

# The relationship between big five personality traits, customer empowerment and customer satisfaction in the retail industry

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## Keywords

customer empowerment, customer satisfaction, retail, Big Five Personality Dimensions

## Abstract

*Big Five Personality Dimensions are considered important to understand how consumers behave and tend to prioritize aspects in a retail business environment. This research provides evidence of how the Big Five Personality Traits, including Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness, are positively correlated to Customer Empowerment or a "state of empowerment" perception, and how dimensions of Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism have a significant relationship with a State of Empowerment promoted among consumers. For such purpose, this research uses a multiple regression analysis and data of consumers around the world who have experienced face-to-face interactions in the retail industry.*

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## Introduction

Customer Satisfaction and Empowerment are fundamental elements to increase profits, loyalty and purchase frequency among consumers. Many things have been said about how to improve consumers' perceptions on satisfaction and empowerment, yet, this research aims to give ideas on how consumers depending on their personality traits tend to perceive satisfaction and empowerment, and how such satisfaction relates to a state of empowerment (Di Mascio, 2010; Grewal, Krishnan & Lindsey-Mullikin, 2008; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008).

## Literature Review and Hypotheses

Most companies constantly look for ways to improve satisfaction among consumers, through a better service quality and value. For this purpose, employees have a significant responsibility executing activities that may add and bring value and service to such customers. Most of the time these activities are represented by face-to-face interactions that may result in customer satisfaction that allows companies retain customers and attain success in the short and long term term (Di Mascio, 2010; Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008; Mueed, 2012; Sainy, 2010; Thenmozhi & Dhanapal, 2010; Wicks & Roethlein, 2009). Yet customer satisfaction and service are not perceived equally by all customers, and there are different ways to promote such perception of satisfaction to improve customer retention (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Mueed, 2012; Thenmozhi & Dhanapal, 2010; Yuen & Chan, 2010).

## Consultative Selling Process

The consultative selling process (CSP) is the process where by consumers have face-to-face interactions with frontline employees while receiving information to decide how to act in a business transaction (Liu & Leach, 2001). To achieve this, salespeople need to cooperate with consumers and share with them information that may help them satisfy their needs in an effective way. Then, they need to be real advisors with enough knowledge to help customers find a good solution to their needs and never be just mere promoters (Liu & Leach, 2001; Suomala, et al., 2012).

Therefore, the consultative selling process is focused on meeting consumers' needs and objectives by taking into account their sentiments, offering a solution to their expectations, and executing actions to make them feel important at the same time of solving their objections in the process (Graziano & Flanagan, 2005; Suomala, et al., 2012).

Last, the CSP consists of five phases where the first one becomes establishing a connection with consumers through a mutual trust connection with front-line employees. The second focuses on discovering customers' needs until being in a good position for stage three where providing a good solution based on such customers' needs is the main objective. The fourth phase is focused on closing the sale by helping customers make an adequate decision and then consolidate in the fifth phase a good relationship with them to develop a long-term association that may result in several transactions (Liu & Leach, 2001; Palokangas, 2010; Suomala, et al., 2012). Thus, Suomala, et al. (2012) describes CSP as a good way to serve customers surpassing their expectations and attaining sales especially when used in a customer journey.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer Satisfaction is defined by past and present events, where a positive experience compared to actual expectations and previous interactions results in a high satisfaction which also improves consumers' loyalty and has a positive relationship with customer service (Wicks & Roethlein, 2009). Thus, loyalty becomes retention and such retention has a significant impact on positive results among companies in the short and long-term (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Wicks & Roethlein, 2009).

As a result of this, a good perception among consumers is fundamental to attain success, which at the ends contributes to loyalty resulting in better market share in the short and long-term (Ivanauskienė, Auruškevičienė, Škudienė & Nedzinskas, 2012).

### **Customer Empowerment and Its Relationship with Satisfaction**

Customer Empowerment or a State of Empowerment perception, results from a selection process whereby consumers have access to interactions and exchange of free agents which produces better information and understanding of all aspects related to such interactions or sales processes and products (Fuchs, Prandelli & Schreier, 2010; Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008; Pranic & Roehl, 2012). At the end, this practice results in an increase of control which is not control by itself, but a perception of ownership triggering a psychological demand force (Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008; Pranic & Roehl, 2012). Hence, this State of Empowerment can be promoted by actors involved in a sales transaction causing a positive State of Empowerment that may also result in a better perception among consumers. Such improved perception resulting from an increase in control as stated previously, results in a better satisfaction among consumers, and consequently, better results in the short and long-term for most organizations (Hunter & Garnefeld, 2008; Pranic & Roehl, 2012).

### **Big Five Personality Dimensions**

Big Five Personality Dimensions (BFPD) were developed from multiple research efforts, compiling more than 4500 English adjectives that ended through research in five dimensions which combine and unify various personality traits that include all underlying possibilities (Miller, 2009; Mulyanegara, Tsarenko & Anderson, 2009; Rammstedt & John, 2007; Žabkar & Kolar, 2010).

