurses as well.

T8 reaffirmed that the customer was the co-creator of value and noted the importance of working in partnership and engaging customers regarding the whole service delivery. Interestingly, T8 also stated that delivering value means having robust processes in place so the company can work more quickly and efficiently. While, T8 reiterated that partnership working and good relationships with customers supported customer orientation and that the supply chain environment created value, which was underpinned by working in partnership. T8 also stated that value was determined/judged by the customer and it was all about joint working and having empathy with the customer noting:

It is virtually impossible to deliver value without the customer.

Furthermore, T8 stated that empowerment, integrity, innovation, accountability, cross-functional and collaborative working were essential for KAMs, as was people skills, the ability to develop customer relations with empathy, and project management, organisational and strategic skills.

Table 5.19. T8 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T8 Themes identified - Male, 40-59 yrs, middle, post grad degree, pharma, -10 yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative and strategic working style that includes partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, as well as commitment, innovation, passion, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with a supportive leadership approach and environment and a service and co-creational approach that embraces partnership working.
T8 social style	Precision/amiable-orientated.

In summary, T8's responses were like those of T1 to T7 inclusive and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a). Also, the interview and context of T8's work supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation by Lusch and Vargo (2006) reinforcing the fact that the customer was the co-creator of value and the importance of gaining knowledge through interaction with the customer to gain a competitive advantage.

The conclusions confirmed a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the main survey showed that precision- and amiable-orientated motivators were the most common, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required to develop robust conclusions.

T9 interview, themes identified

T9 affirmed that the quality of service offered underpinned an approach requiring a collaborative, cross-functional style that involved KAMs working with empowerment, accountability and responsibility. T9 also stated that a supportive senior management culture helped to deliver and build successful relationships, noting that 'although there are two different teams working with separate organisations, it's essentially one team working towards a common goal, really, to achieve the objectives of the company that we are selling to'. In addition, T9 noted that the customer relationship was important in KAM and that to develop relationships being empowered and having autonomy were required, along with the skills needed to understand the customer's requirements, which may involve cross-functional working to develop solutions. T9 said:

Enabling me to go out and build these relationships with customers to find out what their needs and requirements are, then going back to our organisation, sitting down having a meeting, explain what it is we need to achieve and everybody in the business to work to that common goal.

T9 also noted the importance of trust, openness and confidence when working in a service economy and linked customers with service. According to T9, Delivering the solutions to the customer lead to the desired results, which was necessary to satisfy customers with a partnership approach to achieve objectives. In addition, T9 suggested that the customer led the process and that their role was to provide the knowledge and information, which often involved cross-functional working and bringing teams together, enabling them to ‘bring their own strengths to it, to come up with a solution.’ A further comment noted that during ‘work with their internal teams and ours together, which required speaking to technical, support and finance, I was then leading the whole process.’

T9 reiterated that the economy was based on service and that this was achieved by partnership working, underpinned by trust and working towards the same goals. Additionally, T9 noted that the customer was the co-creator of value and led the process, observing that ‘my role is to understand their needs and requirements and work with them to develop the solution.’ Furthermore, T9 quoted that ‘they have the idea very often in the first instance of what they need, and obviously then it involves the project management team to work with all colleagues from both sides of the companies.’ T9 stated that delivering value required trusted collaborative working and understanding and that customer orientation was achieved by developing good working relationships with integrity and understanding.

In addition, T9 stated that KAM required organisational skills, including project management and cross-functional working, to support processes. According to T9, working in partnerships in a supportive setting helped the supply chain and environment to create value and value was determined/judged by the customer. T9 also noted that their role was to work with the customer to understand what they needed to do, and to work together to develop the solutions, noting that ‘the customer determines the value.’ Similarly, to previous KAMs, T9 stated that having empowerment was important and having accountability and being able to problem solve with good communications, along with the ability to listen to and understand customer needs to achieve a resolution. Resolution required project management which often involved joint and cross-functional working, with a line manager who guided, mentored and supported.

Table 5.20. T9 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T9 Themes identified - Male, 40-59 yrs, senior, school level qualifications, IT software, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate. They also needed a collaborative and strategic working style that included partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, as well as commitment, innovation, passion, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with a supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T9 social style	Precision/amiable-orientated.

In summary, T9's responses were like those of T1 to T8 inclusive and the findings in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). FP4 and FP6 were also decisive about the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer, and the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage. The conceptual transitions concepts also resonated confirming a move from GDL to SDL to co-creation as described by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

To conclude, there was a move towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the main survey showed that precision- and amiable-orientated motivators were the most common, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required to develop robust conclusions.

T10 interview, themes identified

T10 stated that relationship building using a collaborative, cross-functional approach was why customers chose to work with them and their company; other reasons were that the company enabled empowerment, was accountable and responsible and had experience of delivering implementations successfully. T10 also reiterated that the relationship with the customer was important in KAM and that having empowerment together with being experienced and having expertise helped to support this. Also, cross-functional working and providing support, knowledge, leadership and project management achieved the best for customers, including tailoring solutions through interactions that provided them with a competitive advantage.

T10 affirmed that the economy is based on service and that the way they worked in partnership with customers and trust, coordination and collaborative working were important, along with project management concerning budgets, time frames and completion dates. According to T10, the customer was always the co-creator of value because they led the process and held the budgets. Delivering value was achieved by partnership and cross-functional working. T10 also noted that customer orientation and supply chain values were accomplished by working in partnership with integrity, trust and creativity and that problem solving and implementing strategy often resulted in working extraordinary hours on long-term projects. Furthermore, T10 enjoyed meeting company and customer expectations and reiterated that value was determined/judged by the customer, quoting:

You work with the customer to find out their needs and requirements and you work together to find the solutions, so the customer determines the value.

Similarly to previous themes, T10 stated that having accountability, responsibility, being empowered, having empathy, trust, self-awareness and the ability to use and apply their experience when leading projects and work in cross-functional multidisciplinary teams were essential for KAMs. Problem solving, good listening, good communication and strategic leadership skills and the ability to work towards sales targets were also critical.

Table 5.21. T10 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T10 Themes identified - Male, 60+ yrs, senior, school level qualifications, IT software, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate with self-awareness. They also needed a collaborative and strategic working style that included partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, as well as commitment, transparency, innovation, passion, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and loyalty. A supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T10 social style	Precision/results-orientated.

In conclusion, T10's responses were like those of T1 to T9 inclusive and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a). FP4 and FP6 were also conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value; they also supported the conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

The conclusions confirmed a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the main survey indicated that precision- and results-orientated motivators were the most common, followed by amiable-orientated, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required to draw meaningful conclusions.

T12 interview, themes identified

T12 stated that it was possible to offer a good quality of service with collaborative working and exceptional communications and accountability. T12 affirmed that relationships with customers were important in KAM and that working while empowered, autonomous and independent and having a supportive culture supported the process of building this relationship.

In addition, T12 noted that partnership working and incorporating the service needs of the customer in a collaborative manner provided a competitive advantage and that this was achieved by cross-functional and joint working that supported knowledge through interactions with the customer, signifying the value and using CRM as a resource. Similarly, T12 stated that the economy was based on service, noting that: 'it's all about the service.' Additionally, the relationship with the customer and working together were important factors ensuring that both the customer and their companies had their needs met.

Furthermore, T12 stated that ‘the customer creates the value’ and therefore is the co-creator of value and reiterated that delivering value was achieved by partnership working and having the right skill set to be able to communicate with different stakeholders, which often meant cross-functional working and aligning internal staff with those of the customers with similar roles/responsibilities, noting that;

if you are talking to the stakeholders, you need a different skill set for that, so I think it is better to align your internal staff to those kinds of customers.

Customer orientation and supply chain value were achieved through having good relationships and collaborative and often cross-functional working, underpinned by honesty, credibility, transparency, sincerity and a partnership approach, according to T12. In addition, T12 stated that project management supported collaboration and cooperation to create the value, yet value was determined by the customer, noting:

The customer has to tell you what they value.

Furthermore, T12 noted that empowerment, experience, confidence and knowledge relating to the company, the product, the service, competitors and the market were essential in KAM. T12 also stated that a hands-on approach and the ability to develop relationships and project manage joint and cross-functional projects with a supportive line manager providing guidance and empowerment was also vital.

Table 5.22. T12 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T12 Themes identified - Female, 40-59 yrs, director+, post grad degree, healthcare, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate with self-awareness. They also needed a collaborative working style that included partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, as well as commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust, credence and loyalty. A supportive leadership approach and environment. A service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working and CRM as a resource.
T12 social style	Precision/amiable-orientated.

In summary, T12’s responses were similar to those of T1 to T10 inclusive and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). FP4 and FP6 were also conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage; CRM-enabling resources like co-creation of value and relationships based on SDL; and the customer being the co-creator of value; they also supported the conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

To conclude, there seemed to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL. The findings regarding social styles in part 1 of the main survey showed that T8 and T9 were precision- and amiable-orientated motivators were the most common, and T8 and T9 had this orientation; nonetheless, this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required for final conclusions to be drawn.

T14 interview, themes identified

T14 suggested that customers chose to work with their company due to KAMs developing good, solid business relationships with them and KAMs being empowered and being supported by inspirational leadership which provided gravitas and supported value-based propositions. Similarly, T14 noted the importance of being personable and having listening skills, which was considered vital, according to T14, for developing relationships. T14 also reiterated that building relationships was important to understand customer requirements pertinent to service, and this required working in a collaborative manner, which provided a competitive advantage.

T14 also noted that ‘[g]ood and honest communication’ supported knowledge requirements gained by joint or cross-functional working, noting:

Open transparency and good communication skills with your customers and each other within the organisation are essential.

Additionally, T14 stated that the economy was based on service, observing that ‘the product does have its place, but more importantly it’s got to be the service that is delivered, and the way it is delivered’ that are the most important. Furthermore, T14 confirmed that customers help create the value, noting,

You have to listen, you ask the customer’s advice.

Similarly, T14 suggested that delivering value was achieved by communicating and working with customers to build and develop relationships based on ‘honest and transparent, regular dialogue’ and that customer orientation and supply chain value required understanding customer requirements by working in partnership, that is, ‘working as a team’. T14 confirmed that value was determined/judged by the customer, noting that ‘customers create the value’ and that KAMs’ purpose was to listen to customers and work with them in partnership to support the value.

According to T14, trust, integrity, having empowerment, communication skills, listening skills, people skills and organisational skills were paramount for KAMs. The ability to develop relationships internal/external to the business, often in cross-functional teams with senior management supporting, empowering and ensuring people feel valued was also essential.

Table 5.23. T14 KAMs themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T14 Themes identified - Female, 40-59 yrs, director+, school level qualifications, pharma, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, personable, responsible, accountable, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate with self-awareness. They also needed a collaborative and strategic working style that included partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, as well as commitment, transparency, innovation, passion, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and a supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T14 social style	Precision/amiable-orientated.

In conclusion, T14's responses were similar to those of T1 to T10 inclusive and T12 and those in the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation, created by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). FP4 and FP6 were also conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being vital to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value; they also supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

To conclude, there seemed to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and co-creation. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the main survey showed that precision- and amiable-orientated motivators were the most common, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required to finalise conclusions.

5.4.1. Main study, KAMs AI interviews conclusion

Many areas have been analysed throughout this main study review including the number of nodes/references pertinent to each question which confirmed that FP1, regarding the fundamental basis of exchange, was chosen the most. It was suggested that SDL, co-creation and social/relational aspects defined KAM, and the analysis noted that internal alignment rather than aligning with customers was often the first challenge faced by KAM programmes. Another area with a similar conclusion was CRM; T12 summarised that CRM enables resources like co-creation of value and relationships to form SDL rather than goods being central to economic exchange. The definition of KAM, as the literature review suggested, has changed over time and may no longer fully encompass the complexity and richness of the role. KAM has evolved from sales management, and while it has a different focus, must still engage with sales and other areas of the business and empowerment, accountability and a supportive leadership style reduced role ambiguity and possible conflict.

All KAMs noted the importance of being empowered, which improved role clarity, and working with internal/external teams, often in cross-functional teams, for co-creation and social/relational aspects. In addition, the literature review also noted that a transformational leadership approach was necessary for successful implementation and required active participation of senior management while empowering KAMs to make decisions, and this theme was captured by all KAMs, who expressed the idea that a supportive leadership embraced collaborative and partnership working.

The literature review presented that KAM concerns the building and maintenance of long-term relationships and yet is measured most often in financial and numerical terms, and the results indicated similar findings; T2 stated that their compensation was linked to sales performance and that although it was measured according to short- and long-term objectives these did not consider social/relational and co-creational aspects of the role or metrics based on customer satisfaction surveys that the literature review also suggested would be useful. However, all respondents noted that they were empowered to develop business plans, often with input from a supportive manager aiding implementation of KAM strategies; nonetheless, revisions that included social/relational and co-creational aspects required consideration and so does the breadth of the role, including SDL. The KAM focus on SDL, which required social/relational and co-creational skills has evolved, as has sales management, which has moved towards a supportive leadership style embracing collaborative and partnership working, described in the literature review as transformational leadership. The relationship between KAMs and buyers has also evolved and was more social/relational and partnership based and focuses more on SDL and co-creational aspects, similar to the findings in the literature review, exploratory survey and main study findings.

The findings, which have been verified by buyers in all interviews, showed what was revealed during the literature review and in the exploratory survey which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The interviews captured shifting contemporary thought about KAM in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships. Similarly, the anomalies identified in the exploratory survey regarding FP4 and FP6 were conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value; FP4 and FP6 also supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation as noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006). In summary, the conclusions revealed evolutionary changes and there appeared to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and co-creation of value.

The part of the main study relevant to social styles showed that although the top 5 highest average weightings were self-reported as 'driver' and 'analyst' orientated, when reviewing each of the respondents fully, the mean average showed that 'precision' was top and then 'driver', so in effect the reverse order, with 'amiable' orientation following. Nonetheless, while the overall results were similar, this part was exploratory and further research would be required for firmer conclusions to be drawn, taking into account Bolton and Bolton's (1984) admission that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style by conventionally recommended methods and that the best way of discovering one's social style was to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format or by using specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles.

Table 5.25. Main study, AI interviews, KAMs Nvivo highest ave. word counts (source: author).

Word	Count	Weighted percentage (%)
Value	506	2.21
Customer	375	1.64
Service	334	1.46
Think	312	1.36
Company	268	1.17
Yes	227	0.99
Working	223	0.97
Customers	204	0.89
Work	186	0.81
Really	178	0.78
Organisation	166	0.72
People	159	0.69
Well	159	0.69
Important	151	0.66
Get	146	0.64
Good	143	0.62
Thank	131	0.57
Know	125	0.55
Just	122	0.53
Terms	120	0.52
Time	120	0.52
Product	116	0.51

*Table 5.25. Includes word counts with a weighted percentage greater than 0.50%.

5.5. Main study, buyer AI interviews, thematic analysis

T11 interview, themes identified

T11 stated that project management skills and having good relationships with companies when working with them were important, as was being agile, efficient and reliable with contacts who supported implementation. T11 also suggested that knowledge, expertise and collaboration were important to satisfy their external customers/service. Also, the ability to work closely and develop/build relationships was essential, along with excellent support, good service and communication skills that were underpinned by cross-functional and joint working, noting: ‘the team working right from account management from the top to developers that were building the system was helping with problems and resolutions.’

According to T11, the service provided by sellers included writing business case reports to aid compliance and finance, which involved cross-functional working. Knowledge was transferred via good coordination among multidisciplinary teams working together: ‘it was down to the team and company culture’. Furthermore, T11 stated that empowerment, good communications and relationships supported the type of economy, which was based on service. While T11 confirmed that they are a decision maker, they acknowledged the importance of working in partnership. T11 also worked in cross-functional teams internal/external to the business for business case approval and implementations.

T11 also noted that delivering value and supporting customer orientation could only be achieved with good communication skills, honesty and the ability to foster relationships and work in partnership, often in cross-functional teams. While their approval processes assessed value, therefore determining the value, T11 observed: ‘right from the start and talking to the sales side and getting the project approved and delivered, it was just everybody pitching in when they needed to, at the right time, and both organisations working together, as one great team.’ T11 further stated that honesty, empowerment, communication and analytical skills regarding pricing and business cases were essential in procurement, along with the ability to build and develop relationships and work in partnership, often in cross-functional teams.

Table 5.26. T11 Buyer themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T11 Themes identified - Male, 60+ yrs, senior, school level qualifications, banking, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, trusted, personable, accountable, analytical, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate. They also needed to have a collaborative and strategic working style, including engaging in partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, and show commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and a supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T11 social style	Precision/results-orientated.

In conclusion, T11's responses were like those of KAMs, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). FP4 and FP6 were also decisive about the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage; FP6 and FP4 supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation, noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

To conclude, there seemed to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and co-creation of value. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the main survey showed precision- and results-orientated motivators were most common but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required with a meaningful comparison to develop robust conclusions.

T13 interview, themes identified

T13 suggested that working in partnership and joint working was important, along with networking, listening, understanding and using intelligence to come up with service solutions to problems. In addition, T13 noted that working with KAMs and understanding their objectives and aligning them helped produce solutions. According to T13, partnership working was imperative; they described their company as being forward thinking and said that to be successful joint working was required. T13 considered themselves to be a pioneer regarding service and having invaluable knowledge of the marketplace and environment, which helped with interaction with companies that required competitive advantage; after all, T13 stated, it was an economy based on service and strategic thinking, noting:

That gave them a bit of competitive advantage because they used knowledge and expertise in order to actually turn it into a real-world situation.

T13 claimed the customer was always the co-creator of value, noting that they 'give advice, help and support with solutions and even ways of moving forward with their own products and services'. In terms of delivering value, this was achieved in several ways but involved partnership and cross-functional working with KAMs via classroom training, online learning or webinars. Similarly, T13 stated that customer orientation and supply chain value were achieved by working in collaboration in the form of partnership working, listening and speedy project management. T13 considered themselves to be an expert with the knowledge and ability to 'translate that complicated thing into a simple thing, for people to understand', but noted that KAMs provided finance:

It was a joint working venture where both separate parties had specific roles and responsibilities. We did all the intellectual property and they did the logistics and mechanics of getting it out there.

T13 also confirmed that value was determined/judged by the customer, observing that: 'the value comes from the customer. We do try and give advice, help and support with solutions and even ways of moving forward with their own products and services.' Additionally, T13 noted that trust, empowerment, relationship management, honesty and reliability were important factors, along with analytical skills and knowledge of the market/environment, including the competition. It was also acknowledged by T13 that they tended to purchase from KAMs they liked working with and had a good relationship with.

Table 5.27. T13 Buyer themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T13 Themes identified - Male, 40-59 yrs, director+, degree, pharma/healthcare, -10 yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, trusted, accountable, analytical, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate. They also needed to be able to work using a collaborative and strategic working style, including engaging in partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, and show commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and a supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T13 social style	Precision/expressive-orientated.

In summary, T13's responses were like those of KAMs and T11, a buyer, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation listed by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). FP4 and FP6 were also conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value; FP4 and FP6 also supported the conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value, affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

In conclusion, there seemed to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and co-creation of value. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the main survey showed that precision- and expressive-orientated motivators were most common, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required with a meaningful comparison to develop stronger conclusions.

T15 interview, themes identified

T15 commented that working with companies and having trusted and good long-term relationships was important for delivering service requirements, as was the ability to deliver financial savings to benefit all parties. T15 confirmed that having autonomy and the ability to develop new innovative strategies with companies while working closely with them to build/develop relationships was essential to developing joint strategies.

T15 suggested that working in partnership offered value for money and considered themselves influential within the marketplace because of their reputation and the fact that they offered solutions to companies wishing to gain a business share. T15 also stated that the economy was based on service, noting that 'it's all about the service' and that they considered themselves the co-creator of value because KAMs could not know what the competitor situation was, or what the marketplace was like because they were external to the NHS and did not have the experience of working directly with the NHS.

T15 stated: ‘one is always looking to develop a strategy for the companies to work along with us.’ Additionally, T15 noted that delivering value, customer orientation and supply chain value with KAMs was achieved by working in partnership in a collaborative manner, being empowered, acting with integrity and being ‘truthful with your dealings’. T15 also confirmed that value was determined/judged by the customer, noting: ‘you are satisfying the company needs but also you have to satisfy your customer needs’.

T15 reiterated that trust, empowerment, integrity, innovation, creativity and the ability to problem solve, listen and work in partnership was essential, and so were analytical skills and knowledge of the market/environment, including the competition. However, T15 also suggested that they worked with KAMs who were personable and those they had experience of working with.

Table 5.28. T15 Buyer themes summarised along with social style (source: author).

T15 Themes identified - Male, 60+ yrs, director+, school level qualifications, pharma, 10+ yrs.	
Role requirements of KAMs	Empowered, responsible, trusted, personable, accountable, analytical, organised and knowledgeable with business acumen. KAMs should also have a supportive leadership style and the ability to influence, listen, emphasise and negotiate. They also needed to have a collaborative and strategic working style, including engaging in partnership and cross-functional working with teams and projects, and show commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, honesty, perseverance, integrity and a drive for results.
Company themes	An open, honest and innovative company working with trust and a supportive leadership approach and environment. Service and a co-creational approach embracing partnership working.
T15 social style	Precision/amiable-orientated.

In conclusion, T15’s responses were like those of the KAMs and the other buyers, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8). The interview captured shifting contemporary thought from a buyer, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships. FP4 and FP6 were also conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value; they also supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006, p. 286).

The conclusions revealed evolutionary changes and there appeared to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and co-creation of value. The findings regarding social styles that featured in part 1 of the main survey showed that precision- and amiable-orientated motivators were most common, but this part was exploratory and further investigations would be required for a meaningful comparison to develop firmer conclusions.

5.5.1. Main study, buyer AI interviews conclusion

The findings regarding buyers in the main study showed that buyer skill sets were like those of sellers but buyers have a different perspective. Buyers were interested in purchasing efficiently at the most cost-effective price while maintaining cooperative relationships that support SDL, social/relational and co-creational aspects and ensuring that the leadership values people and business so that the relevant proficiencies can be retained; this aligned with the findings of the literature review.

When reviewing the contexts of buyer interviews, it was clear to see that buyer-seller interactions were the nucleus of value co-creation and were characterised by interactions that have a sense of commitment, common goals, dialogue and shared interests, enabling co-creation and engagement in value-generating processes, which were more complex processes than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) and Vargo and Lusch (2008a) discussed these complex processes and confirmed that co-creation required joint application of operant resources by buyers and sellers, and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted that the customer is always the co-creator of value, which resonated with all 3 buyers.

The definition of buyers like KAMs in the literature review has changed over time and may no longer fully encompass the complexity and richness of the role; nonetheless, it required a different focus and must involve empowering buyers to make decisions and engaging with suppliers with accountability, business acumen and a supportive leadership style embracing a collaborative and partnership working approach necessary for successful implementation; this theme was captured by all buyers. Also, the buyer respondents noted that they were empowered to develop business plans, often with input from KAMs, aiding implementation of strategies. The buyer role from this research appears much more focused on social/relational and co-creational aspects, including SDL. T11 captured this by noting that 'right from the start and talking to the sales side and getting the project approved and delivered, it was just everybody pitching in when they needed to, at the right time, and both organisations working together, as one great team.'

The buyers focus was on SDL and the social/relational and co-creational skills that have evolved as well as management moving towards a supportive leadership style that embraces collaborative and partnership working, described in the literature review as transformational leadership. The relationship between buyers and KAMs has evolved and was now more social/relational and partnership based and has moved to SDL and then co-creation of value, which was similar to the findings in the literature review, the exploratory survey and main study.

The findings reaffirmed the results of the literature review and the exploratory survey, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation drafted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The interviews captured a shifting contemporary thought about the buyer, in which KAMs were facilitators of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships. FP4 and FP6 were conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value; they also supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

In summary, the conclusions revealed evolutionary changes and there appeared to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and the co-creation of value by buyers and sellers.

The part of the main study relevant to social styles confirmed that the top 5 highest average weightings were independence, job satisfaction, acceptance, correctness, fun, enjoyment and prestige of expertise, followed by recognition of expertise, as shown in table 5.9, appendix 4. In summary, analyst (precision) orientated was the social style preference for the procurement sample, with key factors being job satisfaction, correctness and recognition of expertise. Driver (results) orientated followed, with independence and prestige of expertise, and this was followed by expressive-orientated, with independence and fun and enjoyment. Lastly came amiable-orientated, with acceptance.

