Management Letters / Cuadernos de Gestión 25/2 (2025) 37-52

FESIDE
Fundación Emilio Soldevilla para la Investigación y Desarrollo de la Economía de la Empresa

enpresa institutua
Instituto de Economía Aplicada a la Empresa

Management Letters / Cuadernos de Gestión

journal homepage: https://ojs.ehu.eus/index.php/CG
ISSN: 1131-6837 / e-ISSN: 1988-2157

Bricoleur mindset in sales: Empowering trade fair performance

Mentalidad resolutiva en ventas: Potenciando el desempeño en ferias comerciales

Pedro Mendonça Silva*, Visar Rrustemi[a], José Freitas Santos[b]

[a] *PhD in Marketing from George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA. Full Professor at the Marketing Department at Faculty of Economics - University of Prishtina, Kosovo. University of Prishtina, rr.Rifat Meziu, Taukbashqe Prishtinë – visar.rrustemi@uni-pr.edu – https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6064-310X*

[b] *PhD in Economic and Business Sciences from the University of Minho, Portugal. Full Professor at the Management Department of ISCAP (Porto Polytechnic), Portugal. CEOS.PP, ISCAP, Polytechnic of Porto, Rua Jaime Lopes Amorim, s/n 4465-004 S. Mamede de Infesta – jfsantos@iscap.ipp.pt – https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8233-5039*

* ***Corresponding author:*** *PhD in Business Science - Management from the Aveiro University, Portugal. Professor at the Department the Management of the ISCAP (P.PORTO's Business School), Portugal. CEOS.PP, ISCAP, Polytechnic of Porto, Rua Jaime Lopes Amorim, s/n 4465-004 S. Mamede de Infesta. Portugal – psilva@iscap.ipp.pt – https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2463-0408*

ARTICLE INFO

Received 12 January 2025,
Accepted 18 April 2025

Available online 2 June 2025

DOI: 10.5295/cdg.252346pm

JEL: M10; M31

ABSTRACT

A significant advantage in a constantly evolving trade fair environment is the bricoleur mind set. This is particularly relevant for a company deserving to participate in a trade fair but face challenges such as intense competition, resource allocation problems, and the need for adaptability. This research investigates the impact of bricoleur behaviour and problem-solving confidence on exhibitor performance at trade fairs offering valuable information about the dynamics of salespeople behaviour on a trade fair environment and the impact on the performance of company's trade fair participation. Therefore, the study addresses the gap in the literature regarding the bricoleur behaviour of salespeople at trade fairs, investigating how they creatively use available resources to navigate the complexity of these events and improve their performance. Grounded in the Bricolage and Stressor Event theories, the study explores the swift and effective adaptation required at trade fairs, offering managerial insights and directions for future research. The study adopts a quantitative approach, by examining a sample of 304 Portuguese and Kosovar companies by a covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM). The study results confirm the importance of bricoleur behaviour and confidence in problem-solving for exhibitor performance at trade fairs. The findings align with supporting theories, and the integrated approach of these skills culminates in a "bricolage thinking", which is essential for navigating complex and high-pressure environments such as trade fairs, thereby contributing to the overall success of these business platforms.

Keywords: Bricoleur, Sales, Trade fairs, Performance, Problem solving confidence.

R E S U M E N

Una ventaja significativa en un entorno de feria comercial en constante evolución es la mentalidad resolutiva. Esto es especialmente relevante para empresas que, pese a merecer participar en ferias comerciales, enfrentan desafíos como la competencia intensa, problemas de recursos y la necesidad de adaptabilidad. Esta investigación analiza cómo el comportamiento resolutivo y la confianza en la resolución de problemas afectan el desempeño de los expositores, aportando información valiosa sobre la dinámica de los vendedores en estos entornos y su impacto en el éxito empresarial. Por lo tanto, el estudio aborda la brecha en la literatura sobre el comportamiento resolutivo de los vendedores en ferias comerciales, investigando cómo utilizan creativamente los recursos disponibles para navegar por la complejidad de estos eventos y mejorar su desempeño. Fundamentado en las teorías de Resolutivo y Eventos Estresantes, el estudio explora la adaptación rápida y efectiva requerida en ferias comerciales, ofreciendo ideas de gestión y direcciones para investigaciones futuras. El estudio adopta un enfoque cuantitativo, examinando una muestra de 304 empresas portuguesas y kosovares mediante un Modelo de Ecuaciones Estructurales basado en Covarianza (CB-SEM). Los resultados del estudio confirman la importancia del comportamiento resolutivo y la confianza en la resolución de problemas para el desempeño de los expositores en ferias comerciales. Los hallazgos se alinean con las teorías de apoyo, y el enfoque integrado de estas habilidades culmina en un «pensamiento resolutivo», esencial para navegar en entornos complejos y de alta presión como las ferias comerciales, contribuyendo así al éxito general de estas plataformas empresariales.

Palabras clave: Resolutivo, Ventas, Ferias comerciales, Desempeño, Confianza en la resolución de problemas.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the notion of bricoleur has attracted increasing attention in sales literature, particularly considering its potential implications for navigating high-pressure environments and promoting adaptive behaviours among sales professionals (Epler & Leach, 2021; Epler *et al.*, 2023). During the competitive landscape of trade fairs, where companies compete for attention, leadership and market share (Silva *et al.*, 2021; 2022), the ability to improvise, innovate and take advantage of available resources might be the difference between success and obscurity.

In the dynamic settings of trade fairs, marked by interactions with various stakeholders and relevant levels of competition and uncertainty (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022), bricoleurs stand out in exploring unexpected opportunities, adapting to evolving circumstances and designing innovative solutions to achieve goals (Epler & Leach, 2021; Epler *et al.*, 2023; Wu *et al.*, 2024). This adaptability can be essential to success at trade fairs, where companies invest significant resources and efforts to ensure sustained engagement and fruitful results over time (Lee *et al.*, 2021; Nayak, 2019). In this sense, it is also worth highlighting the crucial role of salespeople, particularly in the context of trade fairs, where their proactive and adaptable approach is critical (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022). Given the competitive nature of trade fairs and the diverse needs of attendees, salespeople should adopt the mindset of a bricoleur – continuously adapting their strategies, tactics, and approaches to effectively leverage available resources and meet the unique demands of each customer (Epler & Leach, 2021). This focus on tailored engagement highlights the crucial role of salespeople's performance at trade fair booths in driving success.