Such BFPD allow an average prediction of individuals' behaviors in many different situations, being used mostly in human resource management and marketing where such behaviors or personalities are represented in an integrative framework of personality's factors that have their source in the structure and concepts of personality (Miller, 2009; Mulyanegara, Tsarenko & Anderson, 2009; Rammstedt & John, 2007; Žabkar & Kolar, 2010).

Therefore, a personality can be defined as the way an individual's mental world is organized when such a world is stable and consistent among time, independently of the situation. Thus, based

on this definition, researchers attempted to develop a framework that may come to explain individual differences (Mulyanegara, Tsarenko & Anderson, 2009). Thus, the Big Five model was developed to include traits such as Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Mulyanegara, Tsarenko & Anderson, 2009).

The neuroticism dimension assesses the adjustment an individual has versus an emotional instability, like a psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or maladaptive coping responses. Extraversion assesses the interpersonal interaction needed to stimulate an individual, as well as his capacity for joy, and the degree to which such person is outgoing or shy. Openness assesses the willingness to look for new experiences, the level of creativity, and the toleration and exploration of the unfamiliar. Agreeableness reviews the level of compassion to the antagonism in thoughts, as well as the different feelings and actions involved. Finally, conscientiousness assesses the degree of organization, persistence, and motivation to achieve the goals that an individual has (Anitsal & Anitsal, 2009; Mulyanegara, Tsarenko & Anderson, 2009; Rammstedt & John, 2007; Žabkar & Kolar, 2010).

Thus, measuring the consumers' personality traits and values contributes to understand and predict better the customers' purchase behaviors in a retail environment, something that is key for decision-making processes in marketing, including segmentation, and for other various drivers, factors and variations that take into account such behaviors (Žabkar & Kolar, 2010).

### **Retail Industry**

As defined by Kotni (2011), retailing is the group of activities that are performed when offering or selling products or services among consumers for their personal, family, or institutional use. Moreover, a retailer is a company, person or organization that reaches the product or service on demand to deliver it later to the consumer or ultimate user (Kotni, 2011). Such retailers are part of the retail industry, considered a pillar due to its size and importance in most countries around the world. Most of the time such industry represents the foundation and health of a formal or informal economy within a region or country, giving final consumers access to products and services that otherwise would be difficult to get (Kotni, 2011).

Indeed, within the retail industry there are organized and unorganized sectors, where companies that possess licenses or are registered to pay income tax or sales tax mostly compose the organized ones (Kotni, 2011). The unorganized retailing sectors, as opposed to the organized ones, are mostly composed by low-cost retailing stores, or open markets, that repeatedly are non-regulated or do not pay taxes (Kotni, 2011). Both sectors are fundamental for economies of all regions, and due to their importance, attaining satisfaction among consumers in such industry is key for any store or company offering products or services to end users.

Thus, the retail industry has proven to be important for economies, deeply dynamic, and very reactive to economic turnarounds such as the ones suffered during the last 10 years, where by downturns in economies or reactions in other industries have caused an impact and a generalize need of improvement in retail businesses (Deloitte, 2014; IMAP Inc., 2010; International Markets Bureau [IMB], 2011; KPMG, 2013).

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the concepts described above, and using data of retail consumers around the world as part of a study made by Castillo (2015) where they explain their perception of satisfaction and empowerment and answer the BFI-10 questionnaire described by Rammstedt and John (2007), the following hypotheses were developed:

$H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between Customer Empowerment evoked during the consultative selling process and Customer Satisfaction, having as null hypothesis  $H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between Customer Empowerment evoked during the consultative selling process and Customer Satisfaction.

${}_2H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction, having as null hypothesis  ${}_2H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction.

${}_3H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Empowerment, having as null hypothesis  ${}_3H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Empowerment.

${}_4H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between Openness and Customer Empowerment, having as null hypothesis  ${}_4H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between Openness and Customer Empowerment.

${}_5H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between Conscientiousness and Customer Empowerment, having as null hypothesis  ${}_5H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between Conscientiousness and Customer Empowerment.

${}_6H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between Agreeableness and Customer Empowerment, having as null hypothesis  ${}_6H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between Agreeableness and Customer Empowerment.

${}_7H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between Neuroticism and Customer Empowerment, having as null hypothesis  ${}_7H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between Neuroticism and Customer Empowerment.

${}_8H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between Extraversion and Customer Empowerment, having as null hypothesis  ${}_8H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between Extraversion and Customer Empowerment.

The author of this document considers discovering the relationship between customers' empowerment and satisfaction with the Big Five Personality Dimensions defined above, can drive retail businesses improve their marketing strategies and attract consumers around the world.

## Method

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between Big Five Personality Dimensions as a whole or individually with Customer Empowerment and validate how such empowerment relates to Customer Satisfaction. Then, contribute to establish such relationship in a retail environment through a consultative selling process which may serve as the base for future developments and more specific analysis on this area.