While some of the demographics highlighted minor differences and sometimes the chronological order varied with each demographic question, overall, the conclusions remained similar; this was also the case when examining the survey of each respondent survey in greater detail and considering all survey answers, not just the top 5 highest average weightings. Nonetheless, the sample for buyers was too small for a meaningful comparison and the data documented was merely gathered for exploratory purposes and to add value to the overall study. Yet, for firmer conclusions to be drawn further research was required. Bolton and Bolton (1984) stated that individuals have a 50% success rate regarding identifying their own social style by conventionally recommended methods and that the best way of discovering one's social style was to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format or by using specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles.

Accountability, analytical skills, knowledge, skills in relationship building and sharing customer information, training, business functions and processes, essentially pointing towards co-creation, resonated with the literature review. Integrity, trust, listening skills, ingenuity and the ability to work in partnership, often involving collaboration and cross-functional project management with internal/external teams, were considered important, reflecting the findings in the literature review relevant to social, relational and co-creational skills. T13 and T15 also confirmed that they tended to work with KAMs who were personable and those they had experience of working with, further supporting SDL and co-creation. In summary, the results confirmed a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and co-creation of value.

While the purpose of including the buyers was to verify KAMs' surveys and interviews, the data was also useful for exploratory purposes, and the following word cloud displays the most frequently used words that were generated when buyers interview transcripts were put into Nvivo, which was then compared to those generated by KAMs. The criterion set was 1000 words with a minimum of 3 letters each, and the results showed that value was the most frequently used word by interviewed buyers, and service was the fourth. The words are highlighted in green in table 5.8 and supported the conclusions noting the move to SDL and co-creation of value. The word product does not feature this time in the Nvivo table, due to having a weighted percentage lower than 0.50%.

5.6. Main study, Nvivo word frequency analysis, KAMs v buyer comparison

When comparing KAMs and buyer word clouds, we could see that they were analogous. This was demonstrated when studying the average weighted percentages of the words in the tables for KAMs and buyers with greater than 0.50% weightings. In summary, we could see that about 70% of the word count was identical and that the words value, customer and service were most frequently used by KAMs; value and service were also in the top 4 for buyers, reinforcing the view that there has been a move towards social/relational aspects of KAM, often referred to as partnership or joint working using and moving towards SDL towards co-creation of value.

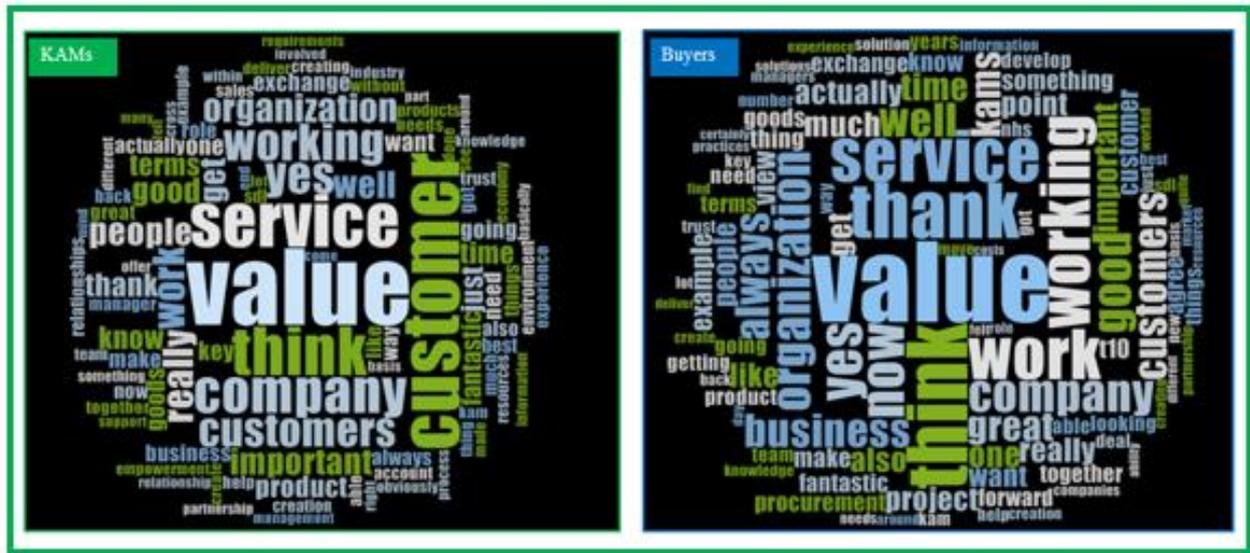


Figure 5.9. Main study, AI Interviews, KAMs v buyers, Nvivo word clouds (source: author).

5.7. Main study, KAMs and buyers crossbar analysis

The Nvivo word frequency analysis for both KAMs and buyers was comparable when examining Nvivo word frequency analysis; around 70% of the weightings for average words (with greater than 0.50% weightings) were similar for KAMs and buyers and the most frequent words used by KAMs were value, customer and service and for buyers these were value and service. While this supported the view that there has been a shift towards social/relational aspects of KAM and SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value, another comparison was conducted in the form of a crossbar analysis pertinent to the answers attained from the interviews with KAMs and buyers that used FP-based questions for evaluation.

5.7.1. Main study, KAMs FP-based questions, crossbar analysis

Table 5.32. shows a one-word thematic crossbar analysis of KAMs pertinent to the answers captured in the AI interviews in response to FP-based questions for comparison.

Table 5.32. Main study, KAMs FP-based questions, crossbar analysis (source: author).

Respondents						
Themes	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
FP1	Empowered	Service	Service	Empowered	Service	Service
FP2	Empowered	Support	Empowered	Empowered	Empowered	Trust
FP3	Agility	Service	Collaborative	Trust	Collaborative	Service
FP4	Partnership	Knowledge	Collaborative	Collaborative	Knowledge	Knowledge
FP5	Trust	Customer	Service	Service	Customer	Service
FP6	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer
FP7	Customer	Customer	Collaborative	Customer	Collaborative	Collaborative
FP8	Customer	Customer	Collaborative	Customer	Customer	Customer
FP9	Collaborative	Customer	Collaborative	Collaborative	Collaborative	Customer
FP10	Customer	Customer	Collaborative	Customer	Collaborative	Customer

Themes	T7	T8	T9	T10	T12	T14
FP1	Relationships	Empowered	Relationships	Relationships	Collaborative	Leadership
FP2	Partnership	Empowered	Relationships	Empowered	Empowered	Partnership
FP3	Relationships	Service	Ingenuity	Collaborative	Partnership	Relationships
FP4	Partnership	Collaborative	Partnership	Partnership	Partnership	Relationships
FP5	Partnership	Service	Partnership	Customer	Service	Service
FP6	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer
FP7	Collaborative	Processes	Collaborative	Customer	Customer	Relationships
FP8	Collaborative	Partnership	Relationship	Relationship	Partnership	Collaborative
FP9	Partnership	Partnership	Partnership	Partnership	CRM	Partnership
FP10	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer	Customer

5.7.2. Main study, KAMs crossbar analysis summary

The findings from the interviews of the respondents reaffirmed the exploratory survey results and the Nvivo thematic analysis results which supported the FP of SDL of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and confirmed that there was a move from KAM towards strategic partnerships co-creating value. When reviewing each respondent, it was clear that the themes were comparable with those of the FP of SDL adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a), which indicated that there had been a swing from KAM towards strategic partnerships creating co-creation of value, and with the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value, affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The swing demonstrated a shifting contemporary thought about KAM in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships.

The results were also conclusive when reviewing FP4, FP6, FP9 and FP10 regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage, FP4, the customer being the co-creator of value, FP6, and value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, FP10. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9)). Additionally, these views are aligned with the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value as noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006). In summary, the conclusions confirmed a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move to SDL and co-creation of value.

5.7.3. Main study, buyers FP-based questions, crossbar analysis

Table 5.33. below shows a one-word thematic crossbar analysis pertinent to the buyer’s answers captured in the AI interviews, attained from FP-based questions for comparison.

Table 5.33. Main study, buyers’ FP-based questions, crossbar analysis (source: author).

Respondents			
Themes	T11	T13	T15
FP1	Relationships	Partnerships	Relationships
FP2	Relationships	Collaborative	Collaborative
FP3	Collaborative	Service	Service
FP4	Collaborative	Partnership	Collaborative
FP5	Partnership	Partnership	Service
FP6	Customer	Customer	Customer
FP7	Knowledge	Collaborative	Knowledge
FP8	Relationships	Collaborative	Collaborative
FP9	Partnership	Collaborative	Collaborative
FP10	Customer	Customer	Customer

5.7.4. Main study, buyers crossbar analysis summary

The findings from all interviews reaffirmed the findings from the exploratory survey, the Nvivo thematic analysis and the conclusions for KAMs, which noted the FP of SDL created by Vargo and Lusch (2008a), which suggested that there had been a move from KAM towards strategic partnerships creating co-creation of value. While the findings were exploratory, and a meaningful comparison cannot be made, the results link with the themes captured from KAMs and were comparable with the FP of SDL of Vargo and Lusch (2008a,). The findings also agree with the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value, noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

5.7.5. Main study, KAMs and buyers crossbar analysis conclusion

The results reaffirmed the findings from the exploratory survey and the Nvivo thematic analysis, which noted the FP of SDL adapted from Vargo and Lusch (2008a), which suggested that there had been a move from KAM towards strategic partnerships creating co-creation of value. In addition, the themes for all KAMs and buyers were comparable with the FP of SDL of Vargo and Lusch (2008a), which suggested that there had been a move from KAM towards strategic partnerships based on SDL forming co-creation of value, and with the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The move demonstrated a shifting contemporary thought about KAM and buyers, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships.

5.8. Main study, summary of themes arising from surveys and interviews

The findings showed that defining KAM as a discipline suggested that SDL, co-creation and social/relational aspects of KAM were important, along with internal and external alignment. Another area with a similar conclusion was CRM, which enabled resources like co-creation of value and relationships based on SDL rather than goods being central to economic exchange. The findings suggested that KAM had evolved from sales management, and while it had a different focus, must still engage with sales and other areas of the business; having empowerment, accountability and a supportive leadership style reduced role ambiguity and possible conflict. Also, in the study KAMs were empowered, which improved role clarity, and supported the way they worked with internal/external teams, often in multi-disciplinary teams, to achieve co-creation of value.

Additionally, the findings confirmed that a transformational leadership approach was necessary for successful implementation and required active participation of senior management while empowering KAMs to make decisions; supportive leadership and buyers that embraced collaborative and partnership working were themes that resonated with all respondents. However, KAMs are still being compensated with fixed bonus schemes with traditional measures of success based on KPIs associated with business plans based on numerical and financial targets rather than measures of success associated with customer relationships and co-creation of value, despite the management of long-term relationships and customer orientation being found as two of the five CSFs in the literature (see section 2.3).

The following themes emerged out of the surveys and interviews:

1. Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to KAMs and buyers.
2. The evolution of an SDL-KAM based approach towards co-creation of value.
3. The FP of SDL supporting the CSFs and relational requirements for successful KAM.
4. The importance of seller-buyer relationships and joint working for co-creation of value.

5.8.1 Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to KAMs and buyers

Transcripts were analysed to identify which CSFs were referred to by each participant when discussing each of the themes, see table 5.34 and 5.35 below.

Table 5.34. Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to KAMs (source: author).

Number of mentions	Achieving financial targets	Coordination/planning of business processes	Customer orientation	Delivering tailored service	Managing long-term relationships
KAM T1	4	6	8	8	7
KAM T2	7	6	6	7	6
KAM T3	2	7	7	4	7
KAM T4	2	7	7	6	7
KAM T5	2	8	7	6	8
KAM T6	2	7	6	6	7
KAM T7	2	7	6	6	7
KAM T8	2	8	8	6	8
KAM T9	2	8	8	7	8
KAM T10	2	8	8	7	8
KAM T12	2	8	8	6	8
KAM T14	2	8	8	7	8
Total	31	88	87	76	89

Table 5.35. Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to buyers (source: author).

Number of mentions	Achieving financial targets	Coordination/planning of business processes	Customer orientation	Delivering tailored service	Managing long-term relationships
Buyer T11	4	8	6	8	7
Buyer T13	5	8	8	8	8
Buyer T15	5	8	8	8	8
Total	14	24	22	24	23

The CSFs for KAM according to the KAMs and buyers are listed below with the number of discrete mentions shown in brackets.

CSFs mentioned by KAMs

1. Managing long-term relationships (CRM) (89)
2. Coordination of planning of business process (88)
3. Customer orientation (87)
4. Delivering tailored service (76)
5. Achieving financial targets (31)

CSFs mentioned by buyers

1. Coordination of planning of business processes (24)
2. Delivering tailored service (24)
3. Managing long-term relationships (23)
4. Customer orientation (22)
5. Achieving financial targets (14)

The findings show that the results are similar with KAMs and buyers. However, while KAMs and buyers described remuneration being linked to achieving financial targets the results showed this CSF was the last one mentioned in each interview. Nonetheless, if you compare this with the resultant CSFs in the academic literature, achieving financial targets was listed 3 followed by customer orientation and delivering a tailored service. Yet, it must be noted that the number of buyers which supported these results is insufficient for a meaningful comparison but the results do show a trend and a move away from traditional measures of success based on KPIs associated with business plans based on numerical and financial targets rather than measures of success associated with customer relationships and co-creation of value, despite the management of long-term relationships and customer orientation being found as two of the five CSFs in the literature (see section 2.3).

Figure 5.10 shows the CSFs mentioned by each respondent in discussion of each of the themes. Many of the CSFs were mentioned repeatedly by the respondents, suggesting that they are, indeed, critical.

Key	CSFs							
1	Managing long-term relationships (CRM)							
2	Coordinating and planning of business processes							
3	Achieving financial targets							
4	Customer orientation							
5	Delivering a tailored service							

KAMs	CRM and business processes	Leadership	Role clarity	Remuneration	Measuring performance	Knowledge management	Skills and experience	SDL and co-creation
T1	1,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5
T2	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	3,5	3	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5
T3	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	3,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	1,2,4,5
T4	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	3,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	1,2,3,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T6	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	3,5	1,2,3,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T7	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	3,5	1,2,3,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T8	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T9	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T10	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T12	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5
T14	1,2,4,5	1,2,4	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5

Buyers	CRM and business processes	Leadership	Role clarity	Remuneration	Measuring performance	Knowledge management	Skills and experience	SDL and co-creation
T11	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,5	2,3,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5
T13	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5
T15	1,2,4,5	1,2,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,4,5

Figure 5.10. Identification of CSFs for KAM, according to KAMs and buyers (source: author).

5.8.2. The evolution of an SDL-KAM based approach towards co-creation of value

The results showed that contemporary KAM as a discipline is now underpinned by FP of SDL and social/relational aspects towards co-creation of value. The KAM role and how KAMs now see the role requires an SDL approach in order to support co-creation of value. The findings showed that the FP of SDL by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) was consistent with the respondents throughout the analysis. Fundamentally, the results showed that these aspects were required to implement contemporary KAM successfully with desired results along with noting personal characteristics of KAMs who may achieve these results. An example response was FP1 regarding service being the fundamental basis of exchange, and this was consistently mentioned by the KAMs and buyer respondents. This supports the inclusion of ‘customer orientation’ as a CSF for KAM, as noted in section 2.3.

The thematic analysis also showed parallels with the literature regarding the definition of KAM changing over time; T1, T3, T7, T12, T13, T14 and T15 all noted that their companies’ focus had moved away from products to service based on partnership working with customers. The new way of working provided solutions with customers by joint working and being empowered by senior management to make decisions. T1 actually stated that their company 20-30 years ago focused on ‘legacy brands, or established brands’ whereas the last 2 years focused more on partnership working where the customer determined the value and was co-creator of value.

When considering the interview transcripts in detail, it was clear that knowledge management was important, particularly with working with multi-disciplinary teams internal or external to the company to support co-creation of value. This links to the CSF of coordinating and planning business processes. Integrity, transparency, ingenuity, analytical skills were also mentioned as skills and attributes all of which were again underpinned by FP of SDL towards co-creation which required social/relational skills. This relates back to the CSF ‘customer orientation’ identified in the literature review (see section 2.3).

5.8.3. The FP of SDL supporting the CSFs and relational requirements for successful KAM

The themes identified in the literature as being parts of the KAM role can be mapped across to the CSFs identified earlier as shown in table 2.7.1 and with the associated FP.

Table 5.36. Summarises the relationship between themes and CSFs and associated FP (source: author).

Key themes identified in the literature on role of KAM (Section 2.5)	Relationship to CSFs	Associated FP
Leadership.	Coordinating and planning of business processes.	FP4, FP6, FP8, FP9, FP10
Role conflict, ambiguity and authority.	Coordinating and planning of business processes.	FP4, FP6, FP8, FP9, FP10
Remuneration, reward and performance.	Achieving financial targets.	FP4, FP6, FP8, FP9, FP10
Measuring performance.	Achieving financial targets, managing long-term relationships.	FP4, FP6, FP8, FP9, FP10
Skills, knowledge and attributes.	Coordinating and planning of business processes, managing long-term relationships, customer orientation, delivering a tailored service, achieving financial targets.	FP1, FP2, FP3, FP4, FP5, FP6, FP7, FP8, FP9, FP10

5.8.4. The importance of seller-buyer relationships and joint working for co-creation of value

The study also showed the importance of seller–buyer interactions which were the centre of value co-creation and were characterised by interactions with a sense of commitment, common goals, dialogue and shared interest, which enable co-creation and engaging in value-generating processes which were more complex than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. In addition, Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) and Vargo and Lusch (2008a) discussed some of these complex processes and stated that co-creation required joint application of operant resources by buyers/sellers, and Lusch and Vargo’s (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted that the customer was the co-creator of value; this resonated with all respondents in the main study, the exploratory survey and the literature review. This supports the inclusion of ‘customer orientation and coordinating and planning of business processes’ as CSFs for KAM, as noted in section 2.3.

KAM and procurement, according to the findings were focused on SDL and social/relational skills and co-creational skills, and these, as well as management, had evolved and moved towards a supportive leadership style embracing collaborative and partnership working. Also, the relationship between KAMs and buyers appeared to evolve and had become more social/relational in nature and is partnership based and leans towards SDL and the co-creation of value, resonating with the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation drafted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and with the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). Both T13 and T15 buyers confirmed that the role had evolved in the last few years and they tended to work with KAMs they had a relationship with and that they worked with in partnership regarding service solutions towards co-creation of value. This relates back to the CSFs 'managing long-term relationships and delivering a tailored service' identified in the literature review (see section 2.3).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interviews captured shifting contemporary thought about KAM and buyers, in which KAMs were facilitators of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships. FP4 and FP6 were conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage and the customer being the co-creator of value; they also supported the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value, noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

The Nvivo word frequency analysis supported SDL that caused a move towards co-creation; the KAMs' top 3 words were value, customer and service. Value and service were the buyers' top and 4th from top word respectively. In addition, over 70% of the same words were selected by both KAMs and buyers (of those with an average weighting of more than 0.50%), showing the move to SDL and then to co-creation of value. Furthermore, the crossbar analysis for KAMs and buyers confirmed FP4, FP6, FP9 and FP10, that is, that the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer was fundamental to competitive advantage, FP4, the customer is the co-creator of value, FP6, and value was always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, FP10. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).)

Additionally, the main themes pertinent to KAMs' social styles confirmed that although the top 2 styles of the top 5 were driver (results-orientated) and analyst (precision-orientated), when examining each of the respondents the most common confirmed precision and then driver-orientated. Whereas, the buyers' most common self-reported social style was precision-orientated and this was also revealed when investigating each buyer individually. Nonetheless, this was exploratory and further research would be required to verify buyers. Also, for firmer conclusions to be drawn more buyers would also need to be included for a meaningful comparison to be made.

Regarding the skills and characteristics of KAMs and buyers, they both included accountability, knowledge, skills in relationship building and sharing customer information, business functions and processes, essentially pointing towards SDL and co-creation and aligning with the literature review.

Integrity, trust, listening skills, ingenuity and the ability to work in partnership, often involving collaboration and cross-functional project management with internal/external teams, were also considered important, and these types of skills stated the requirement for social, relational and co-creational skills. The buyers all suggested that they worked with KAMs who were personable and 2 out of 3 (T13 and T15) suggested that that they worked with KAMs they liked and had experience of working with, and this further supported the notion of social/relational aspects of KAM, including co-creation.

In addition, the results from the questions which were based on the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value created by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) were conclusive with both KAMs and buyers regarding FP4, FP6, FP9 and FP10, confirming that knowledge gained through interaction with the customer was fundamental to competitive advantage, FP4, the customer was the co-creator of value, FP6, and that value was always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, FP10. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9)).

In summary, the conclusions for KAM themes revealed evolutionary changes and there appeared to be a distinct change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM and a move towards SDL and co-creation of value between sellers and buyers.

The findings were consistent across respondents throughout the analysis and linked in with the literature regarding the FP of SDL and CSFs required for successful KAM implementation. While the CSFs identified in the literature review were as follows:

1. Managing long-term relationships (CRM)
2. Coordinating and planning of business processes, for example, resources, accounts, functions, policy, etc
3. Achieving financial targets
4. Customer orientation
5. Delivering a tailored service

The results show that ‘customer orientation’ and ‘delivering a tailored service’ should be more highly ranked alongside ‘managing long-term relationships’ in the list of CSFs, as these are the CSFs most closely aligned with SDL. The ‘coordinating and planning’ and ‘achieving financial targets’ CSFs are less important, according to the primary research results.

An alternative listing of CSFs would therefore be as follows:

1. Managing long-term relationships (CRM)
2. Coordination and planning of business processes, for example, resources, accounts, functions, policy, etc
3. Customer orientation
4. Delivering tailored service
5. Achieving financial targets

The buyers also verified prospective KAMs’ social styles and all respondents stated the need to be able to foster relationships for partnership working based on the FP of SDL towards co-creation of value.

6. Job descriptions synopsis, thematic analysis

The purpose of the job descriptions summary was to analyse job advertisements and person specifications for KAM roles to determine keywords and phrases by desktop study. The combination of this data with the social style evaluations and KAM interviews would build a triangulated picture of the role and the personal characteristics (a) sought by employers and (b) required for success. Also, the findings and conclusions, as directed by the literature, would provide empirical and relevant input for assessing and identifying CSFs of KAM within the context of UK enterprises, and may help develop a new model for and a new approach to implementation.

The job descriptions are shown in appendices 24 to 29. Each document was obtained from a healthcare recruitment company, located in Cheshire and established in 2006. The agency predominantly recruited roles in sales, KAM and market access, along with various other related roles. The briefing supplied to the agency was a request for 6 KAM job descriptions to review and compare against the study's literature review and research findings.

When analysing the data, Nvivo was used for thematic analysis and each job description was anonymised, downloaded, recorded and transcribed into Nvivo. The nodes selected were based on revising the particulars received and studying Martin (2010). This also meant reviewing the company details and key factors of the roles, including the skills, responsibilities and requirements of the role, including qualifications, experience and compensations.

Table 6.1 Job descriptions table noting companies and number of nodes (source: author).

Company	Job title	Number of nodes
#1	Regional Account Manager	16
#2	Account Specialist	45
#3	Key Account Manager	15
#4	Key Account Manager	39
#5	Disease Awareness Key Account Specialist	32
#6	Key Account Manager	27
	Total	174

Table 6.2 Job description nodes via selected framework and definitions (source: author).

Node description	Number of nodes
Company context	20
Compensation	12
Key skills of the role (skills/responsibilities)	118
Requirements of the role (qualifications/experience)	24
	Total
	174

6.1. Job descriptions, thematic analysis

Job description #1, themes identified

Company #1 was a large, global, independent biotechnology company that had been established for more than 35 years, with revenues exceeding \$21.7 billion and over 18,000 employees. The company discovered and developed innovative human therapeutics; it had cutting-edge manufacturing capability and support services, along with an efficient pipeline to deliver therapies to medical teams.

The regional account manager's role was focused around delivering an 'innovative product launch and maintenance of the company's solid product portfolio'. The role includes:

Diagnosing requirements and assuming responsibility for evaluating, developing and commercialising external opportunities and minimising threats at a regional level in line with the company's strategy.

In addition, key skills of the role included ensuring optimal uptake and usage of the then current and near-launch general medicine portfolio through clinical demand generation and local access, formulary and funding activities. It also included planning, organising and executing activities to ensure access to funding to meet regional and national goals.