Despite this growing recognition of the relevance of bricoleur in sales contexts (Epler & Leach, 2021; Epler *et al.*, 2023), empirical studies exploring its manifestation and impact at trade fairs are practically non-existent. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the role of bricoleur behaviour among salespeople at trade fairs which seems to be an unexplored territory in the literature. By examining how salespeople leverage bricoleur to navigate the complexities of trade fairs, this investigation aims to shed light on the mechanisms through which bricoleur behaviour influences problem-solving confidence, and exhibitor performance. The objectives of this study are holistically supported by three fundamental theories: the Resource-Based View Theory, Bricolage Theory and the Stressor Event Theory. The Resource-Based View theory proposes that rather than relying on external resources or costly solutions, a company should maximize the potential of its existing assets (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2020). The Bricolage Theory, initially developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the field of anthropology (Lévi-Strauss, 2021), was later adapted to explain phenomena in organisational and sales contexts by Epler and Leach (2021). This theory emphasises the ability to solve problems creatively by using available resources in innovative and unconventional ways (Lévi-Strauss, 2021). In the sales context, this translates into the ability of salespeople to improvise and adapt quickly to meet customer needs with the resources at hand (Epler & Leach, 2021). Given the highly dynamic business world today, salespeople must be trained to use improvisation to respond to unforeseen situations (Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2021).

On the other hand, the Stressor Event Theory examines how certain events can act as stressors for individuals and organisations, challenging their ability to cope with changes and unexpected demands (Lerman *et al.*, 2020). Trade fairs, while powerful in attracting customers, are characterised by a constant need for rapid adaptation, complex interactions, and measurable outcomes. These characteristics make trade fairs challenging events that require agile and effective responses from the salespeople present at the stands, as pointed out in studies by Li (2020), Gerschewski *et al.* (2020) and Silva *et al.* (2022).

The bricolage theory can be seen as an application of the Resource-Based View in the sales context, where companies creatively utilise available resources to overcome challenges (Epler & Leach, 2021; Epler *et al.*, 2023; Sivathanu & Pillai, 2020). This process is particularly relevant in environments such as trade fairs and business events, which are characterised by high-pressure contexts, challenging the ability of salespeople to cope with unexpected changes and demands, as highlighted by the Stressor Event Theory (Lerman *et al.*, 2020). Trade fairs require salespeople to quickly adapt to different types of customers, market conditions, and unexpected situations, making bricolage a crucial skill for integrating resources in a creative and efficient manner. Thus, the study of salespeople's bricolage at trade fairs fills existing gaps in the literature, offering significant contributions to both the theoretical and practical advancement of bricolage understanding within business contexts, as emphasised by Mateus and Sarkar (2024), including the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), as noted by Gerçek (2024).

The paper begins by establishing a theoretical framework and rationale for the proposed hypotheses, followed by a description of the methodology and presentation of research findings. These findings are then discussed, providing managerial insights and guidance. Finally, the paper addresses limitations and suggests avenues for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The bricoleur mindset of the salesperson

The concept of bricolage, introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1962 in "The Wild Thought" (Lévi-Strauss, 2021), describes spontaneous problem-solving akin to a handyman using available resources. Kincheloe defines a bricoleur as someone who utilizes available tools to complete tasks (Kincheloe, 2001). Markham similarly refers to a bricoleur as a "tinkerer or handyman" (Markham, 2018).

Kincheloe also highlights the bricoleur's ability to understand interconnected contexts (Kincheloe, 2005), aligning with Bricolage Theory, which emphasizes creative resource use for problem-solving. This adaptability has led researchers to explore the bricoleur mindset in various fields, such as entrepreneurship (Wu *et al.*, 2024) and in sales context (Epler & Leach, 2021).

Bricolage demonstrates resourcefulness and proficiency, allowing individuals to navigate challenges across different contexts. As a vital capability, it enhances business resilience, particularly during crises (Baier-Fuentes *et al.*, 2023). The ability to improvise and adapt makes bricolage an essential skill for organizations facing stress and limitations (Baier-Fuentes *et al.*, 2023; Epler & Leach, 2021; Santos

et al., 2022). The use of bricolage behaviours by salespeople can be an effective strategy for overcoming resource constraints (Epler & Leach, 2021). Furthermore, according to the Resource-Based View theory, companies can creatively recombine their existing resources to gain a competitive advantage (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2020). The key is not merely having more resources but knowing how to use them efficiently, especially in unexpected and challenging moments.

Stress is a common issue in sales, influenced by various intrinsic factors. Sales supervisors often face pressure to meet goals, exceed quotas, and expand market share (Brown *et al.*, 2022), leading to work overload and potential burnout (Franck & Dampérat, 2022). Emotional exhaustion can arise from a mismatch between available resources and the demands placed on salespeople (Peasley *et al.*, 2020). High-stress periods, such as during the pandemic, highlighted the importance of a "bricoleur attitude" (Epler & Leach, 2021). This adaptability helps mitigate stress by fostering proactive problem-solving rather than paralysis in the face of challenges (Baier-Fuentes *et al.*, 2023; Epler & Leach, 2021; Santos *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the concept of the "salesperson as bricoleur" emphasizes their ability to creatively and flexibly utilize available resources to address specific customer needs and sales situations (Epler & Leach, 2021).

2.2. Salesperson as bricoleur in trade fair environment

In the context of trade fairs, which involve interactions with numerous exhibitors, customers, and competitors amidst high competitiveness and uncertainty (Silva *et al.*, 2022), bricoleurs can identify unexpected opportunities, adapt to changing conditions, and devise innovative solutions to meet their goals (Wu *et al.*, 2024). This aligns with Bricolage Theory (Lévi-Strauss, 2021), emphasizing creative resource use for problem-solving.