As a result of what has been stated above, the present document comes to reach the following objectives:

- Understand the relationship between Customers' Empowerment and Satisfaction.
- Understand the relationship between Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction in a consultative selling process.
- Understand the relationship between Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Empowerment in a consultative selling process.
- Understand the relationship of each Big Five Personality Dimension and a State of Empowerment.

### Questionnaire Development, Dependent and Independent Variables

As described on appendix B, independent variables of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness and State of Empowerment were used for the present study. Also, dependent variables of Customer Satisfaction and State of Empowerment were utilized to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2013).

More, the survey described on Appendix A was used to assess the Big Five Personality Dimensions (BFPD) independent variables which includes the BFI-10 questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree ... 5=Strongly Agree) described by Rammstedt and John (2007).

Last, questions described below were used to assess the dependent variables of customer empowerment and satisfaction as follows:

- Feeling empowered or with enough control during a selling process is important for you as a customer? This question was used to assess the importance of the dependent variable of a state of empowerment, or customer empowerment.
- Receiving more service from a frontline employee compare to what you were expecting makes you buy more or feel better? This question was used to assess the relation with the dependent variable of customer satisfaction.

This questionnaire and data were part of Castillo (2015) and the present research derives of such analysis.

### Analysis Method

This study uses a quantitative approach to achieve the objectives described above and a 5 point Likert-scale to measure each of the variables that will contribute to make the necessary statistical analysis as described on Appendix A and B (Creswell, 2013).

### Sampling Methods and Procedures

This study used a random sample, where the stratified population had an equal opportunity of being selected. The stratification used was: 21 years of age, Facebook user, high-school degree, speaks Spanish or English, and works or lives around the world (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the population and sample for this study is defined as Facebook's monthly active users that have a high-school degree, with more than 21 years of age, willing to answer the survey, that speak Spanish or English, and that live in any country around the world that speaks such languages. As of March 31st, 2014 Facebook had 1.28 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2014).

Also, it is important to mention that data described in this document was in addition used by Castillo (2015) for the dissertation titled "Impact of Customer Empowerment on Customer Satisfaction in the Retail Industry".

### Sample size.

Sample size was calculated using the formula proposed by Adams, Khan, and Raeside (2007):

$$n_0 = Z^2 \frac{p(1-p)}{d^2}$$

Where  $n_0$  = sample size,  $Z$  = Standardized normal value,  $\alpha$  = level of significance,  $p$  = estimated rate,  $d$  = precision range.

Then, knowing the population size ( $N$ ), the finite population correction (FPC) formula was used as follows:

$$n = \frac{Nn_0}{N + n_0} = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0}{N}}$$

Hence, the parameters defined for this sample size were:

90% confidence level due to language limitation and questions interpretation ( $Z$ ).

5% margin error ( $d$ ).

A response distribution of 50% ( $p$ ).

The above formulas resulted in a sample size of 271 surveys for the study. Yet, the response in the web-survey was 288 completed responses out of 566 surveys distributed from March 27th, 2014 up to May 26th, 2014.

### Sample procedures.

A random sample was used to promote the web-survey using Facebook (Creswell, 2013). The format of the web-survey was a self-administered questionnaire (Appendix A). Facebook ads



were published among users of such platform with a high-school degree, with more than 21 years of age, that speak Spanish or English, asking them to click on a link provided on the ad which lead to the web-survey using the website [javiercastillo.org](http://javiercastillo.org). A raffle of an iPad Mini was promoted among participants with a full response to encourage participation. Furthermore, a disclosure was stated at the beginning of the on-line survey to inform respondents on the use of such information in the elaboration of this study with the approval of SMC University (Creswell, 2013). Also, such invitation to participate was based on the standards 3.10 and 8.02 for informed consent as required by the American Psychological Association (2014), where the purpose of the research, the expected duration and procedures, the right to decline to participate, the possible benefits and foresee use of such information, the incentives for participation, and the information on rights, future contact or research questions, were all described and explained (American, 2014). Moreover, to validate the identity of the respondents, their IP address was saved and kept for future reference, and their email address was requested to participate in the raffle.

## Results

### Participant Profile

Survey's data was collected exclusively through the Internet, using the LimeSurvey® open source survey application, and the website [javiercastillo.org](http://javiercastillo.org) (Appendix C). Also, by using the described Facebook's ad, a response rate of 19.74% (based on completed surveys) was achieved from 1,459 users that showed interest on the advertisement promoting the survey. Plus, a total of 566 respondents were registered in the system, 278 questionnaires were not considered completed for not being totally finalized, and 288 surveys were recorded as completed.