The role requirements were a proven track record of consistently high performance in the same sales setting and therapeutic area. The successful applicant would be educated to degree level, ideally in a scientific discipline, and would have experience of local market access development, preferably with experience of implementing service redesign in the NHS.

Compensation was noted as a competitive salary with a comprehensive benefits package and bonus scheme, but details were not listed.

In summary, the job description pertinent to company #1 was clear regarding the responsibilities of the role, including empowerment, planning, organising and external cross-functional working, but did not fully support the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation listed by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) or the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of Lusch and Vargo (2006). Internal cross-functional working was not included in the description either; the briefing also focused on working towards the company's goals and strategy so did not advocate a partnership approach or co-creation, so was totally at odds with the KAMs interviews.

Job description #2, themes identified

Job description #2 for the account specialist role immediately listed the key skills for the role along with requirements, excluding company details and compensation data.

There was a long list of key skills for the role but some were clearly identified: having responsibility, accountability and empowerment regarding customer positions on sales cycles, target tracking, action planning, budget management and executing infield brand strategies. Other skills needed were building and developing relationships with peers and cross-functional working with partners outside of the team to maximise performance.

It was also stated that the role involved the ability to organise and manage stakeholder meetings, to be well informed regarding clinical and market knowledge development and to have the ability to analyse sales reports, CRM and field/marketing intelligence. Customer selling, and relationship management were clearly skills that were required, yet so was being 'comfortable with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk'.

Delivering the company's expected performance and beyond regarding sales was indicated as required, along with demonstrating in-depth therapeutic, customer, product, market and competitor knowledge and expertise and strong customer relationships and account planning. The job description outlined that business plans needed to work in conjunction with brand strategy, noting:

Develops a business plan for own territory in line with brand strategy.

Key skills also included using business tools and developing SMART pre-call objectives aligned with strategy and team goals for the brand. Differentiating value propositions and handling objectives and concerns using reasonable logic, including using innovation to overcome barriers, were also mentioned. It was also noted that learning fast, motivating and influencing others without authority and being able to work collaboratively with strong communication and interpersonal skills, often flexing styles to respond to customer insights, were required. Leadership skills and accountability were also important.

Requirements for the role included a degree, preferably in science/nursing, and relevant industry and territory management experience.

In summary, job description #2 was clear regarding the responsibilities of the role, which included having empowerment, organisational and planning skills, knowledge management, leadership, and the ability to work collaboratively, by way of either cross-functional or partnership working. Yet there were a couple of anomalies: the description referring to the ability to 'deal comfortably with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk', the details regarding 'the expected performance and beyond (sales)', and with the note about developing business plans in line with brand strategy showed the job description's limitations in terms of fully supporting the FP of SDL that caused a move to co-creation of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value observed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). In conclusion, the briefing was focused on company #2 working towards its own brand strategy rather than shared goals, objectives and strategies, which the KAM interviews confirmed were required for successful KAM implementations.

Job description #3, themes identified

Job description #3 specifically stated developing key accounts along with the ability to manage key accounts, along with key skills and requirements but excluded compensation information.

Key skills included building long-term effective business relationships with selected key accounts as partners. Key accounts included buying groups, major multiples and corporate companies that required business plans to consist of objectives and key activities and would support achievement via internal cross-functional working with internal teams to support growth.

While KAM experience was advantageous, leading negotiations, maintaining and developing existing accounts for further development and growth was specified. The role included reporting to a key account manager working nationally, being empowered, achieving annual sales targets and gaining ownership of the sales and profit objectives of key accounts. Another requirement was noted:

Develop win-win solutions aligned to business strategy and objectives.

Requirements for the role were at least 5 years' experience in sales in the pharmaceutical industry, up-to-date health knowledge and either a science background, a degree in a science, a recognised nursing qualification, an A level in science, or a business or marketing qualification.

In summary, the document was clear regarding the responsibilities of the role, including having empowerment, good planning and organisational skills, knowledge management, and leadership, along with collaborative working with internal/external cross-functional teams to achieve partnership status, which resonated with the main study findings and the literature review. However, the statement noting developing win-win solutions 'aligned to company #3's business strategy and objectives' does not fully support the FP of SDL that caused a move to co-creation of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) or the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value by Lusch and Vargo (2006), due to the company being intent on moving forward with its own agenda, even though the statement suggested win-win solutions, which may be interpreted as co-productive or even co-creational ones.

Job description #4, themes identified

The mission of job description #4's was to care and cure; the company wanted to provide a shareholder return that reflected outstanding performance and to reward those who invested their money, time and ideas.

Key skills included building customer relationships, good communication and presentation skills and responding to customer needs, often presented via customer feedback. Other skills needed were feeling empowered enough to allocate resources effectively and having good business acumen in order to effectively prioritise and focus on target centres to maximise business by ensuring that implementation was aligned with robust account plans. Furthermore, the successful candidate would be 'leading on the delivery of an exciting dermatology campaign'.

The role was described as highly visible and responsible for leading on the delivery of a marketing campaign. It involved deploying marketing materials to facilitate pull-through activities and cross-functional working internal/external to the business to influence and affect customer decisions, including key opinion leader (KOL) plans and the decisions of medical experts and academics, to achieve sales targets. Knowledge management regarding products, services, customers and therapeutic areas was also essential, as was executing accounting plans for assigned product lines/brands, customers or therapeutic areas to uncover and develop new business opportunities. Resilience, competitiveness and KAM knowledge and experience in the same environment were also requirements.

In summary, the document was clear regarding the responsibilities of the role, which included having empowerment, good planning and organisational skills, knowledge management, leadership and responding to customer needs, along with the ability to work collaboratively via cross-functional teams to build customer relationships. However, the descriptions ‘leading on the delivery on campaigns’ and ‘ensuring products/services are broadly understood and available’ neither supported nor failed to support the FP of SDL that caused a move to co-creation of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value by Lusch and Vargo (2006), due to the briefing being focused on the company’s own proposal rather than on a shared agenda and objectives. Even so, company #4 suggested it adapted and responded to customer needs, which was more aligned with the KAM interview responses, along with the findings from the literature review.

Job description #5, themes identified

The job description #5 document regarding a disease awareness key account specialist role started immediately with key skills and requirements but excluded company details and compensation information. Key skills included being self-motivated, tenacious and proactive, and the role involved having accountability for utilising company resources to support business plans and the ability to work within cross-functional teams. Also required were knowledge management of therapeutics, the market, customers, competition and the ability to adapt targets and resources to meet business needs.

In addition, the applicant needed the ability to achieve the required sales and patient findings for the territory and to produce the best in class business case planning, including development and implementation aligned with national plans, which required the ability to monitor and critically review implementations against KPIs objectives and to take corrective action when required. The description stated:

To be able to identify, develop and implement innovative solutions to solve local issues and barriers to patient identification and referrals.

Excellence in KAM along with proven communication skills to debate and challenge customers’ attitudes and deliver regional strategies and initiatives to support the company’s products and disease areas were also needed. Additionally, the role involved creating awareness of rare diseases that the company was involved in so that more patients would be diagnosed and treated by in-call challenging and influencing skills. Moreover, key skills included ensuring compliance with the company’s rules regarding accurate customer records, administration and SOPs and obeying the ABPI code of practice. They also included facilitating customer education in the relevant disease to increase awareness of best practice and helping customers understand and identify the symptoms and referral pathways for diagnosis.

Requirements for the role included ‘previous experience in identifying and prioritising business opportunities’, ‘raising patient awareness, and identification as well as customer education’ and ‘experience of partnering with local (UK) healthcare environment to implement local/national initiatives in support of products and disease areas.’ In addition, applicants were expected to have experience of working within the therapeutic area and in niche markets, including the ability to demonstrate successful sales performance records.

In conclusion, the job description was clear regarding the responsibilities of the role, which included having accountability, coping with empowerment, planning, organising, knowledge management, and leadership, along with the ability to work collaboratively within cross-functional teams and in partnership with customers. However, the statement regarding debating and challenging customers' attitudes to deliver regional strategies and initiatives to support the company's products and disease areas was totally opposite to co-creation of value, which KAM interviews and the literature review established.

Equally, the description of applicants being able to identify, develop and implement innovative solutions to solve local issues and barriers to patient identification and referrals suggested that value propositions regarding products and disease areas were put together by KAMs again shows that there was only limited support for the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of Lusch and Vargo (2006).

Job description #6, themes identified

Job description #6 was from a global pharmaceutical business with more than 31,000 employees working together across 70 countries. The company were an owned subsidiary of Japan's leading research-based company and renowned for having an unwavering dedication to putting people first and working with values of integrity, fairness, honesty and perseverance. With a corporate philosophy and a 235-year research legacy, they were committed to improving the lives of patients by delivering extraordinary medicines through science, innovation and passion. Company #6 was the world's 12th largest manufacturer of ethical medicines and the company was working towards its vision and values, which created and inspired value and served the needs of the environment, the community, employees and patients, noting that 'here, everyone matters'.

Key skills for the role included being empowered, being accountable, taking ownership, high-level leadership, and the ability to influence and negotiate. The successful applicant also required a collaborative working style and the ability to challenge their own business plans while developing their 'position as a therapy area clinical expert in a fast-paced competitive environment'. Additionally, key skills included being proactive, tenacious and accountable to pursue results and reporting to the divisional sales director. Teamwork, commitment, transparency, innovation, passion, fairness, honesty, perseverance and integrity were also skills, along with taking the responsibility for constructing and developing business plans to achieve financial and business objectives with sound strategies and tactics.

Requirements for the role included knowledge management regarding the environment, the market, therapy, competition, products and services. High-level account management experience and experience of managing healthcare professional relationships within the economy were also required. Furthermore, while no compensation information was provided, other requirements included exceptional business planning skills and commercial acumen along with an evidenced substantial track record of industry sales success; the company also noted the following ability:

Demonstrate proven ability to develop superior and respectful healthcare professional relationships, whilst driving the agenda.

In summary, job description #6 was clear regarding having empowerment, responsibility, accountability, planning and knowledge management along with leadership and influencing. Also, the document stated the importance of a collaborative working style and working with teamwork, commitment, transparency, innovation, passion, fairness, honesty, perseverance and integrity, which resonated with the findings from KAM interviews and the literature review and were consistent with an SDL approach.

Similarly, the document also stated that the role required tenaciously driving for results, along with a demonstrable ability to develop superior and respectful relationships while driving the agenda, which showed an SDL partnership or joint working approach, but there was a focus towards their own company agenda, which does not fit with co-creation of value. In conclusion, job description #6 does not fully support the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value drafted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) or the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value by Lusch and Vargo (2006), but only the uniformities of an SDL approach.

6.2. Job description, thematic analysis conclusion

The results from analysing the job descriptions were not decisive regarding social/relational aspects of KAM and co-creation, as opposed to the findings from the exploratory and main study, which showed a definite move towards the FP of SDL and co-creation of value noted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a). The same can be said regarding the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of Lusch and Vargo (2006).

When reviewing the themes from each job description, the details included skills and some consistencies pertinent to an SDL approach, particularly regarding having empowerment, good planning and organisational skills, customer responsibility, accountability, knowledge management and leadership and influencing and negotiation skills, as seen in job description #6. Equally, this document also supported an SDL approach by stating the importance of a collaborative and partnership working approach which often included cross-functional working with internal/external teams, thus maximising teamwork, commitment, transparency, innovation, ingenuity, passion, fairness, honesty, perseverance and integrity, which resonated with the findings of KAM interviews, the literature review and the exploratory survey.

Nonetheless, while job description #6 and others showed an SDL approach, each focused their attentions on their own company agenda, which does not fit with co-creation of value. Job description #4 also stated that ‘debating and challenging customers’ attitudes to deliver regional strategies and initiatives to support the company’s products and disease areas’ was needed, which is totally opposite to co-creation of value and does not support the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation described by Vargo and Lusch (2008) or the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of Lusch and Vargo (2006).

In summary, the job description findings only support the uniformities of an SDL approach. In addition to skills, the job description also included being educated to degree level, as stated in job description #1. The successful applicant would also be analytical (precision) and driver (results) orientated with a proven track record. The proven track record included knowledge management and experience in the therapeutic area, the market, the environment, the product, services and regarding the company and its competitors. These were all similar and support the findings of the literature review, exploratory survey and main study.

The thematic analysis evaluation also showed that different words are used in the main study, particularly when reviewing words with a weighted percentage greater than 0.50%, as this showed that only a 22% of words used by KAMs were the same, and this was 16% for buyers. Furthermore, the matches between KAMs and buyers in the main study regarding Nvivo word frequency and weighted percentages were 70%, with value being the number one word used and service was the third for KAMs, and fourth for buyers in the main study. Yet both words were missing from the job descriptions; the two most frequently used words here were business and sales, which were very traditional and highlighted in green, which reinforced the findings that the selected job descriptions only support in a limited way towards the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creational of value of Vargo and Lusch (2008a).

The job descriptions do highlight CSFs that supported the findings of the literature review along with the KAM interviews, such as: CRM, leadership, remuneration, business plans metrics for measuring performance and providing role clarity and knowledge management and have the required personal characteristics, as seen in job description #6. In addition, the documents also indicated some consistencies with an SDL approach regarding working collaboratively or in partnership, yet all failed concerning SDL and a move towards co-creation of value as the job descriptions made it very clear that the companies were working towards their own company goals and agendas, thus preventing SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value. Table 6.6. summarises KAM skills and attribute requirements obtained from table 2.8. in the literature review for comparison against job descriptions. Table 6.7. also summarises KAM knowledge requirements for comparison in contrast to job descriptions.

Table 6.6. KAM skills and attribute requirements in contrast to job descriptions (source: author).

Skills and attributes	Job descriptions					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Relationship management, empathy, capability-driven (Day et al. 2013, p.928).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Relationship selling, managerial skills with a partnership approach (Donaldson et al. 2001, p.33).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Relationship skills and knowledge to facilitate value creation (Auh and Mengue, 2013, p.1348).		√		√		√
Competences similar to general management and senior marketing (Millman and Wilson, 1996, p.19).	√	√		√	√	√
Strategic skills (Sengupta et al. 2000, p.5).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Managerial and organisational skills (Rogers, 1999, p.62).	√	√		√	√	√
Management and customer management skills (McDonald et al. 1998, p.126).	√	√		√	√	√
Relationship selling with customer focus (Siguaw et al. 1994, p.113).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Relationship management and leadership skills (Bradford et al. 2012, p. 53).		√		√	√	√
Managing conflict with key interpersonal and partnership skills (Weitz and Bradford, 1999, p. 244).		√		√	√	√
Relationship management, trust, commitment (Bengston et al. 2013, p.532)		√	√	√	√	√

Knowledge sharing behaviour and social/relational skills (Songailiene et al. 2011, p.411).	√	√		√	√	√
Managing conflict with interpersonal and partnership skills (Weitz and Bradford, 1999, p. 244).		√		√	√	√
Knowledge management via SDL for value creating networks for co-creation (Flint et al. 2014, p.34).						
Lateral style similar to transformational leadership (Cordeiro-Nilsson and Hawamdeh, 2011, p.99).		√		√		√
Relationship and knowledge management and co-creation skills (Lusch et al. 2010, p.21).		√				√
Relationship and knowledge management and co-creation skills (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a, p.8).						√
Fostering relationships and being more strategic than tactical (Bradford et al. 1999, p.249).	√		√	√	√	√
Social/relational and co-creation skills (Bradford 2012, p.53).						
Knowledge sharing behaviour and social/relational attributes (Songailiene et al. 2011, p.411).		√	√	√	√	√
Ethical and relationship-based attributes (Durif et al. 2013, p.1566).		√		√	√	√
Relationship-based attributes supporting co-creation (Friend and Johnson, 2014, p.655).						√
Relationship-based attributes and knowledge sharing for co-creation (Terho and Jalkala, 2017, p.184).						
Relationship-based attributes for customer orientation (Teau and Protopopescu, 2015, p.67).	√	√		√	√	√

In summary, table 6.6 summarises KAM skills and attribute requirements for KAM against job descriptions and the results indicated very functional and traditional skills KAMs actually need, rather than the added value of someone with an SDL approach towards co-creation of value. Table 6.7 below summarises KAM knowledge requirements obtained from table 2.8 in the literature review, for comparison against job descriptions.

Table 6.7. KAM knowledge requirements in contrast to job descriptions (source: author).

Knowledge	Job descriptions					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Product, service, company, customer, competitor, markets, territory (Donaldson, 1998, p.47).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Customer knowledge, credit worthiness (McDonald et al. 2000, p.25).	√	√		√		√
Understanding intellectual property and valued resources (Bradford et al. 2012, p. 53).		√		√		√
Company knowledge, future product and service (Bradford 2012, p.53).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Knowledge management (Bengston et al. 2013, p.532).		√	√	√	√	√

Knowledge sharing behaviour, highly networked, market intelligence (Songailiene et al. 2011, p.411).	√	√		√	√	√
Customer knowledge acquisition, dissemination and utilisation (Salojarvi and Saarenketo, 2013, p.997).		√		√		√
Knowledge management (Razali and Juanil, 2011, p.386).		√	√	√	√	√
Knowledge management for competitive advantage (Daghfous et al. 2013, p.436).		√		√	√	√
Strategic initiatives based on customer insights and knowledge (Johnston and Marshall, 2011).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Customer knowledge, knowledge sharing creates value for co-creation (Terho and Jalkala, 2017, p.184).						
Customer knowledge, knowledge sharing creates value for co-creation (Blocker et al. 2012, p.15).						

In summary, table 6.7 summarises the knowledge requirements for KAM against job descriptions and the results again indicated very functional and traditional skills KAMs actually required rather than the added value of someone with an SDL and co-creational approach. The other interesting point is that from 2012, none of the job descriptions captured SDL or social/relational and co-creational methods.

The knowledge, skills and attributes mentioned and noted in table 6.6 and 6.7 were very functional and traditional rather than asking for the skills KAMs actually need. The job descriptions stated the obvious, the very minimum that KAMs should be, rather than the added value of someone with an SDL approach towards co-creation of value. Another interesting point regarding NVivo that established this was that 82% of the nodes/references captured regarding job descriptions related to key skills of the role and requirements of the role.

If we were to elicit CSFs for KAM from these job descriptions by selecting those skills and attributes that were included in all six job descriptions, they would be as shown in table 6.8

Table 6.8. KAM skills, attributes and knowledge included in all 6 job descriptions analysed (source: author).

Skills and attributes	Job descriptions					
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
Relationship management, empathy, capability-driven (Day et al. 2013, p.928).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Relationship selling, managerial skills with a partnership approach (Donaldson et al. 2001, p.33).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Strategic skills (Sengupta et al. 2000, p.5).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Relationship selling with customer focus (Siguaw et al. 1994, p.113).	√	√	√	√	√	√

Knowledge						
Product, service, company, customer, competitor, markets, territory (Donaldson, 1998, p.47).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Company knowledge, future product and service (Bradford 2012, p.53).	√	√	√	√	√	√
Strategic initiatives based on customer insights and knowledge (Johnston and Marshall, 2011).	√	√	√	√	√	√

The skills, knowledge and attributes mentioned in all 6 job descriptions analysed were as follows:

- Relationship management, empathy, capability-driven (Day et al. 2013, p.928).
- Relationship selling, managerial skills with a partnership approach (Donaldson et al. 2001, p.33)
- Strategic skills (Sengupta et al. 2000, p.5).
- Relationship selling with customer focus (Siguaw et al. 1994, p.113).
- Product, service, company, customer, competitor, markets, territory (Donaldson, 1998, p.47).
- Company knowledge, future product and service (Bradford 2012, p.53).
- Strategic initiatives based on customer insights and knowledge (Johnston and Marshall, 2011).

There is a clear emphasis here on relationship management/selling and partnership/customer approach. It is interesting, however, that the skills, knowledge and attributes are not all related to SDL, with selling, product, market and territory being more associated with financial goals than with co-creation of value. This demonstrates that the job descriptions are, therefore, still requiring some of the traditional skills associated with KAM even though the profession has moved towards SDL.

In conclusion, the job description findings were not entirely aligned with social/relational aspects of KAM and co-creation of value, unlike the findings from the literature review, exploratory study and main study, which showed a full support for the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value of Vargo and Lusch (2008a), and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The findings of the Job Descriptions show parallels with the resultant CSFs in the academic literature with traditional measures of success based on KPIs associated with business plans based on numerical and financial targets along with measures of success associated with customer relationships and the management of long-term relationships (see section 2.3).

The research has clearly demonstrated that there has been a distinct move towards social/relational aspects to SDL and co-creation of value that is ongoing, so future job descriptions would have to include this if they want successful KAM approaches and implementations.

7. KAM discussion, CSFs model and value model for KAM implementation

The literature review, academic theory study, exploratory survey, main study and job description analyses have now been completed. This section will discuss the findings to draw a conclusion about KAM CSFs and to develop a practical model of implementation based on SDL and co-creation of value.

7.1. KAM discussion

When reviewing the conclusions to both the literature review and the study of academic theory pertinent to KAM, it was evident that from 1983 to 2011 KAM was defined as business, functional and process driven; however, from 2012 onwards there has been a distinct change in focus from the literature towards co-creation and social/relational aspects defining KAM.

While philosophers McDonald and Woodburn (1999) just under 20 years ago suggested that strategic intent lies more with KAMs' offering and that adaptation of the selling companies offer was consistently greater than in less successful ones, along with the fact that in time a point may be reached where the buyer and the seller work together to jointly achieve problem resolution. This research which may have captured a shifted contemporary social/relational SDL and KAM thought, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships that have SDL as their dominant feature and a move towards co-creation of value.

The academic literature showed that it may have taken longer than anticipated for sales personnel to turn their attention to building relationships focusing on longer-term perspectives rather than short-term goals, which was unsurprising given job descriptions and the consequent expectations of the role. The job description findings were also not entirely aligned with social/relational aspects of KAM and co-creation of value. The results from the exploratory and main study surveys and the AI interviews showed the move towards co-creation and social/relational aspects of KAM; this included the findings from the Nvivo thematic analysis and the crossbar analysis, which fully supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value from Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

Furthermore, the exploratory and main study surveys showed interesting demographic readings concerning gender, age, qualifications, experience and management levels. The data showed that most participants in the study were male, had a university degree, were aged between 40 and 59 and had 10 or more years' experience. Also, the KAMs considered themselves to be in middle to senior management positions and predominantly worked in the Midlands, the South East or Nationally. Nonetheless, overall, the exploratory survey and main study had comparable outcomes regarding the five highest average weighted responses pertinent to social styles, with both studies showing participants self-reporting as driver (results) or analyst (precision), from Bolton and Bolton's (1984) social style methodology. This method defined social styles using keywords to describe their social motivation and placing them into one of four quadrants; the traits of assertiveness and emotional responsiveness were reliant on individuals identifying their own style correctly. Yet, Bolton and Bolton (1984) admitted that the success rate for this is 50% and while buyers verified prospective KAMs social styles, verification did not include feedback from other people through a structured feedback format, or by using specific instruments.

Nevertheless, after analysing each of the self-reported responses in detail, the overall mean average when considering all answers, including the top five average weighted answers was highest for analyst and driver, rather than driver and analyst; nonetheless, the overall findings remained the same for each of the responses. Yet it must be noted that this was exploratory and further research would be required for firmer conclusions to be drawn considering Bolton and Bolton's (1984) suggestions regarding using conventionally recommended methods such as a structured feedback format, or specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles. While the KAMs responses were verified by buyers, the buyers self-reported social styles was precision-orientated, this was not conducted through a structured feedback format using specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles, and the sample for buyers was not big enough to draw a meaningful comparison but was included for exploratory purposes. The other demographic data was also included merely for interest and exploratory purposes.

Furthermore, the exploratory survey's purpose was to support and develop the main study questions based around the FP of SDL described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) which measured outcomes in the exploratory survey by using a weighting ranking criterion and showed that there was a distinct move towards SDL-based KAM that would lead to co-creation. The main study included a survey in part 1, and part 2 included an AI semi-structured interview, which confirmed similar findings and, like the exploratory survey, agreed with the conceptual transitions' concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value (Lusch and Vargo, 2006). In addition, all the results based on the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) concluded that both KAMs and buyers, regarding FP4, FP6, FP9 and FP10, stated that knowledge gained through interaction with the customer was fundamental to competitive advantage, FP4, the customer was the co-creator of value, FP6, and that value was always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, FP10. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).)