The dynamic nature of trade fairs also connects to Stressor Event Theory (Lerman *et al.*, 2020), which explores how stressors like competition impact performance and adaptation strategies. Hosting a trade fair requires substantial financial investment and effort, often demanding a commitment spanning at least three years for sustained success (Nayak, 2019; Lee *et al.*, 2021). The benefits of participating in trade fairs typically manifest gradually over time (Kim *et al.*, 2020).

These challenges are especially pertinent for resource-limited companies that frequently attend trade fairs (Display Wizard, 2024; Silva *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, trade fairs are evolving into demanding environments requiring omnichannel experiences, both physical and virtual (Silva *et al.*, 2023). Consequently, while trade fairs offer significant rewards for exhibitors, they also present considerable challenges (Silva *et al.*, 2022).

Trade fairs are competitive events where interactions before and during the event, along with staff motivation, play a key role in building trust between exhibitors and visitors (Jia & Wan, 2022). Gerschewski *et al.* (2020) and Silva *et al.* (2022) emphasize the critical role of salespeople, who must be proactive and capable of initiating relationships with strangers. Given that many participating companies are SMEs with limited resources (Display Wizard, 2024), it is essential for salespeople to adapt their approaches and strategies creatively to meet each visitor's unique needs, embodying the qualities of a bricoleur (Epler & Leach, 2021). Thus, the selection, supervision, and management of sales personnel before and during trade fairs are crucial (Jia & Wan, 2022).

2.3. Conceptual model and formulation of hypotheses

2.3.1. Bricoleur mindset and problem-solving confidence in trade fair

A salesperson's bricoleur mentality helps them navigate unexpected challenges in negotiations, develop innovative solutions for customer needs, and adapt to various sales situations (Epler & Leach, 2021). This adaptability enables them to effectively address issues during trade fairs by creatively utilizing available resources. Exhibitors face several challenges at trade fairs, including high costs, extensive preparation, and intense competition, all of which require them to stand out and manage resources efficiently (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, the complexity of trade fairs is heightened by the need to navigate dynamic environments, seize international networking opportunities (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020), adapt to digitalization challenges (Silva *et al.*, 2023; Vitali *et al.*, 2022), and manage unexpected situations while engaging with unfamiliar attendees (Jia & Wan, 2022).

Promoting bricoleur behaviour among salespeople is beneficial and can be developed within a sales team, as it helps address the challenges of the sales function (Epler *et al.*, 2023). In trade fairs, innovation and proactive measures enhance communication and social interaction (Kim *et al.*, 2020). Improvisation skills can lead to improved performance (Carlson & Ross, 2022) and help salespeople take risks while boosting their confidence to complete projects (Ahmed & Lucianetti, 2024). Proactiveness empowers salespeople to effectively navigate the unique dynamics of trade fairs (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022) by shifting away from rigid, scripted sales pitches toward more spontaneous and adaptive approaches (Carlson & Ross, 2022). It is important to note, however, that in today's competitive and globalized environment, where differentiation and corporate responsibility are crucial, an ethical approach to sales is key to enhancing customer satisfaction and building lasting relationships (Román-Nicolás & Rodríguez-Herrera, 2018). Thus, in challenging scenarios, bricolage skills enable resourceful problem-solving, allowing salespeople to manage resources creatively and effectively (Baier-Fuentes *et al.*, 2023). This adaptability is underpinned by key traits such as creativity, a learning orientation, and grit, which together foster agility and resilience (Epler & Leach, 2021). Consequently, bricoleur behaviour positively influences a salesperson's problem-solving confidence, which encompasses both the belief in one's problem-solving ability and the practical skills to tackle challenges (Soliman, 2014; Sturm & Bohndick, 2021; Heppner *et al.*, 2012). This confidence is crucial for achieving desired outcomes during trade fairs. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. In the context of a trade fair, the bricoleur behaviour exhibited by the salesperson exerts a positive influence on their problem-solving confidence.

2.3.2. Bricoleur confidence, problem-solving and exhibitor performance

The adaptability, creativity, resilience, and improvisation skills of a bricoleur salesperson (Epler & Leach, 2021) enhance their confidence in solving problems. Self-confidence is essential for effective communication and collaboration in problem-solv-

ing (Hendriana *et al.*, 2018) and fosters a learning environment (Clegg & Diller, 2018). Confident individuals better understand problems, create solutions, and assess outcomes (Favorina *et al.*, 2023). Confidence is typically higher when dealing with clear, specific issues (Scheibe *et al.*, 2022). At trade fairs, bricoleur salespeople help exhibitors navigate challenges like competition and communication, leading to improved performance through agility, innovation, and resilience (Silva *et al.*, 2022).

Regarding performance, Hansen (2004) identifies five key salesperson activities at trade fairs: sales, information gathering, relationship building, image building, and motivation. These align with Rai and Nayak (2020), who suggest trade fairs enhance well-being and go beyond sales, also focusing on sharing knowledge and building brand reputation (Katie *et al.*, 2022).

First, "Sales-related activities" focus on increasing sales from trade events (Hansen, 2004). Sales are a primary goal for exhibitors, and the salesperson's confidence in problem-solving plays a key role in performance (Silva *et al.*, 2022). Bricoleur salespeople, with their adaptability, resourcefulness and self-confidence, make quick, effective decisions, which boosts business performance (Epler & Leach, 2021; Maczulskij & Viinikainen, 2023). Salespeople must build strong relationships and adapt strategies to customer needs, which improves sales outcomes (Good & Schwepker, 2022). Engaging in problem-solving helps salespeople guide customers through the buying journey, leading to better overall performance (Panagopoulos *et al.*, 2017).