Furthermore, people of 22 countries answered the survey as follows:

**Table 1**

*Responses by Country*

Country	Responses	%
Argentina	3	1.04%
Bolivia	43	14.93%
Canada	4	1.39%
Chile	3	1.04%
Colombia	5	1.74%
Egypt	10	3.47%
France	1	0.35%
Ghana	1	0.35%
Guatemala	15	5.21%
Honduras	6	2.08%
Indonesia	4	1.39%
India	1	0.35%
Mexico	4	1.39%
Nicaragua	13	4.51%
Peru	4	1.39%
Pakistan	85	29.51%
Paraguay	21	7.29%
Saudi Arabia	1	0.35%
El Salvador	9	3.13%
United States	5	1.74%
Uruguay	2	0.69%
Venezuela	42	14.58%
Unknown	6	2.08%

Last, to consider a survey completed, respondents had to answer all questions with the exception of name, phone and email address. Yet, country of respondents was stated using the IP address recorded by LimeSurvey® software, with a multiple IP address lookup application provided by the hosting company WEBNet77 (WEBNet77, 2014).

### Sample Demographics

Participants' demographics are divided and presented below, by country, gender (male or female), marital status (married or single), age (under 20 years old, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50 and above 50), education level (secondary education, bachelor degree and graduate school), occupation (civil servant, retired, house wife, student, worker, self-employed, unemployed, private sector, employee and other) and income level (less than US\$500 per month, US\$ 501-US\$1000, US\$1001-US\$2000, US\$2001-US\$3000, US\$3001-US\$5000 and above US\$5000 per month).

**Table 2**

*Sample Demographics: Responses by Country*

Country	# Of Valid Responses	% Valid Responses
Argentina	3	1.04%
Bolivia	43	14.93%
Canada	4	1.39%
Chile	3	1.04%
Colombia	5	1.74%
Egypt	10	3.47%
France	1	0.35%
Ghana	1	0.35%
Guatemala	15	5.21%
Honduras	6	2.08%
Indonesia	4	1.39%
India	1	0.35%
Mexico	4	1.39%
Nicaragua	13	4.51%
Peru	4	1.39%
Pakistan	85	29.51%
Paraguay	21	7.29%
Saudi Arabia	1	0.35%
El Salvador	9	3.13%
United States	5	1.74%
Uruguay	2	0.69%
Venezuela	42	14.58%
Unknown	6	2.08%
Total	288	100%

*Note.* Respondents of 22 countries answered the survey.

**Table 3**

*Sample Demographics: Gender*

Gender	Frequency	% Valid
Male	235	81.60%
Female	53	18.40%
Total	288	100%

*Note.* The majority of respondents were male.

**Table 4**

*Sample Demographics: Marital Status*

Marital Status	Frequency	% Valid
Married	90	31.25%
Single	198	68.75%
Total	288	100%

*Note.* Most of valid respondents were single.

**Table 5**

*Sample Demographics: Age*

Age	Frequency	% Valid
Under 20 years old	14	4.86%
21-30 years old	163	56.60%
31-40 years old	57	19.79%
41-50 years old	42	14.58%
Above 50 years old	12	4.17%
Total	288	100%

*Note.* The majority of respondents are between 21-30 years old. The second group was between 31-40 years old. Between both groups there is a total of 220 respondents or 76.39%, plus a total of 54 respondents above 41 years old for a total of 274 participants that are 21 years old or older.

**Table 6**

*Sample Demographics: Education Level*

Education Level	Frequency	% Valid
Secondary Education	50	17.36%
Bachelor Degree	188	65.28%
Graduate School	50	17.36%
Total	288	100%

*Note.* The majority of respondents have a bachelor degree.

**Table- 7**

*Sample Demographics: Occupation*

Occupation	Frequency	% Valid
Civil Servant	22	7.64%
Retired	3	1.04%
House Wife	6	2.08%
Student	75	26.04%
Worker	28	9.72%
Self-Employed	41	14.24%
Unemployed	17	5.90%
Private Sector	41	14.24%
Employee	42	14.58%
Other	13	4.51%
Total	288	100%

*Note.* Most of respondents were students or employees.

**Table-8: Sample Demographics: Income Level**

Income Level	Frequency	% Valid
Less than US\$500 per month	169	58.68%
US\$501-US\$1000	84	29.17%
US\$1001-US\$2000	23	7.99%
US\$2001-US\$3000	5	1.74%



US\$3001-US\$5000	2	0.69%
Above US\$5000 per month	5	1.74%
Total	288	100%

*Note.* The majority of participants earn less than US\$500 per month, and the second group in importance earn between US\$501 – US\$1,000. Both groups represent a total of 253 respondents or 87.85%.

Hence, demographics show 274 or 95.14% participants with 21 years of age or older, 187 or 64.93% participants that are employed and have an income at the moment of the survey, 75 or 26.04% that are students, a total of 262 or 90.97% that are employees or students, 238 or 82.64% that have a university degree, and 100% that have secondary education or more. All participants are Facebook's (FB) users, and Schultz, Block and Labrecque (2012) state that such users commonly make recommendations to their FB's friends on things of their interest like products, retail stores, and related experiences, thus, such users are consumers of products or services in the retail industry. Also, based on survey participants' level of education, age, actual employment or student status, and access to a computer system, their participation in the retail industry as consumers can be assessed (Kim, Kim & Nam, 2010; Schultz, Block & Labrecque, 2012; Yang, 2012).