Also, the results of the exploratory survey, shown in table 4.6, which presented the FP-based questions ranking results summary, confirmed that the FP1 question relating to service being the fundamental basis of exchange (economic exchange involves providing mutual service) had the highest average weighting and was ranked 1. FP3 and FP4 questions followed and were ranked 2. These questions related to goods being a distribution mechanism for service provision (SDL, the basis of exchange, always involves service provision; goods are used for service) and operant resources being the fundamental source of competitive advantage (operant resources were usually intangible and dynamic. SDL provided a refocus by shifting to value-creation processes). Comparable weightings applied to FP8 question, ranked 3; the question here was 'a service-centered view is inherently customer orientated and relational. (SDL relationships underpin how value is created in service-for-service exchange to form value-creating processes.)' This question was closely followed by FP2 and FP10 questions, both ranked at number 4. These questions related to the idea that indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange (exchanging competencies for the competencies of others; exchanging service for service) and the notion that value was always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9)). The customer was always the co-creator of value (co-creation of value describes the process of joint application of operant resources among companies and customers to create benefit) is ranked 5 with FP6.

The review of job descriptions included Nvivo thematic analysis and noted the most frequently used words were business and sales, which were very traditional, and business and functional, as opposed to the findings in the main study, which showed that value, service and customer were the most frequently used words and that these related to social/relational aspects of KAM that lead to co-creation of value. This was followed by an Nvivo analysis pertinent to buyers who reiterated the findings of KAMs by using the words value and service, which was then followed by a crossbar analysis confirming that the themes of all respondents, including KAMs and buyers, were comparable to an SDL approach that included social/relational aspects and led to co-creation, thereby supporting the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value noted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a).

In addition, while the job descriptions included some CSFs that supported the findings from the literature review and the interviews pertinent to CRM, leadership, remuneration, business plan metrics for measuring performance and providing role clarity, knowledge management and personal characteristics, as seen in job description #6, the job descriptions also indicated some consistencies with an SDL approach regarding working collaboratively or in partnership. However, job description #6 also included debating and challenging the customers' attitudes to deliver regional strategies and initiatives to support the company's products and disease areas, which was totally at odds with co-creation. In addition, all job descriptions fail regarding SDL and co-creation of value due to all job descriptions making it very clear that the companies were working towards their own company goals and agendas, thus thwarting SDL and co-creation. The job descriptions mentioned very functional and traditional skills and personal characteristics being needed rather than describing the skills KAMs actually need. The job descriptions stated the obvious, the very minimum that KAMs should be, rather than the added value of someone with an SDL approach towards co-creation of value.

Moreover, the job descriptions noted the importance of working with empowerment, responsibility, accountability, planning and knowledge management, along with supportive leadership and influencing and negotiation and listening skills. In addition, a social/relational and collaborative working style and the ability to work in partnership and cross-functionally with internal/external teams were required, as were agility, commitment, transparency, ingenuity, trust, honesty, perseverance and integrity. Also the requirements of the role noted being educated to degree level, analytical and results-orientated with a proven track record of knowledge management and experience regarding the therapeutic area, the market, the environment, the product, services, the company and competitors, supporting the exploratory survey and main study findings. The overall findings were similar regarding having accountability, skills in knowledge, relationship building, knowledge management and the ability to use CRM as a resource, as well as regarding being empowered to make decisions about implementation and being accountable and responsible for business plans and objectives. Additionally, accountability and taking ownership of business plans resonated with the study, as does including a compensation plan that supported the company goals and was aligned with performance. The business plans were owned by KAMs but involved the active participation of senior management, who supported the process with a supportive leadership style.

This research appeared to show that companies understand skills and business/functional aspects and the importance of social/relational characteristics, including the relevant skills and working collaboratively in cross-functional teams, in joint or partnership working, as noted in job description #6, which showed some consistencies with an SDL approach. However, the job descriptions also suggested that some companies don't seem to want to work towards a SDL and co-creation of value approach, which would lead to shared goals, objectives and strategies.

Many KAMs, as confirmed in the main study have moved towards and continue to move towards social/relational and co-creational aspects, fully supporting the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006). With this in mind, the research clearly demonstrated a distinct and current move towards social/relational aspects and SDL and co-creation, so future job descriptions will need to be revised to include these to ensure successful future approaches and implementations.

The discussion suggested that a change from SDL to social/relational aspects that leads to co-creation of value was contemporary, and companies with a traditional mindset may need to change the type of personnel they recruit, including those in HR and management who write job descriptions; indeed some companies may require training and developing to recognise the required skills and competencies that this research addresses. Furthermore, amendments of future job descriptions would need to refer to shared agendas and working towards shared goals/objectives of SDL that lead to co-creation of value and a competitive advantage. This was noted by the KAMs' interview responses, which supported the FP of SDL that caused co-creational of value described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a), and was captured by T8, who noted that 'it is virtually impossible to deliver value without the customer'. T8's views underlines the importance of SDL and co-creation of value for successful KAM approaches and implementations. When reviewing the existing literature, it was clear that there were no studies at that time that addressed KAMs using an SDL approach forming co-creation of value, so this study addresses this.

In summary, the data for the six job descriptions was relatively small and so was the number of procurement buyers who participated, and the idea that the data for these elements could be used to make a meaningful comparison could be challenged. However, the data from the job descriptions was provided independently from a recruitment agency and the documents were obtained from highly regarded companies in sales and KAM. The selected buyers merely verified responses of the KAMs from the main study survey and the interviews. The results regarding the buyers were very similar to those of the KAMs but buyers had a different perspective. The buyers were interested in purchasing efficiently at the most cost-effective price while maintaining collaborative relationships which supported SDL and its move towards co-creational aspects, while ensuring that the leadership valued people and business so that the relevant skills could be retained.

This view was shared by Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015), who suggested that the importance of buyer-seller's interaction was value co-creation; it enabled co-creation and engaging in value-generating processes, which were more complex processes than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. Similarly, Van Weele (2014) stated that procurement teams have a strategic focus that included developing relations with suppliers to understand customer characteristics, benefiting supplier and buyer companies in terms of co-creation.

Pardo et al. (2014) stated that it was important for managers of KAM programmes to take a proactive, integrative approach by using their ability to communicate, influence and persuade, and by enlisting not just the tacit support of senior managers but their involvement. This supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation noted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a), the notion that co-creation required joint application of operant resources among buyers and sellers, and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL and then towards the customer, forming co-creation of value.

The overall findings from the exploratory survey and the main study captured shifting contemporary thought about KAMs and buyers, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships, showing a distinct move from KAM to strategic partnerships. Furthermore, KAM required an SDL approach and CSFs in order to support co-creation of value. The CSFs noted in table 5.34 (see section 5.8.3) with associated FP have been obtained from the research, in addition to the literature. The new model for and the new approach to implementation include the CSFs researched, which are underpinned by SDL and co-creational of value aspects that are required for successful implementations.

7.2. KAM critical success factors (CSFs) model

The CSFs model in figure 7.2 was developed upon the findings in the literature review and the primary research. The model consisted of CSFs which underpinned KAM by SDL and social/relational aspects towards co-creation of value. The CSFs model is developed for organisations for strategic purposes and the table outlines long-term CSFs which were linked to FP of SDL by Vargo and Lusch (2008a), along with conceptual transitions concepts by Lusch and Vargo (2006). This strategic model is developed for senior management and HR personnel who may be involved with recruitment.

The context to the CSFs featured in table 7.2 along with circle size are associated with how important to the model the circled factor is. Also, the model confirmed that skills and experience were equally important for an SDL to co-creational approach, whereas, all other factors were slightly less, including remuneration which is the smallest circle and featured in the interviews on only a few occasions regarding bonuses being linked to sales performance, rather than social/relational means.

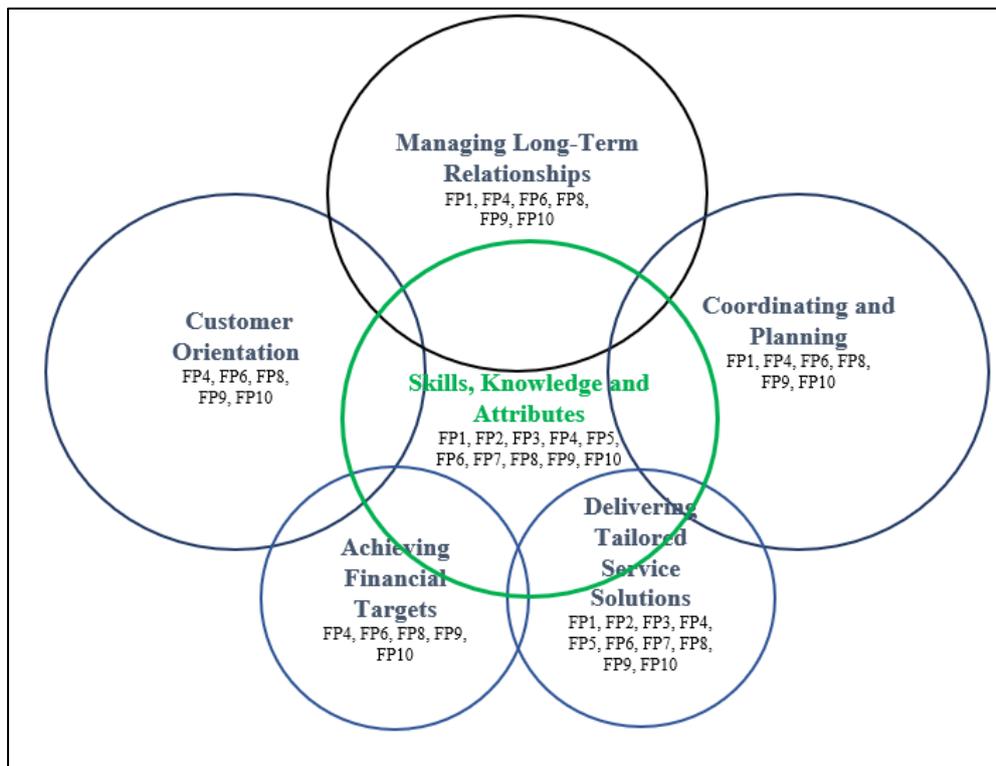


Figure 7.2. KAM CSFs model which underpins KAM by SDL and co-creation (source: author).

The CSFs model was ultimately underpinned by SDL and co-creation. It included working using a collaborative, social/relational and partnership working approach, with a shared agenda forming co-creation. The circle sizes in the model reflected the level of importance and the model showed a distinct move that fully supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of Lusch and Vargo (2006).

CRM enables resources like co-creation of value, value networks and customer relationships to form a dominant logic for marketing and other departments that was entirely focused on services provision rather than goods as the central aspect of economic exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). The importance of the relationship quality and relational capabilities also suggested links with SDL and CRM, according to Gounaris and Tzempelikos (2013). In addition, the links with KAM and CRM were conspicuous, and the stronger the relationship, the better the chances of maintaining and growing key accounts; the primary research showed this, with T12 confirming the importance of partnership working, that incorporating the service needs of the customer in a collaborative manner provided competitive advantage and that this was achieved by cross-functional and joint working which supported knowledge through interactions with the customer, signifying the value, and using CRM as a resource.

Also, business processes included having the ability to develop business planning, including KPIs (Scorecards) and organisational and communication skills, and these were all linked to CRM. The need for a supportive leadership style was drawn out of the primary data, and when analysing the context and comparing this with the findings from the literature review, the terminology used aligned with that used to describe a transformational leadership style.

Examples of this were shown by T6, who confirmed the importance of having empowerment and having good management that supports, guides and ‘is like a mentor to look up and aspire to’, T3, who affirmed the importance of a supportive manager which supported business plans and decisions, and T9, who confirmed that a supportive senior management culture that helped to deliver and build successful relationships was required. The literature review confirmed that the transformational leadership approach exhibits charismatic behaviours to stir inspirational motivation and provides intellectual stimulation while treating followers with individualised consideration (Dvir et al., 2002). This method also involved active participation of senior management while empowering KAMs to make decisions.

Role clarity was a paramount factor and was also drawn out of the literature review and compared with the findings in the primary research, along with job descriptions. The literature review confirmed that KAMs were susceptible to pressures due to disparate expectations from companies, colleagues, customers and management and that the different aspects of the role may become incompatible and there may be tension, resulting in lower job satisfaction which, in turn, may influence job performance. Pardo et al.’s (2013) comments suggested that definitions of KAM roles included working in an integrated and cooperative way during implementation in order to reduce inherent conflicts, which resonated with the findings of Vargo and Lusch (2008a), who noted that a collaborative and partnership working approach encouraged co-creation of value for customers.

T1 emphasised the importance of having empowerment and that they were the business lead and marketing and other functions were there to support their plans to drive the business, with the customer’s input and contributions.

Moreover, the KAM role required role clarity, which in turn increases their empowerment, job satisfaction and productivity, especially when working with internal or external teams supporting collaborative working and social/relational aspects, and therefore reduces possible inherent conflicts. Role clarity was also important for service elements, which Vargo and Lusch (2008a) noted were vital for SDL to move towards co-creation of value. It must also be noted that job descriptions were often aspirational and attractive and do not necessarily reflect the actual role.

When reviewing remuneration, reward methods and measuring performance, it was noted in the primary research, with T2 in particular, that sales were directly linked to compensation and therefore performance was evaluated on sales performance via scorecards in numerical terms rather than in terms of social/relational and co-creational means, which the literature review noted needed to be considered. The literature also confirmed that scorecards could include financial and non-financial metrics and help KAMs understand each stake-holders requirement (Richardson, 2014). The drawbacks of the balanced scorecard were the focus on financial metrics, nonetheless, the balanced scorecards could help KAMs influence what client's value according to Richardson (2014). Also, this method is considered an interactive type of control system supporting a bottom-up approach aiding facilitation of communication between various hierarchical levels, supporting and promoting progress and innovation (Biazzo and Garengo, 2012).

However, the literature review and the primary research were consistent and noted that sales performance and income generation required scorecard metrics pertinent to social/relational aspects of the relationship to be considered, also considering Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) observation that collaborative and partnership working supported co-creation of value. The conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation by Lusch and Vargo's (2006) concluded the same. Teau and Protopopescu (2015) also stated that scorecards in the form of KPIs could also help management to coach conversations and to review and measure performance. Nonetheless, the literature review and the primary research concluded that compensation required measurable short- and long-term objectives but needed to include social/relational processes and knowledge management aspects, which in return yield deeper relationships and thus better performance, as suggested by Salojarvi and Sainio (2010).

Flint et al. (2014) affirmed the importance of knowledge management and averred that management of knowledge flow among suppliers within and across companies was critical, which was like the details captured in the primary research, with T2 stating that they had a special division and network that could source anything for their customers, which provided a service and gave them a competitive advantage. Furthermore, Flint et al. (2014) noted that because SDL required value-creating networks, which integrated resources including skill requirements, this would improve effectiveness. This concept was supported by Auh and Menguc (2013), who stated that accountability, skills including knowledge management and assets that facilitated value creation with customers were important. Similarly, Lusch et al. (2010) confirmed the importance of value networks for co-creation and the important roles of management, relationships and competencies in achieving this.

Moreover, sellers can demonstrate commitment to buyers, as outlined by Rogers (2007), by understanding their goals and requirements in order to share ideas, necessitating a joint measurement for co-creation, and this could work alongside customer satisfaction incentives, which Widmier (2002) claimed motivated KAMs.

Likewise, Fard and Hosseini (2015) suggested that commitment provided positive and meaningful relationships as did SDL concepts, including value propositions forming co-creation of value. These views were like the findings of Vargo and Lusch (2008a), who described the FP of SDL that cause a move towards co-creation, and these views resonated with the primary research; T10 stated that they worked with customers to find out their needs and then worked with them to problem solve and achieve implementation, as the customer determined the value. Similarly, T3 noted that ‘no one wins, unless everyone wins’ when discussing partnership working with customers.

The KAM role has developed over the years, and management skills involving both organising the work and motivating people to do it were a critical component (Rogers, 2007). This idea was noted in the job descriptions, the primary research and the literature review; also mentioned were accountability, which required increased skills in knowledge, relationship building and sharing customer information and assets, essentially co-creation as stated by Auh and Menguc (2013) and Friend and Johnson (2014). However, training and developing skills and competencies may indeed be specific to individual customers in terms of business functions and processes, yet social/relational and co-creational skills may be required and could be deemed personal characteristics rather than developed during a process. After all, as T8 noted, it was virtually impossible to deliver value without the customer. T8 also suggested that this required social/relational skills to work on service provision that would move towards co-creation of value, and all respondents confirmed that value was determined/judged by the customer. Finally, T14 also reiterated the importance of working in partnership with SDL towards co-creation of value.

In addition, the skills and experience that KAMs confirmed were important in the primary research were integrity, trust, listening skills, ingenuity, experience, degree educated, driven and the ability to work in partnership, often being involved in collaboration and cross-functional project management with internal/external teams, and these were considered important and were noted in job descriptions. This was also true for the buyers in the primary research and supported social/relational and co-creational skill requirements. Also, buyers T13 and T15 confirmed that they worked with KAMs who were personable and those they had had experience of working with, further supporting social/relational aspects including co-creation.

In the main study the findings regarding skill set requirements for buyers were like those of sellers but buyers had a different perspective, as confirmed in the literature review and the primary research. The buyers were interested in purchasing efficiently at the most cost-effective price while maintaining cooperative relationships supporting SDL, social/relational and co-creational aspects and ensuring that the leadership valued people and business so that the relevant proficiencies could be retained. Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) confirmed that buyer–seller interaction was crucial for enabling co-creation and engaging in value-generating processes, which were more complex processes than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. Likewise, Vargo and Lusch (2008a) noted that co-creation requires joint application of operant resources by buyers and sellers, and Lusch and Vargo’s (2006, p. 286) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted that the customer is always the co-creator of value. Vargo and Lusch (2014, p. 243) also observed that ‘value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary’.

In summary, the research showed a distinct move from KAM towards strategic partnerships for co-creation of value. The CSFs model was developed for strategic purposes and displays KAM CSFs, including:

1. Managing long-term relationships (CRM)
2. Coordination of planning of business process, for example, resources, accounts, functions, policy, etc
3. Customer orientation
4. Delivering tailored solutions
5. Achieving financial targets

The CSFs are underpinned by SDL-based KAM and co-creational approach. Thus, this research captured a shifted contemporary thought about SDL-based KAM changing to become more social/relational, in which KAM was seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships that moved towards co-creation of value.

7.3. Value model for KAM practitioners

The value model for KAM practitioners featured in figure 7.3 is developed for personnel for tactical purposes and is a guide for practitioners. The model can be used to help write job descriptions to ensure that all these elements are considered when designing a KAM role. The model could also be used in the design of appraisal and performance measurement systems.

The research shows that to be successful, KAMs social styles needed to be driver (results) and/or analyst (precision) orientated, based on Bolton and Bolton's (1984) social style psychological profiles. In addition, KAMs required the skills, competencies and experience noted in the CSFs, which included managing long-term relationships (CRM), the coordination of planning of business process, customer orientation, delivering tailored services and achieving financial targets all of which are supported by FP and underpinned by an SDL-based KAM and co-creational approach.

The FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a, p. 8) confirmed that both KAMs and buyers, regarding FP4, FP6, FP9 and FP10, required knowledge gained through interaction which was fundamental to their competitive advantage, FP4, thought that the customer was the co-creator of value, FP6, and confirmed that value was always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, FP10. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).)

Furthermore, the value model for KAM practitioners required an SDL and co-creational approach, including a collaborative, social/relational and partnership working method, with shared agendas forming co-creation of value. The research showed that this was executed by KAMs who work with mainly driver (results) and/or analyst (precision) social styles. Ultimately, the value model for KAM practitioners is a methodology that drives a definite move that fully supports the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value of Lusch and Vargo (2006) to achieve successful KAM approaches and implementations.

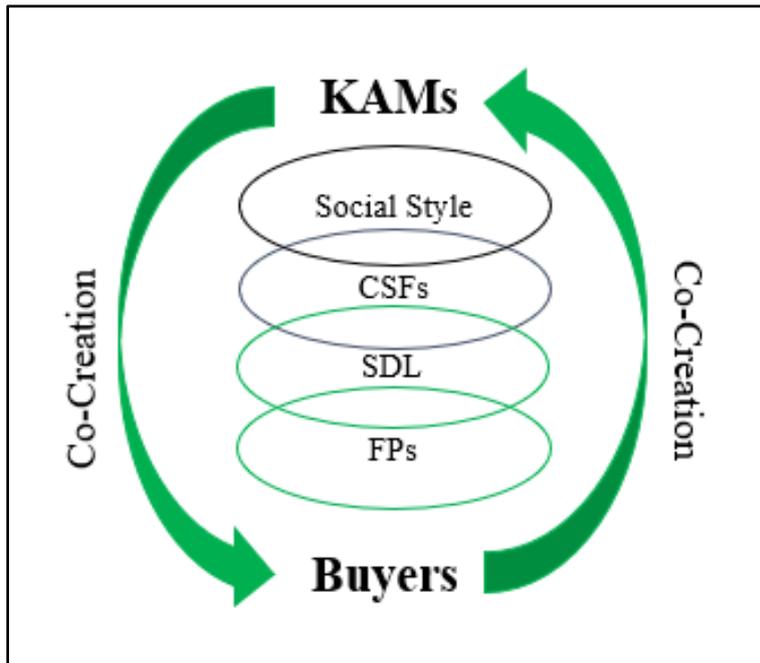


Figure 7.3. Value model for KAM practitioners – all elements to be considered when designing a KAM role (source: author).

In summary, this research confirmed a distinct move from KAM towards strategic partnerships for co-creation of value. The value model for KAM practitioners displays the FP, CSFs and social style requirements for successful implementations with an SDL and co-creational approach and the model captures a shifting contemporary thought about SDL that changes to social/relational KAM, in which KAM is seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships that move towards co-creation in which value is determined by the beneficiary, which supports the views of Vargo and Lusch (2014, p. 243).

In conclusion, the findings confirmed that KAM has moved towards strategic partnerships with an emphasis on key account relationships (KAR) rather than Management. The model covers the CSFs in CRM, and SDL, and provides guidance for issues in business processes, leadership roles, role clarity, remuneration and performance measurement, knowledge management, and skills, competencies and experience.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the research study objectives have been met and answered. This research captures a shifting contemporary KAM approach where KAM is seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships, leading to the development of strategic partnerships. The study finds that amongst KAMs whilst there is strong recognition of CSFs in KAM, CRM, and SDL, there are inconsistent and weak applications in practice. The study explores the reasons for this and proposes that more work is needed to better interpret and translate the language and rhetoric and theoretical principles. A new model for KAM is proposed showing the CSFs for implementation and a shift of emphasis from KAM to Key Account Relationships (KAR), towards strategic partnerships.

The literature review also confirmed that the philosophers McDonald and Woodburn (1999) noted that in time a point may be reached when buyers and sellers worked together to achieve joint problem resolution. More recently, Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) confirmed that buyer–seller interaction was important for value co-creation because it enabled co-creation and engaging in value-generating processes. Equally, Flint et al. (2014) confirmed the importance of sharing information and integrating resources and knowledge management skills, essentially through SDL and value-creating networks supporting co-creation. Likewise, the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation noted by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) affirmed that co-creation required joint application of operant resources by buyers and sellers, and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value confirmed that the customer was always the co-creator of value. These studies underpin the results of the literature review and the main research results; the questions were based on the FP of SDL and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation due to the evidence discovered about the change in focus towards co-creation and social/relational aspects now defining KAM.

The notion of defining KAM as a discipline was uncovered during the literature review; it was also found that SDL, co-creation and social/relational aspects defined KAM and that internal alignment rather than aligning with customers was often the first challenge faced by KAM programmes; finally, it was revealed that for the approach to be successful, CSFs for KAMs required knowledge of CRM, transformational leadership, role clarity, remuneration, measurement of performance via scorecards and knowledge management. The personal characteristics of KAMs, or rather certain social styles, required further research due to the limited data available in this study.

CRM-enabled resources like co-creation of value, value networks and customer relationships form a dominant logic for marketing and other departments entirely focused on services provision rather than goods as the central aspect of economic exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). Also, the importance of the relationship quality and relational capabilities showed links to SDL and CRM (Gounaris and Tzempelikos, 2013). Transformational leadership was another factor of KAM success, and this approach exhibited charismatic behaviours that caused inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation while treating followers with individualised consideration, as noted by Dvir et al. (2002). This method also involved active participation of senior management while empowering KAMs to make decisions.