Second, "Information-gathering activities" involve collecting data on the market, competitors, trends, and potential customers at trade fairs (Hansen, 2004). Trade fairs offer valuable insights (Silva *et al.*, 2021), and confident salespeople are more effective in engaging customers and stakeholders, establishing meaningful connections. Customers often prefer human interaction for solving complex issues over artificial intelligence (Xu *et al.*, 2020), making trade fairs ideal for strengthening relationships. Usually, participants actively seek information and engage with technical staff, who reciprocate this interest (Haon *et al.*, 2020; Jha *et al.*, 2019). These events facilitate knowledge exchange and offer exhibitors the chance to stay updated on industry trends and innovations, enhancing their innovation capacity (Wu *et al.*, 2022). Thus, salespeople with bricolage behaviours are key in this dynamic environment, proactively gathering critical market intelligence (Epler & Leach, 2021).

The third dimension, "relationship-building activities", aims to establish long-term connections with customers and partners (Hansen, 2004), giving exhibitors a competitive advantage through value co-creation (Zhang *et al.*, 2023). Effective networking boosts exhibitors' knowledge (Li *et al.*, 2022), and bricolage is crucial at trade fairs, where new contacts are common (Silva *et al.*, 2022). The unpredictable environment makes adaptability vital (Mormile *et al.*, 2023), and bricoleurs excel in creatively tackling challenges (Epler & Leach, 2021). Despite technological advances, face-to-face interactions remain key for trust and relationship-building (Zhang *et al.*, 2023; Yu & Benson-Rea, 2024). Salespeople are key in creating value and building customer trust, which is essential for the success of trade exhibitions (Arditto *et al.*, 2020).

The fourth dimension, "image-building activities", focuses on enhancing a company's reputation through trade fair participation (Hansen, 2004). A strong reputation is a key resource for navigating challenges (Cavazos *et al.*, 2023) and adapting to business changes (Chaudhary *et al.*, 2021). Salespeople, especially those with a bricolage approach, play a crucial role by addressing customer needs and challenges at trade fairs. Their ability to improvise and solve problems boosts the company's image (Epler *et al.*, 2023). Autonomy in sales can improve customer perceptions, especially when promoting new products (Endres *et al.*, 2022), further strengthening the company's reputation and network (Kang *et al.*, 2019).

Lastly, "motivation activities" focus on inspiring both the exhibition team and potential customers (Hansen, 2004). Bricoleur salespeople excel at problem-solving and optimizing resources (Epler & Leach, 2021), helping to filter opportunities at trade fairs. While focusing too much on sales can overwhelm salespeople (Claro *et al.*, 2023), a bricoleur's adaptability helps them choose the best prospects. Handling rejection and staying motivated are key to success in high-pressure environments (Ewe & Ho, 2023). Salespeople are crucial in fostering relationships and achieving non-sales goals at trade fairs, benefiting both exhibitors and visitors (Jha *et al.*, 2019).

Trade fairs present challenges like intense competition, limited resources, and the need for adaptability. In this dynamic environment, salespeople are crucial, not just for transactions but for navigating complexities. Their roles in gathering information, building relationships, and representing the company are key. Bricoleur behaviours —adaptability, creativity, resilience, and improvisation— boost problem-solving confidence and help handle unexpected situations (Epler & Leach, 2021). These skills enable them to devise solutions and evaluate outcomes effectively (Favorina *et al.*, 2023). The following hypotheses explore how these traits impact exhibitor performance at trade fairs:

H2. In the context of a trade fair, the problem-solving confidence exhibited by the salesperson exerts a positive influence on exhibitor performance.

H3. In the context of a trade fair, the bricoleur behaviour exhibited by the salesperson exerts a positive influence on exhibitor performance.

2.3.3. Multi-dimensional exhibitor performance

Hansen (2004) categorizes exhibitor performance into five dimensions, which Zhang *et al.* (2023) recently used to assess exhibitor outcomes, demonstrating their continued relevance. Both studies treat "exhibitor performance" as a second-order construct, where multiple first-order factors represent the overall performance. This approach is widely supported in the literature (Chen *et al.*, 2005). These five dimensions —sales, information-gathering, relationship-building, image-building, and motivational activities— align with Rai and Nayak's (2020) view that trade fairs are not just for business goals but also enhance participants' well-being. Exhibitors aim to share knowledge, build relationships, and boost brand reputation (Katie *et al.*, 2022). Effective booth interactions are key to achieving these objectives (Li, 2020).

The adaptability and resourcefulness of a bricolage salesperson (Epler & Leach, 2021) enable them to respond to changes, adjust strategies, and maximize exhibitor performance across all dimensions. Whether handling sales, gathering information, fostering relationships, or enhancing the company's image, the bricolage salesperson is a vital asset. These subconstructs of Hansen (2004) highlight how each dimension contributes to exhibitor success at trade fairs. The following hypotheses are specified:

H4A: The dimension of sales-related activities contributes positively to enhance the exhibitor's performance.

H4B: The dimension of information-gathering activities contributes positively to enhance the exhibitor's performance.

H4C: The dimension of relationship-building activities contributes positively to enhance the exhibitor's performance.

H4D: The dimension of image-building activities contributes positively to enhance the exhibitor's performance.

H4E: The dimension of motivational activities contributes positively to enhance the exhibitor's performance.

2.3.4. Conceptual model

The proposed model examines the relationship between bricoleur behaviour and salespeople's problem-solving confidence at trade fairs, and its impact on exhibitor performance. The model identifies bricoleur behaviour —characterized by adaptability, creativity, resilience, and proactive improvisation (Epler & Leach, 2021; Epler *et al.*, 2023)— as the independent variable. It suggests that this behaviour enhances both problem-solving confidence and exhibitor performance. Problem-solving confidence, which is driven by creativity, determination, and improvisation, serves as both a dependent and independent variable, playing a crucial role in overcoming challenges (Epler & Leach, 2021). The dependent variables include five dimensions of exhibitor performance: sales, information gathering, relationship building, image building, and motivation (Hansen, 2004). This model allows for a detailed analysis of each performance dimension, offering targeted recommendations for improvement. Figure 1 illustrates the model.