### Overview of Statistical Analysis

Hypotheses' validity is determined through a linear regression and tested using ANOVA and p-value, with a 90% confidence level. Thus, adjusted R-Square describes how much of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variable, and a P-Value below 0.1 for the intercept and coefficient indicate their statistical significance with a 10% margin error or a 90% confidence level. Hence, R-Square and P-Value help determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variable, thus, accepting or rejecting the related null hypothesis (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Whaley, 2006).

### Presentation of Analysis

A multiple regression analysis between independent variables of personality traits and customer empowerment, and dependent variables of a state of empowerment and customer satisfaction, was performed in this study.

The following results were obtained when assessing variable customer empowerment based on 288 completed questionnaires and respondents:

**Table 9:**  
*Customer Empowerment*

Rate	Count	Percentage
1	15	5.21%
2	18	6.25%
3	55	19.10%
4	81	28.12%
5	119	41.32%
Total	288	100%
Mean		3.94
Mean	Lower	3.83
Confidence Limit		
Mean	Upper	4.05
Confidence Limit		
Median		4.00
Standard Deviation		1.15
Variance		1.32
Mode		5.00

Also, the following results were obtained for dependent variable customer satisfaction:

**Table 10: Customer Satisfaction**

Rate	Count	Percentage
1	22	7.64%
2	23	7.99%
3	50	17.36%
4	65	22.57%
5	128	44.44%
Total	288	100%
Mean		3.88
Mean Lower		3.76
Confidence Limit		
Mean Upper		4.01
Confidence Limit		
Median		4.00
Standard Deviation		1.27
Variance		1.62
Mode		5.00

The overall comparison for both variables is as follows:

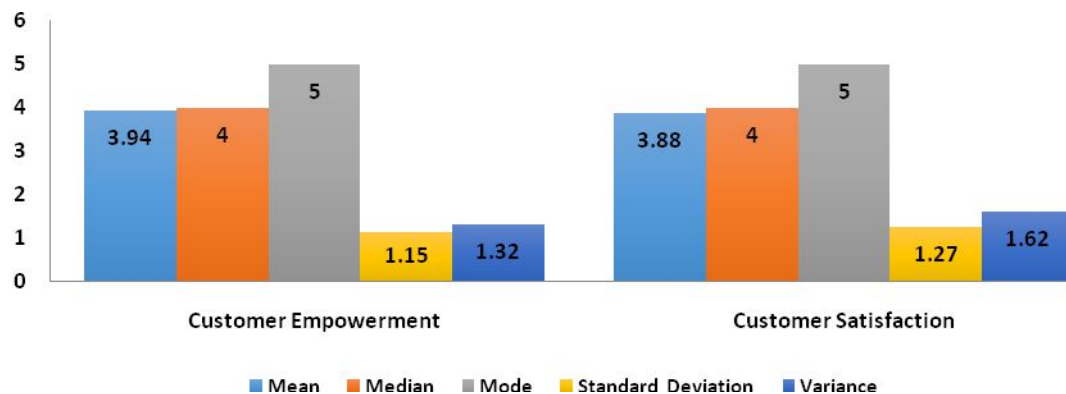


Figure 1. Overall Comparison

As shown on Figure 1 and Tables 9 and 10, customer empowerment and customer satisfaction have a high significance for participants with a mean above 3.88, a median of 4, a mode of 5, a standard deviation of 1.15 and 1.27, and a variance of 1.32 and 1.62 respectively. Thus, the importance of both dependent variables is perceived among respondents, and variations are similar in both cases.

The defined  $H_1$  states: There is a significant positive relationship between Customer Empowerment evoked during the consultative selling process and Customer Satisfaction. Opposing, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  states: There is no significant positive relation between Customer Empowerment evoked during the consultative selling process and Customer Satisfaction.

In this case, the dependent variable is represented by Customer Satisfaction, having as independent variable Customer Empowerment. Hence, when both variables are correlated through a simple linear regression and such correlation is tested through ANOVA and P-Value, the following values arise with a 90% confidence level:

$$R = 40.72\%$$

$R^2 = 16.58\%$

Adjusted  $R^2 = 16.29\%$

P-Value =  $6.24E-13$

Thus, it can be inferred that there is a positive correlation of 40.72% between customer empowerment and customer satisfaction, a P-Value (ANOVA) of  $6.24E-13$  which is considerably below 0.10, and an adjusted  $R^2$  stating that 16.29% of the times customer empowerment explains the perception of customer satisfaction, resulting in the rejection of null hypothesis  $H_0$  (Adams, Khan, & Raeside, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Whaley, 2006). Consequently, based on the results described above, it can be concluded that when such perception of empowerment is induced it has a positive influence on customers' satisfaction.