Moreover, KAMs required role clarity and were susceptible to pressures due to disparate expectations from companies, colleagues, customers and management, and if these expectations become incompatible, there may be tension, resulting in lower job satisfaction which, in turn, may influence job performance. Pardo et al. (2013) suggested that definitions of KAM roles included working in an integrated and cooperative way and implementing partnership working to reduce inherent conflicts. Similarly, Vargo and Lusch (2008a) noted that collaborative and partnership working were essential to support co-creation of value for customers.

When reviewing remuneration and reward methods and those based on sales performance and sales generation, the social/relational aspects of the relationship also needed to be considered, in line with Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) observation that collaborative and partnership working supported co-creation of value, and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL and then co-creation; the findings were comparable for both methods of compensation. The balanced scorecards could help KAMs influence what client's value (Richardson, 2014) and are also considered an interactive type of control system supporting a bottom-up approach aiding facilitation of communication between various hierarchical levels, supporting and promoting progress and innovation (Biazzo and Garengo, 2012) while, measure performance with financial and non-financial metrics. Similarly, Makkonen and Olkkonen (2013) stated that scorecard methods stimulated and steered the adaptation and coordination of activities, sales managers can also refer to scorecards in the form of KPIs during coaching conversations to boost, review and measure performance (Teau and Protopopescu, 2015). Compensation must also relate to measurable short- and long-term objectives and include social/relational processes and knowledge management aspects, which in return yield deeper relationships and thus better performance, as confirmed by Salojarvo and Sainio (2010).

Flint et al. (2014) affirmed the importance of SDL requiring value-creating networks and integrating resources, including skill requirements, to improve effectiveness, which is supported by Auh and Menguc (2013), who observed the importance of accountability and skills, including knowledge management, and assets that facilitate value creation with customers. Also, Flint et al. (2014) averred that management of knowledge flow among suppliers was critical. Furthermore, Lusch et al. (2010) stated that value networks for co-creation and management roles were important, and so were relationships and the competencies needed to achieve these relationships. Likewise, Fard and Hosseini (2015) suggested that positive and meaningful relationships and SDL concepts, including value propositions for co-creation of value were important. In addition, these views were like the findings of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) confirming the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation. Also, although training and developing skills and competencies may indeed be specific to individual customers in terms of business functions and processes, social/relational and co-creation skills may also be required, and these were deemed to be personal characteristics rather than aspects that are developed during a process.

The methodology used in the primary research to seek data about the characteristics of KAMs was surveys; Bolton and Bolton's (1984) four social styles approach was used, and it suggests that people tend to fall into one of four styles. The authors noted that each person had a dominant style that influenced the way they talked and interacted with others. The predominant style was often one that was described as comfortable, frequently used and one that was used throughout interactions; the four styles were driver, analyst, expressive and amiable. Driver and analyst were also considered task orientated, and expressive and amiable people orientated.

When reviewing Bolton and Bolton's (1984) social style psychological profiles, the self-reported social styles for KAMs showed as 'results and/or precision-orientated'. These findings were reflected in the exploratory and main study with driver and analytical ability requirements were confirmed as CSFs, accompanied by aspects including integrity, educated to degree level and having 10 or more years' experience.

The links between KAMs and buyers strategy were considered to identify integrated processes, and it was confirmed that the necessary competencies and skill set requirements for buyers were like those for sellers, even personal characteristic social styles identified by Bolton and Bolton (1984), but buyers had a different perspective. Buyers were interested in purchasing efficiently at the most cost-effective price while maintaining cooperative relationships supporting SDL, social/relational and co-creational aspects and ensuring that the leadership valued people and business so that the relevant proficiencies could be retained. Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) confirmed that buyer-seller interaction was the nucleus of value co-creation and was characterised by interactions with a sense of commitment, common goals, dialogue, shared interests, enabling co-creation, and engaging in value-generating processes, which were more complex processes than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. Similarly, Vargo and Lusch (2008a) noted that co-creation required joint application of operant resources by buyers and sellers, and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation stated that the customer was always the co-creator of value.

The primary research also confirmed that seller-buyer interactions are the centre of value co-creation and are characterised by interactions with a sense of commitment, common goals, dialogue and shared interest, enabling co-creation, and engaging in value-generating processes, which were more complex processes than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) noted similar complex processes, as did Vargo and Lusch (2008a), who stated that co-creation required joint application of operant resources by buyers and sellers; Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted that the customer was the co-creator of value, and all of these observations resonated with all respondents in the main study, the exploratory survey and the data arising from the literature review. KAMs and buyers, according to the exploratory and main study findings and the literature review, focused on SDL that included social/relational and co-creational skills that have evolved as well as on management that had a supportive leadership style that embraced collaborative and partnership working.

Also, the relationship between KAMs and buyers had evolved and was more social/relational and partnership based and had moved towards SDL and co-creation of value, resonating with the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation affirmed by Lusch and Vargo (2006). This research captured a shifted contemporary thought about KAMs and buyers, in which KAMs were facilitators of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships. FP4 and FP6 were conclusive regarding the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer being fundamental to competitive advantage, FP4, and the customer being the co-creator of value, FP6, and also the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted by Lusch and Vargo (2006).

The Nvivo word frequency analysis supported the notion that SDL led to co-creation; KAMs' top 3 words were value, customer and service. Value and service were also the buyers' top and 4th word respectively. In addition, over 70% of the same words were selected by both KAMs and buyers (of those with a greater average weighting of less than 0.50%), confirming the move to SDL and then towards co-creation of value. In addition, the crossbar analysis for KAMs and buyers showed consistency, particularly with FP4, FP6, FP9 and FP10, that is, that the knowledge gained through interaction with the customer was fundamental to competitive advantage, FP4, the customer was the co-creator of value, FP6, and value was always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, FP10. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).)

When regards to role requirements, KAMs and buyers revealed that KAMs needed to be accountable and to have skills in knowledge, relationship building, sharing customer information, assets, training, business functions and processes, essentially pointing towards SDL and co-creation, which aligned with the literature review. Integrity, trust, listening skills, ingenuity and the ability to work in partnership, often involving collaboration and cross-functional project management with internal/external teams, were also considered important for KAMs, which were all social, relational and co-creational skills. T13 and T15 buyers stated that they worked with KAMs who were personable and those they had had experience of working with, further supporting social/relational aspects, including co-creation. All buyers had an analyst-orientated social style.

The CSFs model was developed for strategic purposes and covers CRM, and SDL, and provides guidance for issues in business processes, leadership roles, role clarity, remuneration and performance measurement, knowledge management, and skills, competencies and experience. The model included using a collaborative, social/relational and partnership working approach with a shared agenda to form co-creation. Ultimately, the model reflected a definite move to fully supporting the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation (Lusch and Vargo, 2006).

CRM-enabled resources like co-creation of value, value networks and customer relationships form a dominant logic for marketing and other departments entirely focused on services provision rather than goods as the central aspect of economic exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a). The importance of the relationship quality and relational capabilities also suggested links with SDL and CRM, according to Gounaris and Tzempelikos (2013). In addition, the links with KAM and CRM were conspicuous; the stronger the relationship, the better the chances of maintaining and growing key accounts would be, and the primary research confirmed this, with T12 confirming the importance of partnership working and incorporating the service needs of the customer in a collaborative manner and noting that this provided competitive advantage and was achieved by cross-functional and joint working, which supported knowledge through interactions with the customer, signifying the value, and using CRM as a resource. In addition, business processes included having the ability to develop business planning, including scorecards in the form of KPIs, and organisational and communication skills were both linked to CRM.

The importance of having a supportive leadership style was drawn out of the primary data and when analysing the data and comparing it with the literature review, the terminology aligned with that used to describe a transformational leadership style. Examples illustrating this were T6, who confirmed the importance of having empowerment and good management that supported, guided and 'is like a mentor to look up and aspire to'; T3 affirmed the importance of having a supportive manager who supported business plans and decisions; and T9 confirmed that a supportive senior management culture that helped to deliver and build successful relationships was required. The literature review showed that the transformational leadership approach exhibited charismatic behaviours to stir inspirational motivation and provided intellectual stimulation while treating followers with individualised consideration (Dvir et al., 2002). This method also involved active participation of senior management while empowering KAMs to make decisions.

Role clarity was a paramount factor and was also drawn out of the literature review and compared with the findings in the primary research, along with job descriptions. While the literature research showed that KAMs were susceptible to pressures due to disparate expectations from companies, colleagues, customers and management and that these expectations may become incompatible, resulting in tensions and potentially lowering job satisfaction which, in turn, may influence job performance. Pardo et al. (2013) suggested that definitions of KAM roles included working in an integrated, cooperative and partnership way to reduce inherent conflicts; Vargo and Lusch (2008a) similarly noted that a collaborative and partnership working approach encouraged co-creation of value for customers. T1 emphasised the importance of having empowerment and that they were the business lead and marketing and other functions were there to support their plans to drive the business, with the customer's in joint and partnership working. The KAM role requires role clarity, which in turn increases the level of empowerment, job satisfaction and productivity, especially when working with internal or external teams supporting collaborative working and social/relational aspects and therefore reducing possible inherent conflicts. Role clarity also ensured that the right skills and competencies were used to deliver service requirements; Vargo and Lusch (2008a) noted that the right skills and competencies were vital to SDL and to the co-creation of value. It must also be noted that the job descriptions referred to earlier were often aspirational and attractive and did not always necessarily reflect the role in place.

When reviewing remuneration, reward methods and measuring performance, the primary research noted, with T2 in particular, that sales were directly linked to compensation and therefore performance was evaluated according to sales performance in numerical terms rather than according to social/relational and co-creational performance, which the literature review noted needed to be considered and scorecards to include financial and non-financial metrics to help KAMs understand each stake-holders requirement, along with shaping them (Richardson, 2014). The literature review and the primary research noted that sales performance and income generation required social/relational aspects of the relationship to be considered in line with Vargo and Lusch's (2008a) observation that collaborative and partnership working supported co-creation of value. The conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL and then co-creation made the same conclusion (Lusch and Vargo, 2006). Makkonen and Olkkonen (2013) stated that compensation facilitated business exchange but also stimulated and steered the adaptation and coordination of activities, which according to Teau and Protopopescu (2015) required sales managers to refer to scorecard KPIs during coaching conversations and to review and measure performance.

Nonetheless, the literature review and the primary research concluded that compensation required measurable short- and long-term objectives but needed to include scorecards based on social/relational processes and knowledge management aspects, which in return yield deeper relationships and thus better performance, as noted by Salojarvi and Sainio (2010).

Flint et al. (2014) affirmed the importance of knowledge management and averred that management of knowledge flow among suppliers within and across companies was critical, which was like the details captured in the primary research, with T2 stating that they had a special division and network that could source anything for their customers, which provided a service and gave them a competitive advantage. Furthermore, Flint et al. (2014) noted that because SDL required value-creating networks, integrating resources, including skill requirements, this improves effectiveness. This concept was supported by Auh and Menguc (2013), who confirmed the importance of accountability and skills, including knowledge management, and assets that facilitate value creation with customers.

Similarly, Lusch et al. (2010) confirmed the importance of value networks for co-creation of value and the important roles of management, relationships and competencies in achieving this. Moreover, sellers can demonstrate commitment to buyers, as outlined by Rogers (2007), by understanding their goals and requirements and sharing ideas, necessitating a joint measurement for co-creation, and this could work alongside customer satisfaction incentives, which Widmier (2002) claimed motivated KAMs. Likewise, Fard and Hosseini (2015) suggested that commitment provided positive and meaningful relationships, and so did SDL concepts, including value propositions for co-creation of value. These views were similar to the findings of Vargo and Lusch (2008a), who noted the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation, and these views resonated with the primary research, with T10 stating that they worked with customers to find out their 'needs and requirements' and then worked together to problem solve and implement the strategy, with the customer determining the value. Similarly, T3 observed that 'no one wins, unless everyone wins' when discussing partnership working with customers.

The KAM role has developed over the years and management skills involving both organising the work and motivating people to do it is a critical component (Rogers, 2007). This idea was noted in the job descriptions, primary research and literature review, along with accountability, which required increased skills in knowledge management, relationship building and sharing customer information and assets, essentially co-creation as stated by Auh and Menguc (2013) and Friend and Johnson (2014). Training and developing skills and competencies may indeed be specific to individual customers in terms of business functions and processes, yet social/relational and co-creation skills may be required and could be deemed personal characteristics rather than developed during a process. After all, as T8 observed, it was virtually impossible to deliver value without the customer. T8 also suggested delivering value required having social/relational skills and working on service provision that would lead to co-creation of value, and all respondents stated that value was determined/judged by the customer. Finally, T14 also reiterated the importance of working in partnership with SDL to work towards co-creation of value.

In addition, when reviewing the skills, competencies and experience that were noted by KAMs in the primary research, integrity, trust, listening skills, ingenuity, being experienced, being educated to degree level, being driven and having the ability to work in partnership, often involving collaboration and cross-functional project management with internal/external teams, were considered important and noted in job descriptions.

This was also the same for buyers in the primary research, and this supported the social/relational and co-creational skill requirements. Buyers T13 and T15 confirmed that they worked with KAMs who were personable and those they had had experience of working with, further supporting social/relational aspects including co-creation. Buyers were interested in purchasing efficiently at the most cost-effective price while maintaining cooperative relationships supporting SDL, social/relational and co-creational aspects and ensuring that the leadership valued people and business so that the relevant proficiencies were retained. Van Weele (2014) noted that procurement teams have a strategic focus and develop relations with suppliers to understand customers' characteristics, benefiting supplier and buyer companies because this leads to co-creation. Bauman and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh (2015) drafted that buyer-seller interactions were crucial for enabling co-creation and engaging in value-generating processes, which were more complex process than the delivery and consumption of a standard service. Likewise, Vargo and Lusch (2008a) noted that co-creation requires joint application of operant resources by buyers and sellers, and Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation noted that the customer was always the co-creator of value; Vargo and Lusch (2014, p. 243) observed that 'value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary'.

The conclusions drawn from reviewing the job descriptions included Nvivo thematic analysis, which noted that the most frequently used words were business and sales, which were very traditional and business/functional, as opposed to the findings of the main study, which showed that the words value, service and customer, relating to social/relational aspects that lead to co-creation of value, were the most frequently used. The thematic analysis was followed by an Nvivo analysis of buyers, who like KAMs, used the words value and service most frequently, which was then followed by a crossbar analysis showing that the themes for all respondents, including KAMs and buyers' fitted with an SDL approach with social/relational aspects that lead to co-creation and also supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2008a).

In addition, while the job descriptions included some CSFs that supported the literature review and interview findings pertinent to CRM, leadership, remuneration, business plan metrics (scorecards) for measuring performance and providing role clarity, knowledge management and personal characteristics, as seen in job description #4, the job descriptions also indicated some consistencies with an SDL approach regarding working collaboratively or in partnership. However, job description #6 also included debating and challenging the customer's attitudes to deliver regional strategies and initiatives to support the company's products and disease areas, which is totally at odds with co-creation. In addition, some of the job descriptions failed regarding SDL in terms of adopting SDL and moving towards co-creation of value due to their companies working towards their own company goals and agendas, thus thwarting SDL and a move towards co-creation of value. The job descriptions mentioned were very traditional with functional skills and stated personal characteristics being required rather than describing the skills KAMs actually need. The job descriptions stated the obvious, the very minimum that KAMs should be, rather than the added value of someone with an SDL approach working towards co-creation of value. However, the job description findings noted skills and competencies which also related to the main study and included having empowerment, responsibility, accountability, planning and knowledge management, along with supportive leadership and influencing and listening skills. In addition, having a social/relational and collaborative working style and being able to work in partnership and cross-functionally with internal/external teams was required, and so were agility, commitment, transparency, ingenuity, integrity and perseverance.

Other requirements of the role were being educated to degree level, being analytical and results-orientated with a proven track record of knowledge management in and experience of the therapeutic area, the market, the environment, the product, services, the company and competitors, which supported the findings of the exploratory survey and the main study.

When perusing the overall findings, it was revealed that the investigations had similar results regarding accountability, skills in knowledge management, relationship building and the ability to use CRM as a resource, as well as being empowered to make decisions regarding implementation and being accountable and responsible for business plans and objectives. Accountability and taking ownership of business plans resonated with the study, including in relation to a compensation plan supporting the company goals that were aligned with performance, often in the form of scorecards with KPIs.

Likewise, the business plans were owned by KAMs but the active participation of senior management supported the process, and they worked using a supportive leadership style. This research appeared to show that companies understand skills and business/functional aspects, including the importance of social/relational characteristics, having the right skills and working collaboratively in cross-functional teams in joint or partnership working, as noted in job description #6, which showed some consistencies with an SDL approach. However, the job descriptions also suggested that companies don't seem to want to work towards an SDL to co-creation of value approach, which would lead to shared goals, objectives and strategies. Many KAMs, however, as confirmed in the main study, were moving towards working with social/relational and co-creational aspects and supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and with the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation (Lusch and Vargo, 2006). With this in mind, The research clearly demonstrated a distinct and current move towards social/relational aspects and to SDL and co-creation of value, so future job descriptions need to be revised to include these, so that for future approaches and implementations of KAM is successful.

The discussion suggested that a change from SDL to social/relational aspects that is moving towards co-creation of value was contemporary, and companies with a traditional mindset may need to change their personnel, including those in HR and management who write job descriptions; indeed companies may require training and development of the required skills and competencies that this research addresses. Furthermore, amendments to future job descriptions would need to include shared agendas and working towards shared goals/objectives with the aim of moving towards SDL and then co-creation of value to gain a competitive advantage. This was noted in the KAMs' interview responses, which supported the FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation of value described by Vargo and Lusch (2008a), which were cited by T8, who stated that 'it is virtually impossible to deliver value without the customer'; this underlines the importance of SDL and co-creation of value for successful KAM approaches and implementations. When reviewing the existing literature, it was clear that there were no studies up to that time that addressed SDL-based KAM for co-creation of value, so this study contributes to both academic theory and professional practice.

The data relating to the six job descriptions was relatively small, and it could be argued that making a meaningful comparison was not possible; the same could be said about only having 3 procurement buyers participating. However, the data from the job descriptions was provided independently by a recruitment agency and the documents were obtained from highly regarded companies in sales and KAM. The selected buyers merely verified KAMs' main study surveys and interviews and were only asked to complete the same for exploratory purposes.

The results for the buyers were very similar to those for KAMs, but the buyers had a different perspective. The buyers were interested in purchasing efficiently at the most cost-effective price while maintaining collaborative relationships that supported SDL. They also moved towards co-creational aspects and ensured that their leadership valued people and business so that the relevant skills were retained. In summary, this research captured a shifted contemporary KAM approach where KAM is seen as a facilitator of on-going processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value creating relationships, leading to the development of strategic partnerships. The study finds that amongst KAMs whilst there is strong recognition of CSFs in KAM, CRM, and SDL, there are inconsistent and weak applications in practice. The study explores the reasons for this and proposes that more work is needed to better interpret and translate the language and rhetoric and theoretical principles. A new model for KAM (figure 7.2) is proposed showing the CSFs for implementation and a shift of emphasis from KAM to KAR to strategic partnerships. The CSFs model is developed for organisations for strategic purposes and the table outlines long-term CSFs which were linked to FP of SDL by Vargo and Lusch (2008a), along with conceptual transitions concepts by Lusch and Vargo (2006). The value model for KAM practitioners (figure 7.3) is also proposed and is developed for personnel for tactical purposes and is a guide for practitioners.

8.1. Recommendations (implementations of KAM)

The value model for KAM practitioners as seen in figure 7.3 recommends that for successful implementation, the value model needs to be fully functional, including KAMs' social styles, which this research shows were driver (results) and/or analyst (precision) orientated, based on Bolton and Bolton's (1984) social styles psychological profiles. A fully functional KAM CSFs model was also shown in figure 7.2 and includes CRM and business processes, transformational leadership, role clarity, remuneration, measuring performance via scorecards, knowledge management, skills and experience, all of which support the FP, that underpin SDL-based KAM and co-creation.

The FP of SDL that caused a move towards co-creation proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2008a) confirmed that both KAMs and buyers, pertinent to FP4, FP6, FP9 and FP10, required knowledge gained through interaction which was fundamental to their competitive advantage, FP4, thought that the customer was the co-creator of value, FP6, and confirmed that value was always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary, FP10. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).) Furthermore, the value model for KAM practitioners, as shown in figure 7.3 below, required an SDL co-creational approach, including a collaborative, social/relational and partnership working method, with shared agendas forming co-creation of value.

The research shows that for successful implementation and approaches, KAMs require driver (results) and/or analyst (precision) orientated social styles. Ultimately, the value model for KAM is a methodology that drives a definite move that fully supports the FP of SDL that caused co-creation of Vargo and Lusch (2008a) and the conceptual transitions concepts from GDL to SDL to co-creation of value of Lusch and Vargo (2006) for successful KAM approaches and implementations.

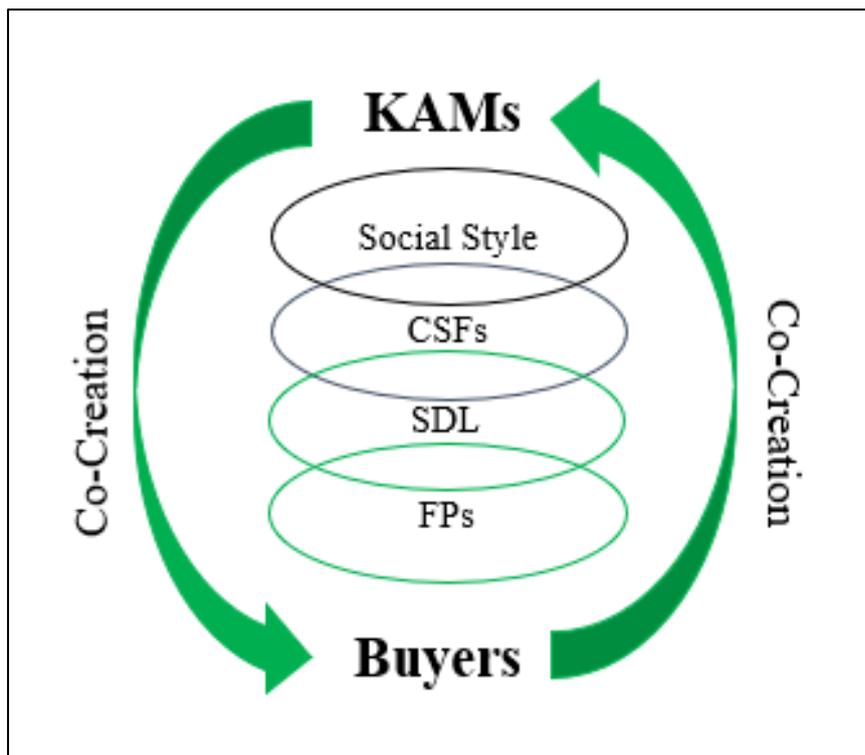


Figure 7.3. Value model for KAM practitioners (source: author).

In summary, the research shows a distinct move from KAM towards strategic partnerships for co-creation of value. The value model for KAM practitioners displays the FP, CSFs and social style requirements for successful implementations; an SDL-co-creational approach which captured a shifted contemporary thought about SDL-based KAM to social/relational KAM, in which KAM is seen as a facilitator of ongoing processes of voluntary exchange through collaborative, value-creating relationships that lead to co-creation where value is determined by the beneficiary, supporting the views of Vargo and Lusch (2014).

In conclusion, the findings show that KAM has moved towards strategic partnerships with an emphasis from KAM to KAR. The CSFs and value model cover the CSFs in CRM, and SDL, and provides guidance for issues in business processes, leadership roles, role clarity, remuneration and performance measurement, knowledge management, and skills, competencies and experience.

9. Research limitations and dissemination

The research limitations of this study is, ironically, the corollary of its strengths. The very open nature of the strategic approach taken was required to gain speedy answers, principally to the exploratory and main study survey questions, and detailed, articulate answers in the AI semi-structured interviews featuring in the main study. Nonetheless, the responses to questions about demographics in the survey were useful, as were the answers to questions about the KAMs' personal social style characteristics.

The methodology used in the surveys was from Bolton and Bolton's (1984) four social styles theory, which suggested that people tend to fall into one of four styles, as seen in figure 2.2 below, previously set out in section 2:



Figure 2.2. Bolton and Bolton (1984), four social styles - Content removed for copyright reasons.

Bolton and Bolton (1984) noted that each person has a dominant style that influences the way they talk and interact with others. The predominant style was often one that was described as comfortable, frequently used and one that was used throughout interactions, and was one of the following: Driver, Analyst, Expressive or Amiable.