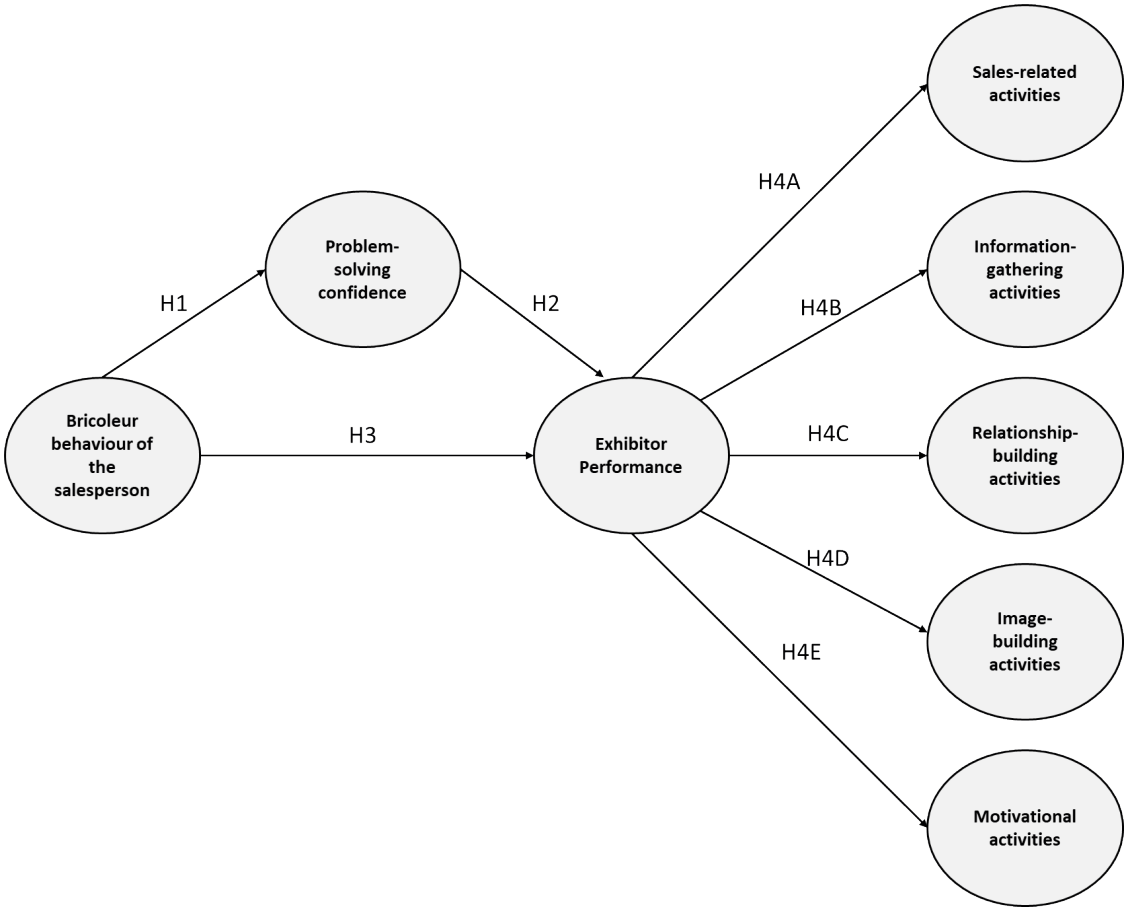


Figure 1
Conceptual Model
Source: Own elaboration.

2.4. Control variables

To better understand how the profiles of salespeople and the companies they work for influence exhibitors' performance, this study incorporates various control variables. Widely used in sales research, these variables include gender, age or generation, education and years of experience (Gao *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2020). Regarding the characteristics of the companies, categories such as type of company, company size, export level, and level of participation in trade fairs were considered, following approaches from previous studies (Silva *et al.*, 2022; Silva *et al.*, 2023).

The inclusion of control variables in the analysis adds depth and reliability to the findings by accounting for factors that may influence exhibitors' performance. Additionally, their inclusion provides valuable insights that could guide future research (Nielsen & Raswant, 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data collection

Data was collected via a structured questionnaire based on the literature review and research objectives. The questionnaire was sent to companies at trade fairs in Portugal and Kosovo. Combining these samples aligns with Ghemawat's (2001) view that globalization enhances the relevance of cross-country studies, offering insights for both emerging and mature economies. Business associations in both countries provided access to random databases of 1450 Portuguese and 1560 Kosovar companies, and all 3010 were contacted by email in January 2024. In total, 304 valid responses from salespeople were received. All companies listed in the databases had an equal opportunity to respond. Table SF1 (supplementary file) presents the characteristics of the respondents and the companies they represent.

The sample comprises three hundred and four (304) sales professionals, with 59.54% from Portuguese companies, 26.97% from Kosovar companies, and 13.49% from companies of other nationalities but located in Portugal and Kosovo. In terms of gender, it is observed a similar distribution between male and female professionals. Regarding age, more than 90% of the participants were born after 1966. The work experience is mostly over 10 years of experience (under 50%), while the other respondents have less. Over 70% have university education. More than 50% are salespeople from industrial companies. Over 60% are salespeople from micro or small companies. 48% of the salespeople represent companies that export more than 25% of their turnover. More than 50% of the salespeople represent companies that participate in at least one trade fair per year.

3.2. Research Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section pertained to respondent characterization questions, as depicted in Table SF1 (supplementary file). The second section included questions about latent and observable variables, with an emphasis on the relationships proposed by the theoretical model. Most constructs for this study were measured using established scales that were modestly adapted to fit the research context. Specifically, the measures of "bricoleur behaviour of the salesperson" and "problem-solving confidence" are based on Epler and Leach (2021) and Soliman (2014), respectively. The exhibitor performance measurement is based on Hansen (2004) and integrates various dimensions, namely "sales-related activities", "information-gathering activities", "relationship-building activities", "image-building activities", and "motivational activities". Hansen (2004) suggests this construct as a second-order reflective model. In this type of modelling, the first-order latent variables are manifestations of the second-order construct, reflecting its characteristics and maintaining a positive correlation with each other.