Personality traits, based on the Big Five Personality Dimensions, had the following results:

**Table 11**

*Independent Variables: Big Five Personality Dimensions*

Traits	Personality	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Extraversion	0.2986	1.49
	Agreeableness	1.2465	1.72
	Conscientiousness	1.5903	1.80
	Neuroticism	0.9167	1.82
	Openness	1.1701	1.63

*Note.* Scale for each personality dimension: +4=Very High ... -4=Very Low.

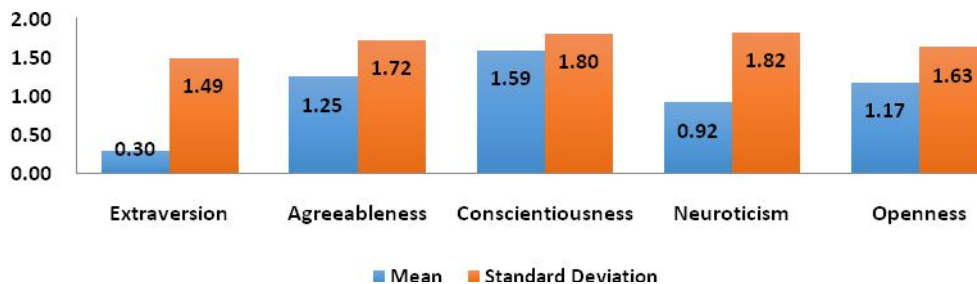


Figure 2. *Independent Variables – Big Five Personality Dimensions Overall Comparison*

These results show a high variance on two personality traits: conscientiousness and neuroticism; yet, conscientiousness (1.59) and agreeableness (1.25) are the highest mean results with a standard deviation of 1.80 and 1.72 respectively out of a range of -4 thru +4, denoting that most participants tend to be oriented towards these two personality traits.

Also, for hypothesis  $H_1$ : There is a significant positive relationship between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction, having as null hypothesis  $H_0$ : There is no significant positive relation between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction, the analysis shows the following results:

$R = 37.81\%$

$R^2 = 14.3\%$

Adjusted  $R^2 = 12.78\%$

P-Value =  $2.62E-08$

There is a positive correlation of 37.81% between all Big Five Personality Dimensions acting as independent variables and customer satisfaction, with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 14.30%, and a P-Value of 2.62E-08, which is significantly lower compared to an error margin of 10% (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Miller, 2009; Whaley, 2006). This reflects that hypothesis  $2H_0$  is rejected and consequently there is a significant positive relationship between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction.

In this case, the results for each independent variable are as follows:

**Table 12**

*Multiple Regression Analysis: Independent Variables of Personality Traits and Customer Empowerment*

Independent Variable	P-Value	Null Hypothesis Rejected?
Openness	8.27E-03	Yes
Conscientiousness	1.31E-03	Yes
Agreeableness	4.09E-02	Yes
Neuroticism	2.60E-01	No
Extraversion	2.71E-01	No

Therefore, Neuroticism (assessing the adjustment an individual has versus emotional instability) and Extraversion (assessing the interpersonal interaction needed to stimulate an individual, his capacity for joy, and the degree to which such person is outgoing or shy) do not show influence over customer satisfaction.

Also, Independent variables of personality traits (Big Five Personality Dimensions) including Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness, when correlated with customer empowerment, through a multiple regression analysis, ended with the following results:

R = 43.62%

R<sup>2</sup> = 19.03%

Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 17.60%

P-Value = 1.31E-11

There is a significant positive correlation of 43.62% between all Big Five Personality Dimensions acting as independent variables and customer empowerment, with an adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of 17.60%, and a P-Value of 1.31E-11, which is significantly lower compared to an error margin of 10% (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Miller, 2009; Whaley, 2006). This reflects that hypothesis  $3H_0$  is rejected and consequently there is a significant positive relationship between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Empowerment.

**Table 13** shows the results for each independent variable.

**Table 13: Multiple Regression Analysis: Independent Variables of Personality Traits and Customer Empowerment**

Independent Variable	P-Value	Null Hypothesis	Null Hypothesis Rejected?
Openness	5.45E-01	$4H_0$	No
Conscientiousness	4.68E-05	$5H_0$	Yes
Agreeableness	1.55E-03	$6H_0$	Yes
Neuroticism	5.66E-03	$7H_0$	Yes
Extraversion	1.88E-01	$8H_0$	No

Two personality traits do not show influence over customer empowerment. Such traits are openness (assessing the willingness to look for new experiences, the level of creativity, and the toleration and exploration of the unfamiliar) and extraversion (assessing the interpersonal interaction

needed to stimulate an individual, his capacity for joy, and the degree to which such person is outgoing or shy) at a 90% confidence level. Openness resulted in a P-Value of 5.45E-01 (above 0.10) and extraversion resulted in a P-Value of 1.88E-01 (above 0.10). Thus, both independent variables have no influence on customer empowerment based on the ANOVA test performed, and consequently, null hypotheses  $4H_0, 8H_0$  are accepted (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Miller, 2009; Whaley, 2006).