When using the social style approach of Bolton and Bolton (1984), it must be noted that the social styles were defined with keywords describing their social motivation and then they were placed in one of four quadrants; the keywords related to the traits of assertiveness and emotional responsiveness, which were reliant on individuals identifying their own style correctly. However, the authors suggested that the success rate for this was 50% and although buyers verified prospective KAMs self-reported social styles, verification did not include feedback from other people through a structured feedback format which may be deemed a limitation, as the greatest way of discovering one's social style, according to the authors, was to receive feedback from other people through a structured feedback format or by using specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles.

Another aspect considered a limitation was the buyers' social styles were not verified along with the number of buyers within the main study, together with the 6 KAM job descriptions which were desktop studied. While a total of 15 interviews took place, 12 were KAMs and 3 prospective buyers. However, the buyers' role was to verify KAMs' responses, but each buyer also added their input to the main survey and completed interviews based on their perceptions of the KAM role for triangulation, along with exploratory purposes. In summary, the results for the buyers indicated similar findings to those for KAMs, which was very interesting and reaffirmed that there had been a move towards SDL and co-creation of value; however, a meaningful comparison would have enriched the study further, and prevented limitations. The same applies regarding the job descriptions and a meaningful comparison would have enriched the study and prevented limitations.

Limitations concerning the buyers could be removed from the exploratory context by increasing the number of buyers to enable a meaningful comparison; the number of job descriptions could be increased too. The feedback method or specific instruments to identify and confirm social styles could be used in future research. The current study required buyers to verify and then add input to the research but didn't include job descriptions for buyers. Yet if a meaningful comparison for buyers could be made, along with having more job descriptions, the data would support the study further, not only for triangulation but possibly in terms of the development of a model for an SDL-based buyer approach to co-creation and implementation.

It is also worth commenting on the diversity of industries that KAMs in the study came from; pharmaceutical, healthcare and banking to name a few. They were all different industries and it could be argued that the study would have benefited from focusing solely on one industry type, such as pharmaceuticals. Yet the findings indicated commonality irrespective of industries, and the study has been enriched because of the inclusion of representatives from diverse businesses. In summary, the results established the CSFs of KAM and the personal characteristics of KAMs, therefore developing a successful KAM model for an approach to implementation, whatever the industry.

While this research does have limitations, as already noted, there were no studies at the time of reviewing existing literature that addressed whether SDL-based KAM formed co-creation of value, so this study contributes to both academic theory and professional practice. The author, from the beginning of this thesis, intended to disseminate this research, as noted by Harmsworth and Turpin (2000, p. 10), who noted that 'unless dissemination is built in from the beginning, it does not happen'.

The author intended to disseminate this research as an evolving and constantly developing process, so that it would become valuable and influential. The author intends to write a number of different articles for journals in the field of marketing that use open access publishing so articles reach more people because subscriptions barriers have been removed. However, the selected journals will be high-quality peer-reviewed journals to enhance the author's reputation and to help get the author's work cited by others in future journals and studies.

10. Bibliography

- AL-Hussan, F.B., AL-Husan, F.B. and Fletcher-Chen, C.C.Y. (2014). Environmental factors influencing the management of key accounts in an Arab Middle Eastern context. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 43, pp. 592-602.
- Artur, B., Cravens, D. and Piercy, N. (2001). Examining business strategy, sales management, and salesperson antecedents of sales organization effectiveness. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 109-123.
- Atanasova, Y. and Senn, C. (2011). Global customer team design: Dimensions, determinants, and performance outcomes. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 278-289.
- Auh, S. and Menguc, B. (2013). Knowledge sharing behaviors of industrial salespeople: An integration of economic, social psychological, and sociological perspectives. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 47, No. 8, pp. 1333-1355.
- Babakus, E., Cravens, D.W., Johnston, M. and Moncrief, W.C. (1999). The role of emotional exhaustion in sales force attitude and behaviour relationships. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 58-70.
- Baily, P., Farmer, D., Crocker, B., Jessop, D. and Jones, D. (2015). *Procurement Principles and Management*. 11th Edition. Harlow: Pearson.
- Baran, R., Galka, R. and Strunk, D. (2008). *Customer Relationship Management*. South-Western, USA: Thomson.
- Bass, B.M. (1985). *Leadership and Beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Bass, B.M. and Avolio, B.J. (1990). *Manual for the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Bass, B.M. and Avolio, B.J. (1994). *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Baumann, J. and Le Meunier-Fitzhugh, K. (2015). Making value co-creation a reality – exploring the co-creative value processes in customer-salesperson interaction. *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 31, Nos 3-4, pp. 286-316.
- Bell, J. (2010). *Doing Your Research: A guide to first-time researchers in education, health and social science*. 5th Edition. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill, Open University Press.
- Bengtson, A., Ljung, A. and Hadjikhani, A. (2013). Managing stability and crises in business relationships. The case of Ericsson in an emerging market. *European Business Review*, Vol. 25, No. 6, pp. 518-535.
- Bennis, W.G. (1959). Leadership theory and administrative behaviour: The problem of authority. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 4, pp. 259-60.

Bettencourt, L.A., Lusch, R.F. and Vargo, S.L. (2014). A service lens on value creation: Marketing's role in achieving strategic advantage. *California Management Review*, Berkeley Haas, Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 44-66.

Biazzo, S. and Garengo, P. (2012). Performance Measurement with the Balanced Scorecard: A Practical Approach to Implementation within SMEs. New York: Springer.

Bjerre, M. (2002). Different forms of key account management – in a transaction cost perspective. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 73-85.

Blocker, C.P., Cannon, J.P., Panagopoulos, N.G. and Sager, J.K. (2012). The role of the sales force in value creation and appropriation: New directions for research. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 15-17.

Bolton, P. and Bolton, D.G. (1984). *Social Style/Management Style*. New York: American Management Association.

Bradford, E., Berkovi, J., Campbell, J., Fear, R. and Rollinson, L. (2000). Riding the key account revolution: How to develop your key account managers into revolutionary leaders (part 2). *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 65-73.

Bradford, K.D., Challagalla, G.N., Hunter, G.K. and Moncrief, III, W.C. (2012). Strategic account management: Conceptualizing, integrating and extending the domain from fluid to dedicated accounts. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 41-56.

Bradford, E. and Rollinson, L. (2000). Riding the key account revolution: How to develop your key account managers into revolutionary leaders. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 53-64.

Brassington, F. and Pettit, S. (2005). *Essentials of Marketing*. 4th Edition. Harlow: Prentice-Hall.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Brehmer, P.O. and Rehme, J. (2009). Proactive and reactive: Drivers for key account management programmes. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 43, No. 7-8, pp. 961-984.

Brown, S. (2009). Harry Potter and the Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: a cautionary tale. *Journal of Marketing Management*. Vol. 25, No. 5-6, pp. 519-533.

Bruhn, M. (2003). *Relationship Marketing: Management of customer relationships*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Bryman, A. (1992). *Charisma and Leadership in Organisations*. London: Sage.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods*. 4th Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burnett, K. (1992). *Strategic Customer Alliances*. London: Pitman.

Burns, J.M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row. Retrieved, from http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/theories/burns_transformational.htm

Burns, N. and Grove, S.K. (2005). *The Practice of Nursing Research: Conduct, critique & utilization*. St Louis, MO: Elsevier Saunders.

Bushe, G.R. (2007). Appreciative inquiry is not (just) about the positive. *OD Practitioner*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 30-35.

Buttle, F. (2009). *Customer Relationship Management*. 2nd Edition. Burlington, MA: Elsevier.

Buttle, F. (2015). *Customer Relationship Management: Concepts and technologies*. Oxon: Routledge.

Calabrese, R.I. (2006). Building social capital through the use of appreciative inquiry theoretical perspectives in a school and university partnership. *International journal of educational management*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 173-182.

Campbell, C., Papania, L., Parent, M. and Cyr, D. (2010). An exploratory study into brand alignment in B2B relationships. *Journal of Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 39, No. 5, pp. 712-720.

Charmaz, K. (2009). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage.

Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (2015).
<https://www.cips.org/en-GB/Knowledge/Procurement-topics-and-skills/#6903>

Cheverton, P. (2001). *Key Account Management*. 2nd Edition. London: Kogan Page.

Cheverton, P., Foss, T., Hughes, T. and Stone, M. (2005). *Key Account Management in Financial Services; Tools and techniques for building strong relationships with major clients*. London: Kogan Page.

Churchill, G.A., Ford, N.M., Hartley, S.W. and Walker, O.C. (1985). The determinants of salesperson performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XXII, pp. 103-118.

Churchill, G.A., Ford, N.M., Walker, O.C., Johnston, M.W. and Tanner, F.J. (2000). *Sales Force Management*. 6th Edition. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.

Clarke, C., Knights, D. and Jarvis, C. (2012). A labour of love? Academics in business schools. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*. Vol. 28, pp. 5-15.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education*. 7th Edition. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Collis, J. and Hussey, R. (2014). *Business Research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students*. 4th Edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Cooperrider, D.L. and Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life, in, R. Woodman and W. Pasmore (eds). *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Vol. 1. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Cooperrider, D.L., Whitney, D.K. and Stavros, J.M. (2003). *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: The first series in a series of AI workbooks for leaders of change*. Bedford Heights, OH: Lakeside.

Cordeiro-Nilsson, C.M. and Hawamdeh, S. (2011). Leveraging socio-culturally situated tacit knowledge. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 88-103.

Cravens, D.W. (1995). The changing role of the sales force. *Marketing Management*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 49-57.

Cravens, D.W., Ingram, T.N., LaForge, R.W. and Young, C.E. (1993). Behavior-based and outcome-based salesforce control systems. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 57 (October), pp. 47-59.

Creswell, J. and Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*. 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research Design*. 4th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cronbach, L.J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, Vol. 16, Issue 3, pp. 297-334.

Curran, J. and Blackburn, R.A. (2001). *Researching the Small Enterprise*. London: Sage.

Daghfous, A., Ashill, N.J. and Rod, M.R. (2013). Transferring knowledge for organisational customers by knowledge intensive business service marketing firms. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 421-442.

Davies, A., Brady, T. and Hobdey, M. (2007). Organising for solutions: systems seller is systems integrator. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 36, pp. 183-193.

Davies, G. (1993), *Trade Marketing Strategy*. London: Paul Chapman.

Davies, I.A. and Ryals, L.J. (2013). Attitudes and behaviours of key account managers: Are they really any different to senior sales professionals? *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 42, pp. 919-931.

Davies, I.A., Ryals, L.J. and Holt, S. (2010). Relationship management: A sales role, or a state of mind? An investigation of functions and attitudes across a business-to-business sales force. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 39, Issue 7, pp. 1049-1062.

Davis, D.F., Golicic, S.L. and Boerstler, C.N. (2011). Benefits and challenges of conducting multiple methods research in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 467-479.

Dawes, J. (2007). Do data characteristics change according to the number of scale points used? An experiment using 5-point, 7-point and 10-point scales. *International Journal of Market Research*. Vol. 50, Issue 1, pp. 61-77.

Day J.W. and Holladay C.L. (2012). Appreciative inquiry: An effective training alternative to traditional adult learning. *Psychology*, Vol. 3, No. 12, pp. 1125-1130.

Day, M., Fawcett, S.E., Fawcett, A.M. and Magnan, G.M. (2013). Trust and relational embeddedness: Exploring a paradox of trust pattern development in key supplier relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 42, pp. 152-165.

Daymon, C. and Holloway, I. (2011). *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*. 2nd Edition. London: Routledge.

De Vaus, D. (2002). *Surveys in Social Research*. 5th Edition. London: Routledge.

Dewar, B. (2017). Developing caring conversations in care homes: An appreciative inquiry. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, Vol. 25, No. 4, pp. 1375-1386.

Donaldson, B. (1998). *Sales Management, Theory and Practice*. 2nd Edition. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Donaldson, B., Tzokas, N. and Saren, M. (2001). The sale never closes. How closer relationships between buyers and sellers change the role of the salesperson. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 31-43.

Dong, G., Liem, C.G. and Grossman, M. (2010). Knowledge-sharing intention in Vietnamese organizations. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 262-276.

Doran, G. T. (1981). There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives. *Management Review*. AMA FORUM. Vol. 70, Issue 11, pp. 35-36.

Downton, J.V. (1973). *Rebel Leadership: Commitment and charisma in a revolutionary process*. New York: Free Press.

Durif, F., Geay, B. and Graf, R. (2013). Do key account managers focus too much on commercial performance? A cognitive mapping application. *Journal of Business Research*, No. 66, pp. 1559-1567.

Dvir, T., Eden, D., Avulsion, B.J. and Shamir, B. (2002). Impact of transformational leadership on follower development and performance: A field experiment. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp. 735-744.

Dwyer, R., Schurr, P. and Sejo, O. (1987), Developing buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 11-28.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P.R. (2012). *Management Research*. 4th Edition. London: Sage.

Edwards, A. and Talbot, R. (1999). *The Hard-Pressed Researcher*. 2nd Edition. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Ellegaard, C., Johansen, J. and Drejer, A. (2003). Managing industrial buyer-supplier relations – the case for attractiveness. *Integrated Manufacturing Systems*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 346-356.

Ernst, H., Hoyer, W.D., Kraft, M. and Krieger, K. (2011). Customer relationship management and company performance – the mediating role of new product performance. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 39. No. 2, pp. 290-306.

Fard, S.S. and Hosseini, S.M. (2015). Performance measurement of the after-sales service network: Evidence from the automotive industry. *Marketing Science Letters*, Vol. 5, pp. 927-932.

Finnegan, D. and Willcocks, L. (2007). *Implementing CRM: From technology to knowledge*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Flint, D.J., Lusch, R. F. and Vargo, S.L. (2014). The supply chain management of shopper marketing as viewed through a service ecosystem lens. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, Vol. 44, Nos 1-2, pp. 23-38.

Ford, N. and Walker, O. Jr. (1975). Expectation specific measures of the intersender conflict and role ambiguity experienced by salesmen. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 95-112.

Francis, K. (1998). What is KAM? *Winning Business*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 62-64.

Friend, S.B. and Johnson, J.S. (2014). Key account relationships: An exploratory inquiry of customer-based evaluations. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 43, pp. 642-658.

Fung So, K.K. and King, C. (2010). When experience matters: Building and measuring hotel brand equity. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp. 589-608.

Gatfaoui, S. (2007). Comment développer une relation bancaire fondée sur la confiance? *Decisions Marketing*, Vol. 46, pp. 91-103.

Gibas, J.J. (1997). *Business-to-Business Selling, Selling and Sales Strategy*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

Gillan, A. (1982). *The Principles and Practice of Selling*. London: Heinemann.

Gill, J. and Johnson, P. (2010), *Research Methods for Managers*. 4th Edition. London: Sage.

Gillman, B. (2000a). *Case Study Research Methods*. London: Continuum.

Gillman, B. (2000b). *The Research Interview*. London: Continuum.

- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 597-606.
- Gotsis, G. and Kortezi, Z. (2011). Bounded self-interest: A basis for constructive organizational politics. *Management Research Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 450-476.
- Goulding, C. (1998). Grounded theory: The missing methodology on the interpretivist agenda. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 1, p. 28.
- Gounaris, S. and Tzempelikos, N. (2013). Key account management orientation and its implications: A conceptual and empirical examination. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, Vol. 20, pp. 33-50.
- Grove, A.L., Meredith, J.O., MacIntyre, M., Angelis, J. and Neailey, K. (2010). UK health visiting: Challenges faced during lean implementation. *Leadership in Health Services*, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 204-218.
- Guan, W. and Rehme, J. (2012). Vertical integration in supply chains: Driving forces and consequences for a manufacturer's downstream integration. *Supply Chain Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, pp. 187-201.
- Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). *Competing paradigms in qualitative research*. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K.M., Namey, E.E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.
- Gummesson, E. (2004). Return on relationships (ROR): The value of relationship marketing and CRM in business-to-business contexts. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 136.
- Hackley, C. (2009). *Marketing: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.
- Hamilton, M.B. (2003). *Online Survey Response Rates and Times: Background and guidance for industry*. Cambridge, MA: Tercent.
- Hammervoll, T. (2014). Service provision for co-creation of value: Insights from exchange- and production economy perspectives. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*. Vol. 44, No. 1/2, pp. 155-168.
- Handy, C.B. (1985). *Understanding Organisations*. 3rd Edition. London: Penguin Books.
- Harmsworth, S. and Turpin, S. (2000). *Creating an Effective Dissemination Strategy*. Bristol: HEFCE.
- Hartas, D. (2010). *Educational Research and Inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Henn, M., Weinstein, M. and Foard, N. (2006). *A Short Introduction to Social Research*. London: Sage.

Hewlett, K. and Krasnikov, A.V. (2016). Investing in buyer–seller relationships in transitional markets: A market-based assets perspective. *Journal of International Marketing, American Marketing Association*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 57-81.

Holt, S. and Millman, T. (2001). Making the transition from customer satisfaction to customer value in key account management. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 45-65.

Homburg, C., Giering, A. and Menon, A. (2003). Relationship characteristics as moderators of the satisfaction-loyalty link: Findings in a business-to-business context. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 35-62.

Homburg, C., Workman, J.P. and Jenson, O. (2002). A configurational perspective on key account management, *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 66, No. 2, pp. 38-60.

Hughes, J.A. (1990). *The Philosophy of Social Research*. 2nd Edition. Harlow: Longman.

Hurcomb, J. (1999). Developing strategic customers and key accounts: The critical success factors. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 49-59.

Ionescu, A.M. and Bigioi, C.E. (2016). Performance management through budgets. Drafting and launching the company's sales budget. *Audit Financiar*, Vol. XIV, No. 7, pp. 791-801.

Ivens, B.S. and Pardo, C. (2007). Are key account relationships different? Empirical results on supplier strategies and customer reactions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 36, pp. 470-482.

Ivens, B.S., Pardo, C. and Tunisini, A. (2009). Organizing and integrating marketing and purchasing in business markets: An introduction to the special issue, issues and implications. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 38, No. 8, pp. 851-856.

Jenkins, N., Bloor, M., Fischer, J., Berney, L. and Neale, J. (2010). Putting it in context: The use of vignettes in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 175-198.

Jobber, D. and Lancaster, G. (2000). *Selling and Sales Management*. 5th Edition. Edinburgh: Pearson Education.

Johnson, J.S. and Sohi, R.S. (2016). Understanding and resolving major contractual breaches in buyer–seller relationships: A grounded theory approach. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 44, pp. 185-205.

Johnston, M.W., and Marshall, G. W. (2011). *Sales force management*, 10th Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill

Kaplan, R.S., and Norton, D.P. (1992). The balanced scorecard – measures that Drive performance. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 70, Issue 1, pp. 71-79.

Kelly, T. (2010). A positive approach to change: The role of appreciative inquiry in library and information organisations. *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 163-177.

- Klenke, K., Wallace, J. R. and Martin, S. (2015). *Qualitative Research in the Study of Leadership*. 2nd Edition. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Kohn, A. (1993). Why incentive plans cannot work. *Harvard Business Review*, September–October, pp. 54-63.
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2012). *Marketing Management*. 14th Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kotter, J.P. (1990). *A Force for Change: How leadership differs from management*. New York: Free Press.
- Kowalkowski, C. (2011). The service function as a holistic management concept. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 26, Issue 7, pp. 484-492.
- Krapfel, R. Jr, Salmond, D. and Spekman, R. (1991). A strategic approach to managing buyer-seller relationships. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 25, No. 9, pp. 22-37.
- Krysik, J.L. and Finn, J. (2013). *Research for Effective Social Work Practice*. 3rd Edition. Oxon: Routledge.
- Kuhnert, K.W. (1994). Transforming leadership: Developing people through delegation. In B.M. Bass and B.J. Avolio (Eds), *Improving Organizational Effectiveness through Transformational Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kuhnert, K.W. and Lewis, P. (1987). Transactional and transformational leadership: A constructive/development analysis. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 648-657.
- Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology: A step by step guide for beginners*. 3rd Edition. Sage.
- Kuster, I. and Canales, P. (2011). Compensation and control sales policies, and sales performance: The field sales manager's points of view. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 273-285.
- Kuzel, A.J. (1999). Sampling in qualitative inquiry. In N.B.F. Crabtree and W.L. Miller (Eds), *Doing Qualitative Research*. 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.
- Lamberti, L. and Paladino, A. (2013). Moving forward with service dominant logic: Exploring the strategic orientations of a service-centred view of the firm. *International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp. 1-15.
- Lamont, L.M. and Lundstorm, W.J. (1977). Identifying successful industrial salesmen by personality and personal characteristics. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XIV, pp. 517-529.

- Langdon, K. (1995). *Key Accounts are Different: Solution selling for key account managers*. London: Pitman.
- Lawrence, A. (1983). *The Management of Trade Marketing*. Aldershot: Gower.
- Lee, J. and Fink, D. (2013). Knowledge mapping: Encouragements and impediments to adoption. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 16-28.
- Leininger, M. (1994). Evaluation criteria and critique of qualitative research studies. In Morse, J. M. (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lewis, J. (2009). Redefining qualitative methods: Believable in the fifth moment. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 1-14.
- Lewis, S., Passmore, J. and Cantore, S. (2008). Using appreciative inquiry in sales team development. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 175-180.
- Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Enquiry*. Newbury, CA: Sage.
- Longbottom, D, and Lawson, A. (2017). *Alternative Market Research Methods*. Market Sensing. London: Routledge.
- Longenecker, C.O., Ragland, C.B. and Mallin, M.L. (2014). Developing high performance sales managers: Key practices for accelerating growth. *Development and Learning in Organisations*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 10-13.
- Lukas, J. F. and Lukas, J. A. (2009). *Pardon me -- your personality is showing!* Conference Paper. PMI Global Congress Proceedings: Orlando.
- Lusch, R. and Vargo, S. (2006). Service-dominant logic: Reactions, reflections and refinements. *Journal of Marketing Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 281-288.
- Lusch, R., Vargo, S. and O'Brien, M. (2006). Competing through services: Insights from service-dominant logic. *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 83, pp. 5-18.
- Lusch, R.F., Vargo, S.L. and Tanniru, M. (2010). Service, value networks and learning. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, No. 38, pp. 19-31.
- MacKenzie, S.B. Podsakoff, P.M. and Rich, G.A. (2001). Transformational and transactional leadership and salesperson performance. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 115-134.
- Maclaran, P., Saran, M., Sern, B. and Tadajewski, M. (2009). *The Sage Handbook of Marketing Theory*. London: Sage.
- Makkonen, H. and Olkkonen, R. (2013). The conceptual locus and functionality of key supplier management: A multi-dyadic qualitative study. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 42, pp. 189-201.