Table SF2 (supplementary file) shows the items used as observed variables to measure the respective constructs, as well as the sources of these same scales, as mentioned above. All variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from: one (1) - totally disagree to five (5) - totally agree, except for the Exhibitor Performance measures which were assessed according to the level of satisfaction, where: one (1) - totally dissatisfied and five (5) - totally satisfied. Typically, as noted by McKelvie (1978), five-point scales exhibit higher reliabilities.

To bolster content validity, a panel comprising six experts (three from academia and three managers representing companies participating in trade fairs) was invited to assess the initial items of the questionnaire. The collaboration of these experts proved to be beneficial, contributing to the development of a suitable questionnaire for the study. The research utilized a t-test to compare the initial 135 responses (from the first half of January 2024) with the subsequent 169 responses (from the second half of January 2024). Nevertheless, no statistically significant variances were observed between these two groups, indicating the absence of response bias (Armstrong & Overton, 1977).

3.3. Data analysis

The collected data was analysed using covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM), following Collier (2020) and Dash and Paul (2021). SPSS version 26 and IBM® SPSS® Amos version 24 were used. CB-SEM, which focuses on analysing covariances between variables to test hypotheses about their relationships, is well-suited for studies involving theoretical models and latent variables (Collier, 2020). An initial exploratory data analysis examined the distribution and coherence of responses (Watkins, 2021). Model parameters were estimated in AMOS using the Maximum Likelihood method, and a second-order construct was applied to exhibitor performance (Chen *et al.*, 2005). Fit indices were assessed to ensure model suitability, and hypotheses were tested via Path Analysis (Collier, 2020). Finally, potential group differences in exhibitor performance dimensions were evaluated using One-Way ANOVA (George & Mallery, 2021).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Before analysing the CB-SEM model, it is essential to first assess the data (Collier, 2020; George & Mallery, 2021; Watkins, 2021). Normality was evaluated through skewness and kurtosis values, with all falling between –1 and +1, indicating a normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2021). Table 1 provides the mean, standard deviation, and anti-image correlation matrix (Table SF3 in the supplementary file), which confirmed no issues of multicollinearity (Watkins, 2021). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values (above 0.8) and Bartlett's test ($p < 0.001$) supported the suitability for factor analysis. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation revealed factor loadings above 0.50, except for two items (P_IMA5 and P_IMA6), which were removed. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.8 for all constructs, confirming high reliability and internal consistency (Collier, 2020; George & Mallery, 2021; Watkins, 2021). For more details, see Table 1.

Table 1
Exploratory Factor Analysis

Constructs and items code	Mean	Stand. Dev.	Factor loadings	Skewness	Kurtosis	KMO	Cronbach's alpha
Bricoleur behaviour of the salesperson							
BRIC1	3.51	0.961	0.564	−0.387	−0.172	0.866	0.890
BRIC2	3.77	0.979	0.705	−0.516	−0.249		
BRIC3	3.82	0.933	0.621	−0.656	0.196		
BRIC4	3.69	0.993	0.643	−0.508	−0.109		
BRIC5	3.45	1.023	0.668	−0.210	−0.580		
BRIC6	3.64	1.046	0.571	−0.624	−0.162		
BRIC7	3.70	0.929	0.685	−0.562	0.142		
Problem-solving confidence							
PSC1	3.76	0.960	0.696	−0.718	0.260	0.880	0.836
PSC2	4.02	0.858	0.751	−0.708	0.148		
PSC3	4.12	0.920	0.746	−0.909	0.380		
PSC4	3.96	0.971	0.761	−0.858	0.314		
PSC5	3.93	0.961	0.666	−0.783	0.147		
PSC6	3.87	0.895	0.664	−0.600	0.110		
Exhibitor performance						0.933	0.944
Sales-related activities							
P_SAL1	3.62	1.015	0.703	−0.488	−0.233	0.826	0.854
P_SAL2	3.66	0.941	0.647	−0.416	−0.179		
P_SAL3	3.49	1.111	0.749	−0.310	−0.713		
P_SAL4	3.68	1.072	0.648	−0.719	−0.139		
P_SAL5	3.13	1.201	0.708	−0.209	−0.817		
Information-gathering activities							
P_INF1	3.69	1.030	0.813	−0.604	−0.097	0.815	0.866
P_INF2	3.95	0.925	0.715	−0.676	0.034		
P_INF3	3.88	0.949	0.732	−0.747	0.150		
P_INF4	3.71	1.037	0.583	−0.458	−0.448		
Relationship-building activities							
P_REL1	3.84	1.047	0.643	−0.808	0.141	0.825	0.869
P_REL2	3.91	1.059	0.736	−0.903	0.249		
P_REL3	3.75	0.947	0.590	−0.508	0.013		
P_REL4	3.99	0.975	0.679	−0.834	0.323		
Image-building activities							
P_IMA1	3.89	1.085	0.587	−0.788	−0.073	0.899	0.886
P_IMA2	4.10	0.949	0.711	−0.944	0.436		
P_IMA3	4.02	0.988	0.664	−0.949	0.546		
P_IMA4	4.11	0.912	0.637	−0.801	0.036		
P_IMA5	3.89	1.066	*0.473**	−0.840	0.103		
P_IMA6	3.89	1.066	*0.475**	−0.994	0.581		
Motivational activities							
P_MOT1	3.67	1.043	0.717	−0.690	0.000	0.809	0.872
P_MOT2	3.75	0.941	0.764	−0.612	0.160		
P_MOT3	3.83	0.944	0.772	−0.547	−0.120		
P_MOT4	3.88	0.935	0.660	−0.670	0.209		

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2. Confirmatory factor analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, incorporating all the measurement items in the hypothesised model. To do so, various indicators were utilised, including x^2/DF, CFI, NFI, TLI, IFI, GFI, RMR, and RMSEA, to assess the model fit. These tests aids in understanding how well the overall structure of the model aligns with the data (Collier, 2020). The results of the CFA indicated a good fit, therefore, all indicator values analysed met the requirements for a model well-suited to the data (Collier, 2020), as illustrated in Figure 2 and Table SF4 (supplementary file).