Thus, personality traits of Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, are the ones that influence customer empowerment in a significant way due to their P-Value compared to a 90% confidence level (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Miller, 2009; Whaley, 2006). Consequently, null hypotheses  $5H_0, 6H_0$  and  $7H_0$  are rejected (see table 14).

**Table 14:** Summary of Null Hypotheses Results

Null Hypothesis	Description	P-Value	Rejected?
$1H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between Customer Empowerment evoked during the consultative selling process and Customer Satisfaction.	6.24E-13	Yes
$2H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Satisfaction.	2.62E-08	Yes
$3H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between all Big Five Personality Dimensions and Customer Empowerment.	1.31E-11	Yes
$4H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between Openness and Customer Empowerment.	5.45E-01	No
$5H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between Conscientiousness and Customer Empowerment.	4.68E-05	Yes
$6H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between Agreeableness and Customer Empowerment.	1.55E-03	Yes
$7H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between Neuroticism and Customer Empowerment.	5.66E-03	Yes
$8H_0$	There is no significant positive relation between Extraversion and Customer Empowerment.	1.88E-01	No

### Conclusions and Discussion

Throughout this paper, the relationship between customer empowerment and customer satisfaction was validated. Customers that perceive a State of Empowerment will tend to be more satisfied in a consultative selling process within the retail industry than those who don't perceive such empowerment.

Personality dimensions of Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism show a significant relationship to promote a State of Empowerment among consumers, or in other words,

consumers with such personality traits will tend to feel more empowered when interacting with frontline employees using a consultative selling process.

Also, consumers related to personality traits such as Openness, Conscientiousness and Agreeableness are the ones that will tend to feel more satisfied when interacting with employees through a consultative selling process in the retail industry.

Personality traits of Conscientiousness and Agreeableness are the ones that show a strong relationship with both, Customer Empowerment and Satisfaction. Thus, the author of this document suggests that these two personality dimensions when considered as part of a selling strategy, will tend to bring customers that will perceive better the efforts focused on promoting a State of Empowerment perception, and will drive a higher Customer Satisfaction and loyalty which will result in higher sales in the short and long-term.

Therefore, it can be inferred that companies' strategies to promote loyalty and satisfaction among consumers should consider focusing more on consumers related to Conscientiousness and Agreeableness personality traits if they want to have a higher probability of success, and gain market share and loyalty through a consultative selling process that may promote such State of Empowerment, and consequently, a higher Customer Satisfaction, loyalty and retention of consumers (Anitsal & Anitsal, 2009; Mulyanegara, Tsarenko & Anderson, 2009; Rammstedt & John, 2007; Žabkar & Kolar, 2010).

### Limitations

There are three limitations in this research. The first being a sample, including only people willing to answer the survey that represented 22 countries, causing generalizations difficult to be totally supported around the world (Creswell, 2013). Yet, as explained by Brenna and Coppack (2008), and Broderick, Demangeot, Adkins, Ferguson, Henderson, Johnson, Kipnis, Mandiberg, Mueller, Pullig, Roy, and Zúñiga (2011), the concept of customer empowerment and satisfaction is known in most countries, although, the meaning of such concept may vary. Thus, the present research aims to focus on a defined concept of a state of empowerment, by asking "Feeling empowered or with enough control during a selling process is important for you as a customer?" based on Fuchs, Prandelli, and Schreier (2010), Hunter and Garnefeld (2008), and Pranic and Roehl (2012), and also use a defined concept of customer satisfaction, by asking "Receiving more service from a frontline employee compare to what you were expecting makes you buy more or feel better?" based on Hennig-Thurau (2004), Liu and Leach (2001), Muyeed (2012), Palokangas (2010), Suomala, Palokangas, Leminen, Westerlund, Heinonen, and Numminen (2012), Thenmozhi and Dhanapal (2010), Wicks and Roethlein (2009), and Yuen and Chan (2010), that may allow the readers decide if the involved concept is significant for them.

The second limitation is the use of only two languages in the survey, English and Spanish, which represent a barrier for potential participants in non-English or Spanish speaking countries. Yet, the survey's promotion was made in both languages, and the corresponding ad in Facebook was selected based on the user's profile preferred language. Also, Sullivan, and Cottone (2010) state "using different languages with different research participants was a strength and was evidence of study validity, rather than a source of possible error" (p.360). In the same research, they also mention "awareness of language can contribute to a deeper understanding and does not necessarily introduce greater complication or error into a study" (p.360). Thus, such different languages used in the research may contribute to a deeper understanding of the related questions.