- Malshe, A. and Sohi, R.S. (2009). Sales buy-in of marketing strategies: Exploration of its nuances, antecedents and contextual conditions. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales management*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 257-270.
- Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Design Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Martin, C. (2010). *Perfect Phrases for Writing Job Descriptions: Hundreds of ready-to-use phrases for writing effective informative, and useful job descriptions*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.
- Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage.
- Matthyssens, P. and Vandenbempt, K. (2010). Service addition as business market strategy: Identification of transition trajectories, *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 21, No. 5, pp. 693-714.
- Mayer, D. and Greenberg, H.M. (1964). What makes a good salesman? *Harvard Business Review*, Jul–Aug, pp. 119-125.
- McDonald, M. and Rogers, B. (1998). *Key Account Management: Learning from supplier and customer perspectives*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- McDonald, M., Rogers, B. and Woodburn, D. (2000). *Key Customers. How to manage them profitably*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.
- McDonald, M. and Woodburn, D. (1999). *Key Account Management – Building on supplier and buyer perspectives*. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- McKercher, M. (2009). Philosophical paradigms, inquiry strategies and knowledge claims: Applying the principles of research design and conduct of taxation. *University of New South Wales Faculty of Law Research Series*, No. 31, pp. 114-216.
- McNabb, D.E. (2008). *Research Method in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. 2nd Edition. New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Mercier, M. (2009). *Night Train to Lisbon*. London: Atlantic Books.
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Merrill, D. and Reid, R. (1981). *Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make your style work for you*. Radnor, PA: Chilton.
- Michel, S., Stephen, W. and Gallen, A.S. (2008). Exploring and categorizing discontinuous innovations: A service-dominant logic perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36, pp. 54-66.
- Miles, M.B., Huberman, M.A. and Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A methods sourcebook*. 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Miles, C. (2014). Rhetoric and the foundation of the Service-Dominant Logic. *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, Vol. 27, Issue 5, pp. 744-755.
- Millman, A.F. and Wilson, K.J. (1995). From key account selling to key account management. *Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 9-21.
- Millman, A.F. and Wilson, K.J. (1996). Developing key account management competences. *Journal of Marketing Practice: Applied Marketing Science*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 7-22.
- Millman, A.F. and Wilson, K.J. (1998). Contentious issues in key account management. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 27-37.
- Millman, A.F. and Wilson, K.J. (1999). Processual issues in key account management: Underpinning the customer-facing organisation. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 328-337.
- Mitchell, M. and Jolly, J. (2001). *Research Design Explained*. 4th Edition. Orlando, FL: Harcourt College.
- Moncrief, W.C. and Shipp, S.H. (1997). *Sales Management – Strategy, technology, skills*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Mullins, L.J. (1996). *Management and Organisational Behaviour*. 4th Edition. London: Pitman.
- Mullins, R.R., Ahearne, M., Lam, S.K., Hall, Z.R. and Boichuk, J.P. (2014). Know your customer: How salesperson perceptions of customer relationship quality form and influence account profitability. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 78, pp. 38-58.
- Murphy, P.E., Lacznik, G.R. and Wood, G. (2007). An ethical basis for relationship marketing: A virtue ethics perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 41, Nos 1-2, pp. 37-57.
- Myers, M.D. (2009). *Qualitative Research in Business Management*. London: Sage.
- Naughton, M.D. and Tiernan, P. (2012). Individualising maintenance management: A proposed framework and case study. *Journal of Quality in Maintenance Engineering*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 267-281.
- Noonan, C. (1998). *Sales Management*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Normann, R. (1983). *Service Management*. Almqvist & Wiksell. Kristianstad, Sweden.
- Oliver, R.L. and Anderson, E. (1994). An empirical test of the consequences of behavior-based and outcome-based sales control systems. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 58 (October), pp. 53-67.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. and Leech, N.L. (2005). Taking the Q out of research: Teaching research methodology courses without the divide between quantitative and qualitative paradigms. *Qualitative and Quantitative. International Journal of Methodology*, Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 267-295.

Opara, B.C., Ayopo, O.O. and Darogo, W.M. (2010). Analysis of impact of technology on relationship marketing orientation and bank performance. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 291-300.

Pardo, C., Ivens, B.S. and Wilson, K. (2013). Assessing and strengthening internal alignment of new marketing units: An interpretative tool. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 42, pp. 1074-1082.

Pardo, C., Ivens, B.S. and Wilson, K. (2014). Differentiation and alignment in KAM implementation. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 43. Issue 7, pp. 1136-1145.

Parvatiyar, A. and Sheth, J.N. (2001). Customer relationship management: Emerging practice, process, and discipline. *Journal of Economic & Social Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 1-34.

Parvinen, P., Aspara, J., Kajalo, S. and Hietanen, J. (2013). Sales activity systematization and performance: Differences between product and service firms. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 28, No. 6, pp. 494-505.

Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd Edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. London: Sage.

Payne, A. and Frow, P. (2005). A strategic framework for customer relationship management. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 69, No. 4, pp. 167-176.

Payne, A. and Frow, P. (2006). Customer relationship management: From strategy to implementation. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 22, pp. 135-168.

Payne, A., Storbacka, K. and Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 36, pp. 83-96.

Pettijohn, C., Pettijohn, L., and Taylor, A. (2002). The influence of salesperson skill, motivation, and training on the practice of customer-oriented selling. *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 19, No. 9, pp. 743-57.

Piercy, N.F. (2009). Strategic relationships between boundary-spanning functions: Aligning customer relationship management with supplier relationship management. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 38, No. 8, pp. 857-864.

Piercy, N.F., Cravens, D.W. and Lane, N. (2000). Burnout in the salesforce: Identifying the causes and effects. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 13-37.

Piercy, N.F., Cravens, D.W. and Morgan, N.A. (1999). Relationships between sales management control, territory design, salesforce performance and sales organisation effectiveness. *British Journal of Management*, Vol. 10, pp. 95-111.

Piercy, N.F. and Lane, N. (2006). The hidden risks in strategic account management strategy. *Journal of Business Strategy*, Vol. 27, Issue 1, pp. 18-26.

Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B. and Bommer, W.H. (1996). Transformational leader behaviours and substitutes for leadership as determinants of employee satisfaction, commitment, trust, organizational citizen behaviors. *Journal of Management*, Vol. 22, pp. 259-298.

Prahalad, C.K. and Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol. 18, No. 3. pp. 5-14.

Punch, K. (2009). *Introduction to Research Methods in Education*. London: Sage.

Qudrat-Ullah, Hassan. (2009). *Beyond the Balanced Scorecard: Towards the Dynamic Balanced Scorecard*. UKSim: 11th International Conference on Computer Modelling and Simulation. pp. 317-321.

Rackham, N. (1989). *Major Accounts Sales Strategy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Randall, G. (1994). *Trade Marketing Strategies: The partnership between manufacturers, brands and retailers*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Razali, M.N. and Juanil, D.M. (2011). A study on knowledge management implementation in property management companies in Malaysia. *Facilities*, Vol. 29, Nos 9-10, pp. 368-390.

Rehme, J., Kowalkowski, C. and Nordigarden, D. (2013). Sales coordination and structural complexity: A national-international comparison. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 28, No. 6, pp. 514-522.

Remenyi, D., Williams, B. and Money, A. (2002). *Doing Research in Business and Management*. London: Sage.

Richardson, L. (2014). *Changing the Sales Conversation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Riley, R. (1996). Revealing socially constructed knowledge through quasi-structured interviews and grounded theory analysis. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 15. No. 2.

Rizzo, J.R., House, R.J. and Lirtzman, S.I. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 15, pp. 150-163.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research, third edition*. Chichester: Wiley

Rogers, B. (1999). The key account manager as leader. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 60-66.

Rogers, B. (2007). *Rethinking Sales Management: A strategic guide for practitioners*. Chichester: Wiley.

Rohm, R.A. (2000). *Positive Personality Profiles*. 2nd Edition. Atlanta, GA: Personality Insights.

- Rubin, A. and Babbie, E. (2010). *Research Methods for Social Work*. 7th Edition. Belmont CA: Cengage Learning.
- Rubin, H. and Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative Interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ryals, L.J. and Davies, I.A. (2013). Where's the strategic intent in key account relationships? *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 111-124.
- Ryals, L. and Rogers, B. (2006). Holding up the mirror: The impact of strategic procurement practice on account management. *Business Horizons*, Vol. 49, Issue 1, pp. 41-50.
- Ryals, L. and Rogers, B. (2007). Key account planning: Benefits, barriers and best practice. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 15, Nos 2-3, pp. 209-222.
- Salojarvi, H. and Saarenketo, S. (2013). The effect of teams on customer knowledge processing, esprit de corps and account performance in international key account Management. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 47, Nos 5-6, pp. 987-1005.
- Salojarvi, H., Saarenketo, S. and Puumalainen, K. (2013). How customer knowledge dissemination links to KAM. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 383-395.
- Salojarvi, H. and Sainio, L-M. (2010). Customer knowledge processing and key account performance. *European Business Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 339-352.
- Sarantakos, S. (2013). *Social Research*. 4th Edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 5th Edition. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 6th Edition. Harlow: Pearson.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 7th Edition. Harlow: Pearson.
- Scott, J.T., and Armstrong, A.C. (2019). Disrupting the deficit discourse: reframing metaphors for professional learning in the context of appreciative inquiry. *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 114-124.
- Sengupta, S., Krapfel, R.E. and Pusateri, M.A. (2000). An empirical investigation of key account salesperson effectiveness. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 253-262.
- Senn, C., Thoma, A. and Yip, G.S. (2013). Customer-centric leadership: How to manage strategic customers as assets in B2B markets. *California Management Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 27-59.

Shapiro, B.P. (1989). *Close Encounters of the Four Kinds: Managing customers in a rapidly changing environment*. Boston: Harvard Business School.

Shaw, R. (1991). *Computer Aided Marketing & Selling*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

Sheth, J.N. and Sharma, A. (2008). The impact of the product to service shift in industrial markets and the evolution of the sales organization. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 260-269.

Sheth, J.N., Sharma, A. and Iyer, G.R. (2009). Why integrating purchasing with marketing is both inevitable and beneficial. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 38, No. 8, pp. 865-871.

Shipley, D. and Palmer, R. (1997). *Selling To and Managing Key Accounts. Selling and sales strategy*. D. Jobber (Ed.). Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

Siguaw, J.A., Brown, G. and Wilding, R.E. (1994). The influence of the market orientation of the firm on sales force behaviour and attitudes. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 31, pp. 106-116.

Skapa, R. and Kubatova, E. (2009). Quality of buyer-seller relationships from a value creation perspective. *Portuguese Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 163-175.

Songailiene, E., Winklhofer, H. and McKechnie, S. (2011). A conceptualisation of supplier-perceived value. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 383-418.

Speakman, J.I.F. and Ryals, L. (2012). Key account management: The inside selling job. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 360-369.

Spreitzer, G.M., DeJanasz, S.C. and Quinn, R.E. (1999). Empowered to lead: The role of psychological empowerment in leadership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 511-526.

Stavros, J.G., Cooperrider, L. and Cooperrider, D. (2016). Appreciative inquiry: Organisation development and the strengths revolution. In *Practicing Organisation Development: A guide to leading change and transformation*. 4th Edition. Chichester: Wiley.

Stodgill, R.M. (1974). *Handbook of Leadership; A survey of theory and research*. New York: The Free Press.

Stone, M. and Woodcock, N. (1998). The role of the sales force in customer retention. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 58-70.

Storbacka, K. (2012). Strategic account management programs: Alignment of design elements and management practices. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 259-274.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Tapp, A. (2008). *Principles of Direct Marketing and Database Marketing. A digital orientation*. 4th Edition. Harlow: Financial Times, Prentice Hall.
- Teau, A-M. and Protopopescu, C.E. (2015). Key performance indicators – managing tools for sales improvement. *Revista Romana de Statistica Supliment*, Vol. 6, pp. 65-71.
- Terho, H. and Jalkala, A. (2017). Customer reference marketing: Conceptualisation, measurement and link to selling performance. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 64, pp. 175-166.
- Thompson, N.J. and McClintock, H.O. (2000). *Demonstrating your Program's Worth: A primer on evaluation for programs to prevent unintentional injury*. 2nd Edition. Atlanta, GA: National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control.
- Trochim, W. and Donnelly, J.P. (2006). *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*. Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog.
- Truss, C. Soane, E. and Edwards, C. (2006). *Working Life: Employee attitudes and engagement*. Research report. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Tzempelikos, N. and Gounaris, S. (2013). Approaching key account management from a long-term perspective. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 179-198.
- Tzokas, N. and Donaldson, B. (2000). A research agenda for personal selling and sales management in the context of relationship marketing. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 13-29.
- Van Weele, A.J. (2014). *Purchasing and Supply Chain Management*. 6th Edition. Andover: Cengage Learning.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 68, pp. 1-17.
- Vargo, S. and Lusch, R.F. (2014). Inversions of service-dominant logic. *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 239-248.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2008a). Service dominant logic: Continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy Marketing Science*, Vol. 36, pp. 1-10.
- Vargo, S.L. and Lusch, R.F. (2008b). From goods to services: Divergences and convergences of logics. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 37, pp. 254-259.
- Vargo, S. L., and Lusch, R. F. (2016). Institutions and axioms: an extension and update of service-dominant logic. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 44(4), pp. 5-23.
- Vargo, S.L. (2009). Toward a transcending conceptualization of relationship: A service-dominant logic perspective. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 24, Nos 5-6, pp. 373-379.

- Vesalainen, J. and Kohtamaki, M. (2015). Toward a typological view of buyer–supplier relationships: Challenging the unidimensional relationship continuum. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 49, pp. 105-115.
- Vézina, M. and Messier, C. (2005). Une perspective relationnelle de l'apprentissage inter-organisationnel: Le cas d'un réseau informel. Angers, France: *Actes de la XIVe conférence internationale de management stratégique*. pp. 1-21.
- Waite, M. and Hawker, S. (2009). *Oxford Paperback Dictionary and Thesaurus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wang, X.L. (2012). The impact of revenue management on hotel key account relationship development. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 358-380.
- Warren, C.A.B. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein, (Eds), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & methods* (pp. 83-101). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Watkins, J.M., Mohr, B.J. and Kelly, R. (2011). *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the speed of imagination*. 2nd Edition. Chichester: Wiley.
- Weilbaker, D.C. (1999). Compensation issues for global account management. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 88-95.
- Weitz, B. (1978). Relationship between salesperson performance and understanding of customer decision making. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 501-16.
- Weitz, B.A. and Bradford, K.D. (1999). Personal selling and sales management: A relationship marketing perspective. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 241-254.
- Widmier, S. (2002). The effects of incentives and personality on salesperson's customer orientation. *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 31, pp. 609-615.
- Wiehrich, H. and Koontz, H. (1993). *Management: A global perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wilson, K.J. (1999). Developing key account relationships: The integration of the Millman-Wilson relational development model with the problem centred (PPF) model of buyer-seller interaction in business-to-business markets. *The Journal of Selling and Major Account Management*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 11-32.
- Woodburn, D. and McDonald, M. (2011). *Key Account Management. The definitive guide*. 3rd Edition. Chichester: Wiley.
- Wrenn, B., Stevens, R.E. and Loudon, D.L. (2007). *Marketing Research, Text and Cases*. 2nd Edition. London: Haworth Press.
- Xu, M. and Walton, J. (2005). Gaining customer knowledge through analytical CRM. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, Vol. 105, No. 7, pp. 955-971.

Yin, R.K. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and method*. 5th Edition. London: Sage.

Yukl, G. (2010). *Leadership in Organisations*. 7th Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Yun, G.W. and Trumbo, C.W. (2000). Comparative response to a survey executed by post, e-mail, and web form. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communications*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-26.

11. Appendices

Appendix A, exploratory survey

Exploratory survey, part 1.

Participant Information and Consent Form

From Key Account Management (KAM) to Strategic Partnerships: Critical Success Factors for Co-Creation of Value.

Introduction: This is an exploratory study examining links between KAM, and procurement to identify potential integrated processes, KAM personal characteristics along with critical success factors to develop a new KAM model and approach to implementation. It is part of a PhD research project for the University of Derby.

Information and Purpose: The project is a part of a research study that is focused on an investigation into key account managers and procurement practices. The researcher is interested in processes/procedures that have been introduced by KAM organisations to support and develop sales. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of KAM and procurement, particularly KAM characteristics and critical success factors.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of a survey lasting approximately 15 minutes. You will be asked questions about KAM along with work experiences and personal characteristics. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the survey that you would like to stop. There is no penalty for stopping.

Benefit and Risks: The benefit of your participation is to contribute information regarding critical success factors and personal characteristics of KAM. This may assist future KAM and companies should a paper be published based on this study. There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All your information and survey responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisor.

Withdrawal: If, following completion of the survey, you wish to withdraw from the study, please email me at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk by 31st July 2017. I will use your personal identifier to retrieve and destroy your data.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk
 I confirm that I have read and understand the above information and am happy to participate.

Please give the first two letters of your surname and the last two numbers of your year of birth: This is your personal identifier. I will need this to remove your data from the study, should you decide to withdraw.

Figure 3.14. Exploratory survey, part 1 (source: author).

Exploratory survey, part 2.

1. I am male female

2. I am aged 18-39 40-59 60 or over

3. My highest level qualification is school level university degree postgraduate degree

4. I have worked in Key Account Management for less than 10 years 10 years or more

5. I am a manager at this level junior middle senior director/executive/board

6. I work in this region North East North West Midlands South East South West Wales Scotland
 Northern Ireland I don't work in the UK

7. Which of these lists best describes what motivates you at work? Please tick one box.

List 1: Results Orientated	List 2: Fun Orientated	List 3: Friendship Orientated	List 4: Precision Orientated
<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Power & Authority • Prestige & Status • Results • Wealth 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fun & Enjoyment • Independence • Power & Authority • Prestige & Status • Material Comfort 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Recognition of Feelings • Job Satisfaction • Security & Safety • Love 	<input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job satisfaction • Recognition of Expertise • Approval • Perfection • Correctness

Figure 3.15. Exploratory survey, part 2 (source: author).

Exploratory survey, part 3.

8. Please read the following statements and show how far you agree or disagree with them on a scale from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 6 for Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The specialised skills we offer are most important to our customers						
The tangible products we offer are most important to our customers						
The quality of service we offer is most important to our customers						
The relationships our customers have with our staff						
The sales are more important in KAM						
The relationship is more important in KAM						
Factors other than sales and the relationship are more important in KAM						
Tangible goods are most important when the customer evaluates our overall provision						
The way we do business (our service) is most important when the customer evaluates our overall provision						
Overall, tangible goods are more important than our service						
The knowledge we have is the fundamental basis of our competitor advantage						
The knowledge we gain through interaction with our clients is the fundamental basis of our competitive advantage						
My organisation's economy is based on transactions of goods						
My organisation's economy is based on service and the way in which we offer it						
It is the company's role to create value for the customer						
The customer is always the co-creator of value						
We can deliver value without the customers' help						
Without the customers' collaboration, we can only offer value propositions (rather than actual value)						
Our dealings with customers are based on transactions						
Our dealings with customers are based on relationships						
What we offer is fundamentally based on what customers want or need						
The supply chain is important to how we do business in a purely transactional way						
The value added by those in our supply chain is important to how we do business						
Value is added to what we offer by organisations/factors outside our supply chain						
Value is determined/judged by the organisation						
Value is determined/judged by the customer						

Figure 3.16. Exploratory survey, part 3 (source: author).

Exploratory survey, part 3.

9. Which of these lists best describes your approach to KAM? Please tick one box.

List 1	List 2	List 3
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Goods	Services	Service
Products	Offerings	Experiences
Feature/attribution	Benefit	Solution
Value-added	Co-production	Co-creation of value
Value-in-exchange	Value-in-use	Value-in-context
Profit maximization	Financial engineering	Financial feedback/learning
Price	Value delivery	Value proposition
Equilibrium systems	Dynamic systems	Complex adaptive systems
Supply chain	Value-chain	Value-creation network/constellation
Promotion	Integrated Marketing Communications	Dialog
To Market	Marketing to	Marketing with
Product orientation	Market orientation	Service orientation

Figure 3.17. Exploratory survey, part 3 continuation (source: author).

Appendix B, main study

Main study survey, part 1.

Participant Information and Consent Form

From Key Account Management (KAM) to Strategic Partnerships: Critical Success Factors for Co-Creation of Value.

Introduction: This is an exploratory study examining links between KAM, and procurement to identify potential integrated processes, KAM personal characteristics along with critical success factors to develop a new KAM model and approach to implementation. It is part of a PhD research project for the University of Derby.

Information and Purpose: The project is a part of a research study that is focused on an investigation into key account managers and procurement practices. The researcher is interested in processes/procedures that have been introduced by KAM organisations to support and develop sales. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of KAM and procurement, particularly KAM characteristics and critical success factors.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of a small survey and an interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. You will be asked questions about KAM along with work experiences and personal characteristics. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. At any time, you may notify the survey that you would like to stop. There is no penalty for stopping.

Benefit and Risks: The benefit of your participation is to contribute information regarding critical success factors and personal characteristics of KAM. This may assist future KAM and companies should a paper be published based on this study. There are no risks associated with participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All your information and responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share your individual responses with anyone other than your procurement contact, and the research supervisor.

Withdrawal: If, following completion of the interview and survey, you wish to withdraw from the study, please email me at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk by 31st March 2018. I will use your personal identifier to retrieve and destroy your data. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at c.veasey@derby.ac.uk

I confirm that I have read and understand the above information and am happy to participate. Participant Signature Date _____

Please give the first two letters of your surname and the last two numbers of your year of birth: This is your personal identifier. I will need this to remove your data from the study, should you decide to withdraw.

Researcher Signature Date _____

Figure 3.19. Main study survey, part 1 (source: author).

Main study survey, part 2.

1. I am male female

2. I am aged 18-39 40-59 60 or over

3. My highest-level qualification is school level university degree postgraduate degree

4. I have worked in Key Account Management for less than 10 years 10 years or more

5. I am a manager at this level junior middle senior director/executive/board

6. I work in this region North East North West Midlands South East South West Wales Scotland
 Northern Ireland I don't work in the UK

7. Which of these lists best describes what motivates you at work, please show how far you agree or disagree with them on a scale from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 6 for Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Fun and enjoyment						
Acceptance						
Independence						
Job Satisfaction						
Power and authority						
Recognition of feelings						
Recognition of expertise						
Prestige of expertise						
Approval						
Security and safety						
Results						
Perfection						
Material comfort						
Love						
Wealth						
Correctness						

Thank you for your time and contributions to the study, the interview will now commence.

Figure 3.20. Main study survey, part 2 (source: author).

Main study interviews, part 3 (AI semi-structured interviews)

The AI semi-structured interview questions identified in the literature review and exploratory survey consisted of 10 further questions based on research assumptions that aim to find out whether the CSFs required were aligned with the move towards SDL and co-creation. The FP are highlighted in 'italic green', and these are followed by the main study questions, which have been tested for internal validity by academics rather than Cronbach's (1951) alpha tests.

The questions were checked by academics; they were forwarded questionnaires based on Vargo and Lusch's (2008a, p. 8) FP questions together with Lusch and Vargo's (2006, p. 286) conceptual transitions concepts and interpreted AI semi-structured interview questions to ensure reliability and clear understanding. The main study survey part 1 and part 2 included questions 1 to 7. The main study which was part 3 included AI semi-structured interview questions which are noted below:

FPI. – Service is the fundamental basis of exchange. (Economic exchange involves providing mutual service.) Why do customers choose your organisation?

8. Considering your time as an employee at your organisation working with customers, can you recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about your involvement in the organisation?
 - a. What made it an exciting experience? What gave it energy?
 - b. What was it about your company's unique qualities that contributed to the exchange?
 - c. What were the most significant factors?
 - d. Why were they significant?
 - e. In what ways did your organisation contribute to the creation or support of this exchange?
 - f. What were the most important factors in your organisation that helped to make it a meaningful experience (e.g. specialist skills, tangible products, quality of service, relationships our customers have with our staff)?

FP2. – *Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange. (Exchanging competencies for the competencies of others; exchanging service for service.) What is important in KAM?*

9. Let's consider for a moment the things you value deeply. Specifically, the things about
1) your role 2) the nature of your work and 3) your organisation.
 - a. Without being humble, what do you value the most about your role, the nature of your work and your organisation?
 - b. When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value about the task itself?
 - c. What is it about your organisation that you value?
 - d. What is the single most important thing the organisation has contributed to your success?

FP3. – *Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision. (SDL, the basis of exchange, always involves service provision; goods are used for service.) Goods or service, what is most important?*

10. Your organisation builds on 'proven strengths' and has a history of being a pioneer in a wide number of areas. In your opinion, what is the most important achievement that you recall that best illustrates this spirit of 'being the best'?

FP4. – *Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage. (Operant resources are usually intangible and dynamic. SDL provides a refocus by shifting to value-creation processes.) Importance of knowledge?*

11. Can you think of a time when there was an extraordinary display of cooperation between individuals or groups at your organisation to the customer, giving a competitor advantage?
 - a. What made such cooperation possible (e.g. planning methods used, communications systems or process, leadership qualities, incentives for cooperation, skills, team, development techniques)?
 - b. How could these lessons be applied to your team?

FP5. – *All economies are service economies. (SDL is service-centered thinking, an increase in knowledge and the ability to exchange information.) Service or goods economy (the environment in which your company operates)?*

12. In your mind, what is the common mission or purpose that unifies everyone - is it goods or service economy?

FP6. (Conceptual transitions from GDL to SDL question) – *The customer is always a co-creator of value. (Co-creation of value describes the process of joint application of operant resources among companies and customers to create benefit.) The company's role?*

13. How does the customer help to create value?

FP7. – *The enterprise cannot deliver value, but can only offer value propositions. (The company cannot make and deliver value due to the collaborative requirements of value creation. The firm can only make value propositions.) Value?*

14. If you could continue, develop or transform your organisation in any way you wished to develop value, what would you suggest could offer value to customers?

FP8. – *A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational. (SDL relationships underpin how value is created in service-for-service exchange to form value-creating processes.) Customer orientation?*

15. What has been your best customer experience as a key account manager, and why do customers choose to work with your organisation?
- a. What's really important about this experience? What do you value most about dealing with customers?
 - b. What do you value most about your work as a key account manager and is the role focused more on goods or service?
 - c. Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself and the way that you do your work?