Convergent and discriminant validity were assessed. As evident from Table 2, the composite reliability (CR) coefficients of each construct in all models exceed the recommended guideline of 0.70 (Collier, 2020; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Similarly, the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct in all models meets the recommended threshold of >0.50 (Collier 2020; Fornell & Larcker 1981). Additionally, the Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) and Average Shared Variance (ASV) indicators were analysed for all constructs in each model, and the results demonstrate compliance with the recommended values of MSV < AVE and ASV < AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Hence, convergent validity is supported across all models.

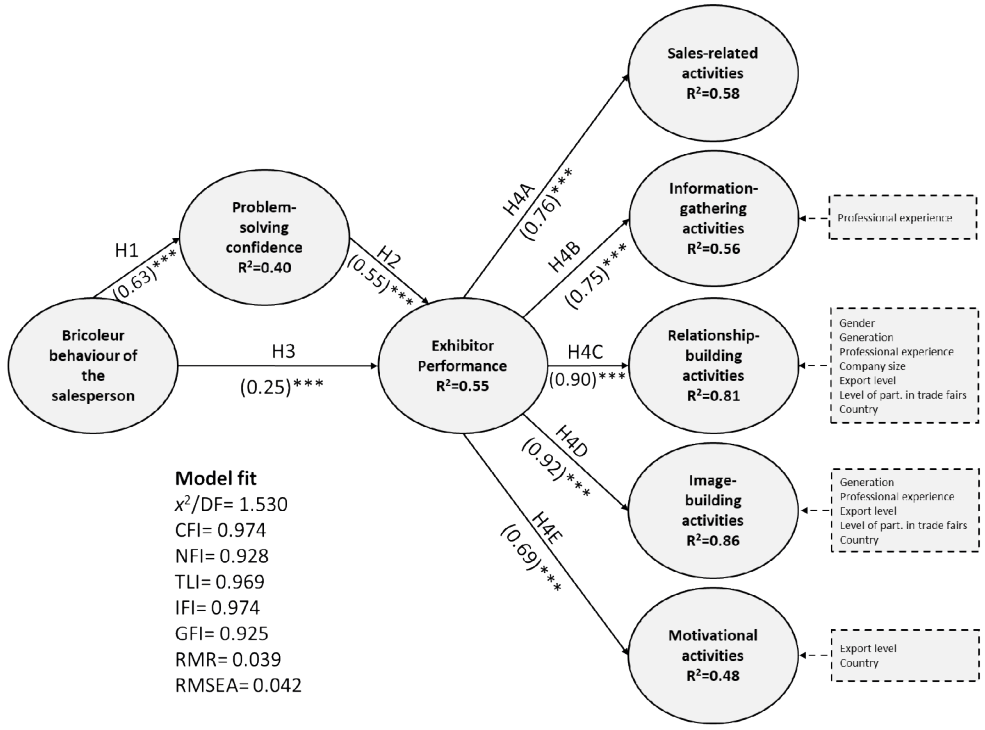
Furthermore, to ensure discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE measures should exceed all correlations between all constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As observed from Table 2, discriminant validity is substantiated by the data obtained.

In summary, evaluating CR, AVE, MSV, and ASV has helped ensure that the constructs measure what they are intended to measure, that the items in each construct are reliable, and that there is no excessive redundancy or overlap between the constructs of the model. These measures are crucial for validating the model structure and interpreting the results of a CFA analysis (Collier, 2020; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2
Convergent and discriminant validity

Constructs	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Image-building activities (1)	0.875	0.700	0.650	0.462	***0.837***						
Bricoleur behaviour of the salesperson (2)	0.727	0.574	0.398	0.263	0.553	***0.758***					
Problem-solving confidence (3)	0.833	0.555	0.486	0.335	0.697	0.631	***0.745***				
Sales-related activities (4)	0.760	0.613	0.460	0.356	0.659	0.460	0.520	***0.783***			
Information-gathering activities (5)	0.794	0.661	0.496	0.337	0.704	0.445	0.530	0.577	***0.813***		
Relationship-building activities (6)	0.850	0.654	0.650	0.433	0.806	0.575	0.608	0.678	0.659	***0.809***	
Motivational activities (7)	0.876	0.640	0.425	0.299	0.633	0.365	0.455	0.652	0.528	0.593	***0.800***

Note: Diagonal elements (bold and italic) represent the square root of average variance extracted (AVE).
Source: Own elaboration from AMOS.



Note:
(Standardized estimation); *** represent the usual significance levels of 1%.
Control variables that showed statistically significant differences between their categories in the respective constructs analyzed.

Figure 2
Structural model
Source: Own elaboration.

4.3. Hypothesis test-Path analyses

After analysing the measurement model, the focus shifts to examining the structural model, which aims to investigate the relationships between constructs, corresponding to the hypothesized relationships in this study (Collier, 2020). Consequently, the direct effects indicate that H1 (0.63***) is statistically supported. Additionally, the results demonstrate that H2 (0.55***) is also statistically supported. In the same sense, the results reveal that H3 (0.25***) is statistically supported. Finally, the findings reveal that H4A (0.76***), H4B (0.75***), H4C (0.90***) H4D (0.92***) and H4E (0.69***) are statistically supported. Table SF5 (supplementary file) summarizes the results of the hypothesis test.

Moreover, the R^2 values, which depict the influence of one construct over another (Collier 2020), are also displayed in Figure 2. The results (R^2=0.55, R^2=0.58, R^2=0.56, R^2=0.81, R^2=0.86 R^2=0.48) show a strong influence of the antecedents over the subsequent constructs is observed across all models (Collier, 2020).