Third limitation is related to discrepancies that may exist between different cultures and corresponding Big Five Personality Dimensions (Allik, 2005; Heine, Buchtel & Norenzayan, 2008; Schmitt, Allik, McCrae & Benet-Martinez, 2007). This is mostly related to cultural differences and the limited samples and number of cross-cultural comparisons (Allik, 2005). Yet, several authors including Allik (2005) and Schmitt, et al. (2007), described Big Five Personality Traits being highly



replicable among most important cultural regions around the world with a significant reliability. Nevertheless, is important to notice that such personality traits may tend to change over the life course and such changes might be related to social demands and experiences (Specht, Egloff & Schmukle, 2011).

### Future Research Suggestions

How to address personality traits when related to Customer Empowerment and Satisfaction, may constitute a fundamental topic in a customer orientation selling process that could result in a new model to handle interactions with customers. This suggested research is based on the impact that personality traits such as Conscientiousness and Agreeableness may have on such perceived State of Empowerment or Customer Satisfaction as stated in this research.

Also, the discovery of actions to attract customers with these personality traits that may get more identified with a company, and consequently, may buy more through a State of Empowerment perception and a specific customer journey, seems to be another subject of interest.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Questionnaire Used in the Quantitative Research

- Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

- Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Email  
(optional) \_\_\_\_\_

- Actual Location (country) \_\_\_\_\_

- Gender: Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Marital Status: Married \_\_\_ Single \_\_\_

- Age: Under 20 \_\_\_ 21-30 \_\_\_ 31-40 \_\_\_ 41-50 \_\_\_ above 50 \_\_\_

- Educational level: Secondary Education \_\_\_ Bachelor Degree \_\_\_ Graduate School \_\_\_

- Occupation: Civil Servant \_\_\_ Retired \_\_\_ House Wife \_\_\_ Student \_\_\_ Worker \_\_\_ Self-Employed \_\_\_  
Unemployed \_\_\_ Private Sector Employee \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

- Income level: Less than US\$500 per month \_\_\_ US\$501-US\$1000 \_\_\_ US\$1001-US\$2000 \_\_\_  
US\$2001- \_\_\_\_\_

US\$3000 \_\_\_ US\$3001-US\$5000 \_\_\_ Above US\$5000 \_\_\_

I see myself as someone who...	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly
... is reserved	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... is generally	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... tends to be lazy	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... is relaxed, handles stress well	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... has few artistic interests	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... is outgoing,	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... tends to find fault with others	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... does a thorough	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... get nervous easily	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
... has an active imagination	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11) Feeling empowered or with enough control during a selling process is important for you as a customer? (Strongly Disagree) 1 - - 2 - - 3 - - 4 - - 5 (Strongly Agree)					
12) Do you buy more from a salesperson that understand your needs? (Strongly Disagree) 1 - - 2 - - 3 - - 4 - - 5 (Strongly Agree)					
13) Do you buy more from a salesperson that asks if you like something that is being suggested by him based on your needs? (Strongly Disagree) 1 - - 2 - - 3 - - 4 - - 5 (Strongly Agree)					

14) Do you buy more from a salesperson that suggests several products to you based on your needs? (Strongly Disagree) 1 - - 2 - - 3 - - 4 - - 5 (Strongly Agree)
15) Do you buy more from a salesperson that explains what you are entitled to when buying a product, in terms of returns, exchange and support of such products being sold? (Strongly Disagree) 1 - - 2 - - 3 - - 4 - - 5 (Strongly Agree)
16) Receiving more service from a frontline employee compare to what you were expecting makes you buy more or feel better? (Strongly Disagree) 1 - - 2 - - 3 - - 4 - - 5 (Strongly Agree)

## Appendix B

### Variable Mapping

Variable Relation Map	
Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Extraversion	State of Empowerment & Customer Satisfaction
Agreeableness	State of Empowerment & Customer Satisfaction
Conscientiousness	State of Empowerment & Customer Satisfaction
Neuroticism	State of Empowerment & Customer Satisfaction
Openness	State of Empowerment & Customer Satisfaction
State of Empowerment	Customer Satisfaction Perception

Variable Mapping and Survey Questionnaire		
Q #	Question/Statement	Independent Variable
Q1-Q10	Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) Questionnaire	Extraversion
Q1-Q10	Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) Questionnaire	Agreeableness
Q1-Q10	Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) Questionnaire	Conscientiousness
Q1-Q10	Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) Questionnaire	Neuroticism
Q1-Q10	Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10) Questionnaire	Openness
Q11	Feeling empowered or with enough control during a selling process is important for you as a customer?	State of Empowerment

Variable Mapping and Survey Questionnaire		
Q #	Question/Statement	Dependent Variable
Q11	Feeling empowered or with enough control during a selling process is important for you as a customer?	State of Empowerment
Q16	Receiving more service from a frontline employee compare to what you were expecting makes you buy more or feel better?	Customer Satisfaction Perception