FP9. – *All social and economic actors are resource integrators. (Networking with many organisations or individuals and combining resources from multiple parties to create value.) Supply chain and environment creating value?*

16. Think back through your career concerning the environment in which you operate with service or goods; locate a moment that was a high customer point, when you felt most effective and engaged. Describe how you felt, and what made this situation possible?
 - a. When you are feeling best about your work, what do you feel the customer role is regarding value?
 - b. What is value? Can organisations deliver value to customers without customers' help or collaboration?
 - c. Can you think of a time when there was an extraordinary display of cooperation between customers and your organisation?

FP10. – *Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).) Who determines value?*

17. What's really important about value, and who determines the value?

Final question – this question was not based on Vargo and Lusch's (2008a, p. 8) FP questions. What makes a good key account manager?

18. Without being modest about yourself what do you think makes a good key account manager?

Appendix C, main study - T1 (GH68) interview transcription

T1 (GH68) Interview – 7th February 2018 15:38hrs (30 minutes, 22 seconds).

Participant information and consent form read out and signed/dated.

FPI. – Service is the fundamental basis of exchange. (Economic exchange involves providing mutual service.) Why do customers choose your organisation?

Q8. Considering your time as an employee at your organisation working with customers, can you recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about your involvement with the organisation?

A8. I suppose a recent example would be when the industry or my company went through what you would class as a restructure, but not in a traditional way as we know it, so the industry going through a focus on more rare diseases, unmet needs, oncology, specialists commissioning and therefore established brands. The mainstay of the industry 20-30 years ago have been moved into what, I suppose, is becoming more and more legacy brands, or established brands. So, the last 2 years, I have been part of the business in integrating and setting it up, not structurally or from a framework or guidance perspective, but in order to be a big part of the team as proof of concept, that this was the right thing to do, and it's been the most in my last 15 years of the industry, and in the last 11 years with this company has been the most enjoyment and involvement and satisfying.

Q8.1. In what way, in terms of meeting with the customers, would you say that benefited?

A8.1. If you go, everybody, no matter what title you give them is a representative of the company and everyone sees you as what we would call a rep, therefore, what it's allowed is empowerment, that's the difference. Good key account management for me is about empowerment and the individual and that's exactly what the role in the last 2 years has given me. More empowerment, more decision-making ability and also the fact I can go to senior management with a particular proposal and work with groups in a way that I could never work as an individual.

Q8.2. Fantastic, so in terms ... I guess with the company you're working with empowerment. That's a unique quality; how has that contributed with conversations with customers, would you say?

A8.2. Quite simply, you can make decisions there and then, not all the time, it's not 100% empowerment, it just means that you can discuss things more creatively, more innovatively, the conversation's a lot more fluid, it's a lot more, what about if we tried this, or what about if we tried that as opposed to what was the representative conversation of old, which was this is what we are doing, this is how we are doing it, do you want it or not, so it's more about, I guess is more partnership working because you're both trying to arrive at a solution which is going to best suit, you know, the people you serve.

Q8.3. Fantastic! Would you say that empowerment was a significant factor, then, in terms of making it exciting?

A8.3. Yes, Absolutely, again my current territory if you will is England and Wales, and what that means is, there is no teams of reps on the ground that are working to marketing campaigns and key messages being delivered. My remit is around a brand that I have to defend and grow as appropriate, and therefore I have to come up with strategies in line with code of practice and governance that allows me to put together projects and ideas with the customer in mind and with the customer in the conversation.

Q8.4. Fantastic! Would you say that the restructure of the company really helped with that, then?

A8.4. It's more the role; the restructure helped because it meant that I was promoted to the role, but it's the actual role and geography. It's meant that because we are a smaller team, we are not marketing lead, we're business lead, so Marketing are working alongside us, we're not marketed lead, but sales led and driven.

Q8.5. OK, fantastic, that's great. Obviously with the success of your company, in terms of the company itself, to create a meaningful experience with the customer, for example specialist skills, quality of service, how would you say that the company ... what sort of important factors did the company contribute to in helping the exchange?

A8.5. It's a tough one to answer. It is not a physical product per se, it's a medicine that you indirectly ask someone to consider the next time the patient walks through the surgery or hospital department, therefore, what I do is concepts and ideas for the business to grow. It's not so much supply chain delivering logistics, so it's a tough one to answer.

Q8.6. OK. So, your role, would you say, is engineered by the company, in terms of empowerment, and the ability to be able to work that way?

A8.6. Yes, it's dictated, its more dictated. I don't get involved with supply chain, how we deliver the product, because my customer isn't in many industries. Their interest is if I order this do you have enough supply, can you get it to me, which warehouse will you get it to me and so on. This is not a consideration here.

Q8.7. OK, thanks for that, thank you.

*FP2. – Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange. (Exchanging competencies for the competencies of others; exchanging service for service.) **What is important in KAM?***

Q9. Let's consider for a moment the things you value deeply, specifically the things about your role, the nature of your work and your organisation. Without being humble, what do you value the most about your role, and the nature of your work and your organisation?

A9. Again, it's the big e word for empowerment and the ability to make decisions at a higher level than previously. In no particular order, if I was to throw several words out, empowerment is probably the most important but then, running a close second is level of compensation, people you work with. I don't necessarily have a manager, I have a reporting line. That gives me empowerment. I don't have someone looking over my shoulder saying how do you say this, how do you do that, what did you say then, what would you do there. So, compensation is important, values and recognition within the company and generally when you pull ideas together, people a) willing to listen, and b) willing to make them work. Now that's quite rare because we can have many ideas and if people keep saying no, you stop having ideas, there goes empowerment.

Q9.1. Thank you for that, that's a good example. When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value about the task itself? You know, when you're feeling really good about the work you are doing?

A9.1. Coming up with a complex solution, no, sorry, coming up with a simple solution to a complex problem, and quite often the problem is historical and inherited such as the example I gave earlier around three organisations merging together with three different terms and conditions of supply in place, and having to merge that and make sure the patient is not in detriment. That's been a real labour of love.

Q9.2. What is it about your organisation that you value? What do you value most about your organisation? Again, is it about the empowerment they provide?

A9.2. If you go outside of the role, the transformation the company has gone through the last, I would say, I have been there 11 years, I would say the last 5 years, there has been nothing short of huge. It's a better word than that but it's gone from a UK company to Japanese to American company and a few European locations to a global organisation and the pace that they globalised, and minimising the impact to people on the ground in Turkey, Bulgaria, in Scotland it's just been handled very well. That's been quite important, that's been huge. I think the biggest thing for me though is the company itself being Japanese. In 2008 we were able to go to Japan and see the heritage of the company and that's a spiritual part of belonging to that organisation.

Q9.3. That's lovely. What is the single most important thing the organisation has contributed, because you're very successful, to your success?

A9.3. I guess, they have allowed, if you put too many restrictions on an employee, they will do the job how you have described it, whereas, if you allow and give a person the outcome and allow them to get there, within a compliance and governance structure, then you are giving them the freedom to be innovative knowing where the boundaries are. They may follow a different path to get there but it may be a path that could be replicated in the organisation, so that's been a huge part of my success.

FP3. – Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision. (SDL, the basis of exchange, always involves service provision; goods are used for service.) Goods or service, what is most important?

Q10. That's good to hear, in terms of your organisation, which builds on 'proven strengths' and has a history of being a pioneer in many ways. In your opinion, what is the most important achievement that you recall that best illustrates this spirit of 'being the best'?

A10. Gosh, I guess it was, I think the spirit, is probably best characterised as agility and nimbleness. Many big organisations do not move at such a pace because it's cool to carry on doing what you're doing, whereas my company has been agile to the best of its ability. That will probably slow down the more global you become. So, by the time, you have been market leader in diabetes, we have been market leader in hypertension. 2003 the company was told, sort yourself out or we will leave the UK. 2008 we were a 100 million-pound UK company and market leader in all areas we worked in, all based on agility and nimbleness. Restructuring how we sell our brands with a new key account management model is seen as the excellence in the country, sorry industry.

FP4. – Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage. (Operant resources are usually intangible and dynamic. SDL provides a refocus by shifting to value-creation processes.) Importance of knowledge?

Q11. I agree, totally. I guess, can you think of a time when there was an extraordinary display of cooperation between individuals or groups at your organisation to the customer? How would you say that gives you competitive advantage?

A11. In our industry, that doesn't necessarily give you competitive advantage because, you are essentially, chief cook and bottle washer. When it comes to ideas, campaigns and internal ideas they tend to be very cross-functional; there are various people you have to engage when it comes to the interface with the customer.

Q11.1. So, would you say that leadership helps here?

A11.1. It does help but actually the cooperation with the customer, many people believe that head office, internal, they don't actually speak with customers, that's the difference between what is the strategic excellence and key account management. We are all empowered to deliver in the field; it's completely opposite in the office which is why I believe good key account management is internal and external.

Q11.2. Great, thank you, interesting, and obviously, you have said that conversations are very important to you for customer engagement. What other ideas would you say help with competitive advantage with the customer in terms of cross-functional working? You said empowerment and leadership?

A11.2. Yes, if you are, key account management in a nutshell is about delivering a value proposition and then to be working in partnership to deliver the proposition for a win for all parties, but it also means that it's ongoing. You can't see someone on Monday to deliver on Tuesday to see on Wednesday and never see them again per se; the partnership needs to be ongoing and that's one thing, with empowerment comes innovation and creativity and with that you can add more value to the customer, which means when they see the logo on the business card, this may not be the individual, although you would like to think so. They want to see the company or person, because they know, actually, I am only there because I have something for them.

FP5. – All economies are service economies. (SDL is service-centered thinking, an increase in knowledge and the ability to exchange information.) Service or goods economy (the environment in which your company operates)?

Q12. Thank you for that. So in your mind, what is the common mission or purpose that unifies everyone? Is it goods or service economy? Is it the product itself or service or the partnership you talked about earlier?

A12. You know what, it's not really one reason, there are many reasons. The heritage of the company, the spirituality that some people feel towards the company, the way the Japanese do business, the companies going places, the fact it's a company that is well planned in advance and there is a lot of good and excellence in the way the company operates, and there all equally as good as each other. They do not pay more than the next guy, it's all industry benchmarked. It's more about if a company says that they are doing things for patients, so our 4 pillars for the company are patient, trust, reputation and business. If you do everything right for the patient, you build trust, your reputation will be enhanced, and the business will follow.

I do not fall for these things, they are just telemarketing things but words on a page but actually for me it's a really good order and fits in well with my moral compass. I do not talk market share to customers, I talk share of patients, because patients are the people we are helping and there is nothing more warming when you find a patient who is receiving our drug and getting better with a drug that your company made.

Q12.1. Thank you for that. So, the empowerment helps with that, then, in terms of customer needs?

A12.1. Well it does. It gives you greater access to various decision makers because of what you have done in the past and what we stand for. Therefore, better value conversations – it's not 30 minutes for the sake of it.

FP6. – The customer is always a co-creator of value. (Co-creation of value describes the process of joint application of operant resources among companies and customers to create benefit.) The company's role?

Q13. How does the customer help to create value? When you're speaking to groups or customers, do you ever ask them and build solutions together?

A13. Yes, we do, it's happened more recently. Let me give you an example. The brand we are currently more focused on, number one patient sharing women's health, endometriosis so we are engaged at the moment in terms of putting a campaign or strategy in place to see how we can increase gynaecology or patient leadership, but we want to do that by partnering with hospitals and producing sets of materials they are bringing in to endometriosis.co.uk, so we have got charity, customer and our company all working together. We are bringing all three together to find out from a patient perspective what are the materials they are missing, what would they like to give to a patient, can we direct them, and that's new.

Q13.1. How new would you say that approach was to transform the value that way?

A13.1. It's more, it's hard to put a time frame on. It's around the time 90% of medicines within the UK or Western economy are all generic. You know paracetamol and ibuprofen are no longer promoted medicines anymore, so the industry has looked at unmet needs, rare diseases and specialist commissioning, as I have said before, and it's that focus which means when you're talking about high blood pressure, you don't need to work with hypertension society per se, but if you're talking about lung cancer, you do. You talk about lung cancer, you want to work with lung cancer society. As the disease areas we are working with becomes more complex, the work of charities becomes important, but if you are designing a campaign you have to talk to the customer, particular oncology.

FP7. – The enterprise cannot deliver value, but can only offer value propositions. (The company cannot make and deliver value due to the collaborative requirements of value creation. The firm can only make value propositions.) Value?

Q14. So, customers create the value?

A14. Absolutely. They engage to create value; the customer creates the value.

FP8. – A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational. (SDL relationships underpin how value is created in service-for-service exchange to form value-creating processes.) Customer orientation?

Q15. Thank you. Interesting, a very innovative way of working. What has been your best customer experience as a key account manager, and why do customers choose to work with your organisation?

A15. I don't particularly have a best experience because I have had a lot of them, just because of the empowerment. That's a tough one to answer. What's the last part of the question again?

Q15.1. What's really important about this experience? What do you value most about dealing with customers? Is it more about the perhaps service delivery example, would you say?

A15.1. I think it's, for us at the moment it's more of supply chain, delivery, finance; take all that out of it for the moment, they are variables with any supplier arrangement or partnership. We are purely the brand, and I think it's the brands; the brands that we have do offer value, whether it's our syringe or whether its availability of stock that we hold in UK, up to 6 months in advance, but it's more to do with the brand and brand itself and also the terms that are available, and how it can get to them, sooner rather than later.

Q15.2. Do you find, without being humble, the approach you have about finding out the need and requirements and partnership arrangement helps with good customer experience, because I think you said earlier that you get customers involved with products and service requirements as well?

A15.2. Well, yes, but that's relatively a new thing, getting them more involved, but ultimately, we have an aligned outcome, that is that the customer wants to do better for the patient, we want to do better for the patient, albeit via the customer, so we are trying to align our outcomes. We don't want to promote medicine that increases mortality or side effects, the customer does not want their customer, essentially to come back, they want to treat the patient and wants them to go away and not come back because they're better, so if you align the outcomes it's important that you supply and make available to the customer the appropriate materials but also educationally for them so they can deliver the best message around the best medication for them to treat patients.

Q15.3. So, getting the customer involved with that, they can support the process and create value together.

A15.3. They could do. It's always difficult for a clinician to name one drug or medicine over another. The value created is more of a value to them in terms of how they feel about the product and what it does. The value to us is growth and increased access; the value to the patient is that they are given something that has been prescribed for the right reasons.

*FP9. – All social and economic actors are resource integrators. (Networking with many organisations or individuals and combining resources from multiple parties to create value.)
Supply chain and environment creating value?*

Q16. Thank you for that, that's a good example. Think back through your career concerning the environment in which you operate with brand or service in mind; locate a moment that was a high customer point, when you felt most effective and engaged. Describe how you felt, and what made this situation possible? In effect, what do you think the customer role is regarding value?

A16. It's an interesting question actually, generally because the NHS doesn't really value this industry as a whole, it's a big paintbrush, but 50.001% think the industry is evil, so therefore trying to create value to a certain extent depends on the individual you are dealing with, so it's a hard one. That's why this way of working is so relatively new with the patient focus in mind, because admittedly 20–30 years ago, medicines promoted by industry has created a rod for its own back. So, it is a difficult question to answer properly, that one.

Q16.1. Obviously with the great answer you gave me with working collaboratively in partnership, would you say it's very hard to deliver value without the customer's help and collaboration?

A16.1. In our case, yes, but I also think it depends on the product, customer and industry. Key account management gets more complex, almost project level the higher up, selling in and implementation is harder, selling IT is harder as opposed to office products. The product itself to a certain extent, the product or service you are selling will dictate the quality of that strategic relationship, that's quite simple. If you sell a commodity, it's about price and how fast you can get it to me, what's the price, on what terms and charges, whereas you're less worried about that with the smaller detail brand or IT system that makes you more efficient.

FP10. – Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. (Value creation is implicit in the SDL definition of service (FP6, FP8 and FP9).) Who determines value?

Q17. So, in terms of value, if we go back to value, who determines the value?

A17. I think value is specific to each case.

Q17.1. With your new way of working?

A17.1. Yes, as an industry we can generate a value, we can develop a value, we can postulate a value, but I think it's with the customer you find the true value. If the message you are giving about an injection, it goes deeper or lasts longer, that's not really the value, the value is the patient is kept better for longer. The value has to be seen as what the outcome is the customer is looking for, so therefore, the customer outcome or value should be how you're promoting it, but quite often companies and industries get it wrong. Its more about how fast this injection works and all that; however, it does not mean anything. A car with a steering wheel means what? The fact you can turn corners is the benefit; that's the value, isn't it, that you don't just go in a straight line.

Q17.2. So, you're saying, in essence, in a nutshell, the customer creates value and you work towards that?

A17.2. You should, not to sound dictatorial. In an ideal world you work with the customer to find the true value. You have a product which is for you, but if you're a purchasing manager, procurement manager, you may not necessarily be the customer. You know, my customer is not the customer per se, but the patients, so the value. Putting a new email system in is not going to be any good for you personally, unless it makes email efficient for everybody else, so the value is, I suppose, a house that is built on a foundation level and then built up and the more stakeholders you engage the more value you can pull out you actually have.

Q17.3. So, determining that value, you have to have engagement with the end user?

A17.3. I think so, absolutely. The product, goods and services themselves will dictate how that value is created. For 10 commodity products created what value is the value there, but for 1 high-end, complex, high-end, expensive service that's value and a harder sell to be honest, but that value has to be created with more stakeholders in mind, I would say.

Q17.4. So, in terms of the stakeholders being decision makers, they determine the value?

A17.4. Yes, it's an old sales tactic, I suppose from back in the day, in order to get one individual to buy your product. It's about how that product makes them feel about themselves. Putting in new windows fitted for £10k is so what but if that saves money in the winter with electricity then that's a good thing, that's the value, but that has to come from working with the customer, it can't be produced by one party, without the other part knowing, because it's your value and not theirs.

Final question – this question was not based on Vargo and Lusch's (2008a, p. 8) FP questions. What makes a good key account manager?

Q18. Thank you very much for that. One last question for you. I know you have been very successful, and I have bumped into you during the last 10 years at various events. Now without being modest about yourself what do you think makes a good key account manager?

A18. It's a good question, because as you know in our industry, it's been one of the hardest things to implement, not for us, but for the rest of the industry, because they cannot let go of micro management, and that goes back to one side of the scale is micro management and the other empowerment. But you also have to recruit the right individuals. I get recruitment processes are a lot more complex these days with assessments and psychometric tests and that. If you take our model throughout the industry, it was very much based on self-motivation, people who can think for themselves, people that are prepared to speak, engage, access the customer, ask the customer what it is they want or need. Having that conversation and value-added services, being able to go back and be senior enough to be able to put a business case together and value-added services to the customer; it's about the person. It's as much about the company as it is the person. If you recruit the right people, they will make that happen, and not any one of those things I mentioned is really dominant if you will. You might be great at building relationships but if you're not adding value the customer will stop seeing you at some point. You might be great at presenting business processes or business cases, external or internal, but you may be no good at implementation, so you are really a small businessman. If you view your region as your business, what would you do if this were your business, rather than I only work 9–5, I only do this, my job description says I do this. You know, that is a rep. We are not reps, we are good KAMs.

Q18.1. Thank you very much, I really enjoyed that, and that draws the interview to a close at exactly 30 minutes, so thank you very much. Any questions for me?

A18.1. No. It will be interesting to see the finished article.

Appendix D, main study, part 1, survey results

The first part of the main study commenced with the survey examining demographic questions. Table 5.7.1 below summarises the demographics results within the main survey, part 1.

Table 5.7.1. Main study survey, part 1, demographics results synopsis (source: author).

No.	Question	Options	Results summary
Q1.	I am?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	The results showed that 67% of participants were male, which accounted for 8 participants out of 12 KAMs. Nonetheless, in contrast to the exploratory survey, females' responses in this survey were 10% higher in comparison. When examining the buyers, all 3 participants were male.
Q2.	I am aged?	<input type="checkbox"/> 18-39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60+	The results noted that 9 out of 12 KAMs, representing 75%, were in the age bracket 40–59. The gender results had parallel percentages. The exploratory results also shared comparable gender trends; nonetheless, the total percentage was a little lower, at 63%. Yet, when investigating the buyers, the highest number, 2 out of 3, was for the 60+ age bracket; however, the number is too small to make a meaningful comparison.
Q3.	My highest qualification is?	<input type="checkbox"/> School Level <input type="checkbox"/> University Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate Degree	The results indicated that 58% of KAMs had a university or postgraduate degree, which represented 7 out of 12 participants. However, when considering gender percentages specifically, the opposite was discovered in the exploratory survey and males had a higher percentage by 13%, totalling 63%, in comparison to females, with 2 out of 4 having a university or postgraduate degree. Furthermore, the data showed that 4 out of 6 males aged between 40 and 59 had a degree, along with a male aged 18–39. Even so, a 60+ male had school-level qualifications. In comparison, a female aged between 18 and 39 held school-level qualifications along with another aged 40–59, whereas, a 40–59-year-old and 60+ female held degrees. Interestingly, the initial survey revealed that 73% of females had a degree, in contrast to 61% of males. For exploratory purposes, the comparison with buyers' revealed that 2 out of 3 had school-level qualifications.
Q4.	I have worked in KAM for?	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 10 years or more	The results revealed similar findings to the exploratory survey, with 67% of KAMs having 10 or more years' experience, regardless of gender and qualifications. However, it must be noted that 88% of age bracket 40–59 had 10+ years' experience, whereas 71% had this in the exploratory survey. The only other anomaly was that in the main survey both 18–39 age brackets indicated that they had less than 10 years' experience, and the only 60+ age bracket the same, whereas 50% of those in the 18-39 age bracket had this level of experience in the exploratory survey. Nevertheless, the sample in the main survey was too small to make a meaningful comparison.

			Regarding the procurement sample, both 60+ age brackets had 10 years' or more experience and the 40–59 bracket had less than 10 years' experience.
Q5.	I am a manager at this level?	<input type="checkbox"/> Junior, <input type="checkbox"/> Middle <input type="checkbox"/> Senior, <input type="checkbox"/> Director+	<p>The results showed that over 75% of KAMs considered themselves to be in senior to director+ level roles; this percentage was 63% in the exploratory survey. The percentage of those who indicated that they were in middle-level roles was comparable to the exploratory survey at around 25%. However, when reviewing the context at granular level, it was revealed that 71% of males with 10 or more years' experience stated that they had senior to director+ level roles. Yet, for females the results showed the opposite of the exploratory survey with all stating they had senior to director+ level roles regardless of age, qualifications and experience. This was in contrast to the exploratory survey results, which noted that 53% of females had middle-level roles and 14% had junior roles. The other interesting factors related to those with school-level qualifications, which showed that 80%, were in senior to director+ level roles and that 60% of those have 10 or more years' experience. In contrast, 71% of those with a degree were in senior to director+ level roles, and 71% had 10 or more years' experience. Nonetheless, the sample was too small to make a meaningful comparison, and most of the sample held a degree. When examining the buyers, all were in senior to director+ level positions.</p>
Q6.	I work in this region?	<input type="checkbox"/> North East <input type="checkbox"/> North West <input type="checkbox"/> Midlands <input type="checkbox"/> South East <input type="checkbox"/> South West <input type="checkbox"/> Wales <input type="checkbox"/> Scotland <input type="checkbox"/> N. Ireland <input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> Out of UK	<p>The results indicated that 83% of KAMs worked in the Midlands, the South East or nationally. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the main survey was changed to include the option National due to receiving considerable feedback when processing the exploratory survey. The analysis also revealed that all females in the main survey selected National, and 7 out of 8 males selected National, Midlands or South East.</p> <p>While, the results were difficult to compare both surveys indicated that the majority of KAMs worked in the Midlands, the South East or nationally; nonetheless, given the author was located in the Midlands and has worked in the South East the response results for the exploratory survey and the main survey were not surprising. When examining age brackets, experience, qualifications and seniority levels, the data showed that the dominant working locations were the Midlands, the South East or National being the dominant working locations. While the data captured provides a good overall synopsis of the UK, it must also be noted that a small percentage of the data, 11% in the exploratory survey and 8% in the main survey, was derived from KAMs working overseas. The procurement sample corresponded to the KAMs results: all participants worked nationally or from Midlands or South East locations. The location data gained from buyers was gathered merely for awareness and understanding.</p>