4.4. Differences in exhibitor performance.

In this section, the analysis will focus on the variables where significant differences were observed, as these provide relevant insights for discussion. This analysis may reveal additional information by identifying how different characteristics can influence the relationships we are investigating (Nielsen & Raswant, 2018).

ANOVA is a statistical technique that allows for comparing the means of three or more groups to determine if there are significant differences between them (George & Mallery, 2021). Based on various control variables, groups were formed from response categories. The first step was to assess if there were significant differences between groups, for which the test of variance homogeneity was applied (George & Mallery, 2021). Table SF6 (supplementary file) reveals differences in "information-gathering activities" among groups generated by professional experience. In "relationship-building activities", significant differences were observed between groups generated by gender, generation, professional experience, company size, export level, level of participation in trade fairs, and country. In "image-building activities", significant differences were found between groups displayed by generation, professional experience, export level, level of participation in trade fairs, and country. Lastly, in "motivational activities", significant differences were identified between groups generated by export level and country. Based on these results, multiple comparison tests were conducted for a more detailed analysis (George & Mallery, 2021).

Table 3
Multiple comparison tests

			MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J) and Sig.			
Control Variables	**(I)**	**(J)**	**Information-gathering activities**	**Relationship-building activities**	**Image-building activities**	**Motivational activities**
Gender	Male	Female	—	0.24589**	—	—
		Others	—	0.31782	—	—
Generation	Between 1966-1980	Before 1946	—	–0.41000	–0.73333	—
		Between 1946-1965	—	0.16292	0.15556	—
		Between 1981-1994	—	0.42553***	0.32807**	—
		Between 1995-2012	—	0.63442***	0.53526***	—
Professional experience	More than 20 years	< 3 years	0.27376**	0.68621***	0.46705***	
		Between 4 - 10 years	0.38682***	0.58182***	0.53263***	
		Between 10 - 20 years	0.26673*	0.26563*	0.28152*	
Company size	Medium	Micro		0.36261***		
		Small		0.14939		
		Large		0.05238		
Export level	> 50%	0%		0.43828**	0.56491***	
		<25%		0.27698**	0.29489**	
		25% - 50%		0.36416**	0.32109**	
	25% - 50%	0%				0.42607**
		<25%				0.24801**
		> 50%				0.07994
Level of participation in trade fairs	Several fairs per year	Sporadically		0.37143***	0.47611***	
		1 trade fair every 4 years		0.59475***	0.64739***	
		1 trade fair every 2 years		0.37131**	0.25260*	
		1 trade fair per year		0.26385**	0.22585*	
Country	Portugal	Kosovo		0.64484***	0.39681***	0.10607
		Other		0.52594***	0.74031***	0.35302**

Note: *. **. and *** represent the usual significance levels of 10%. 5% and 1%. respectively.

Source: Own elaboration from SPSS (one-way ANOVA). Posteriori test - LSD (least significant difference).

Multiple comparison tests were conducted using the LSD (Least Significant Difference) method with a 95% confidence interval (George & Mallery, 2021). The results obtained are presented in Table 3. In "information-gathering activities", professionals with over 20 years of experience tend to be more competent in information-gathering activities than the other groups. In "relationship-building activities", male salespeople tend to be more competent than female salespeople in relationship-building activities. Professionals born between 1966-1980 tend to be more competent in the same activities than those born between 1981-2012. Professionals with over 20 years of experience tend to be more competent in relationship-building activities than the other groups. Salespeople from medium-sized companies are statistically more competent in relationship-building activities than salespeople from micro companies. Salespeople working in companies that export more than 50% of their turnover are more competent in these activities than salespeople from companies that export less than 50%. Salespeople from companies that participate in several trade fairs per year are more competent in relationship-building activities than salespeople from companies that participate sporadically, 1 trade fair every 4 years, 1 trade fair every 2 years, and 1 trade fair per year. Lastly, still in "relationship-building activities" salespeople from Portuguese companies are more competent in relationship-building activities than salespeople from Kosovo companies or other nationalities.

In "image-building activities", salespeople born between 1966-1980 tend to exhibit greater competence in image-building activities compared to those born between 1981-2012. Professionals with over 20 years of experience also demonstrate higher competency in these activities compared to other groups. Additionally, salespeople employed in companies exporting more than 50% of their turnover display greater competence in image-building activities than those from companies exporting less than 50%. Furthermore, salespeople from companies participating in several trade fairs per year exhibit higher competency in image-building activities compared to those from companies participating sporadically and/or attending one trade fair every 4 years. Moreover, salespeople from Portuguese companies demonstrate greater competence in image-building activities compared to salespeople from Kosovo companies or other nationalities.

Finally, in "motivational activities", salespeople employed in companies exporting 25%-50% of their turnover demonstrate greater competence in motivational activities compared to salespeople from companies exporting less than 25%. Additionally, salespeople from Portuguese companies exhibit greater competence in motivational activities compared to salespeople from other nationalities.

5. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

5.1. Alignment with the theoretical model

In summary, the results indicated that all hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4A, H4B, H4C, H4D, and H4E) were statistically supported. The findings of the study align closely with the theoretical underpinnings and expectations outlined in the literature review regarding the influence of bricoleur behaviour and problem-solving confidence on exhibitor performance at trade fairs.

In the literature review, it was argued that sales professionals embracing the bricoleur mentality exhibit adaptability, creativity, and resilience, which enable them to effectively navigate the unforeseen challenges and pressure situations (Epler & Leach, 2021), as often happens in the context of trade fairs (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020; Li, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022). This adaptive approach was expected to enhance problem-solving confidence, enabling salespeople to address issues creatively and efficiently during the event. Hence, the capacity to improvise, adapt, and devise creative and innovative solutions using existing resources correlates with the belief and confidence in effectively resolving challenges. This common trait among salespeople demonstrates a bricoleur behaviour (Epler & Leach, 2021) and seems to prove why improvisational skills of salespersons can lead to outstanding performance (Carlson & Ross, 2022) and aid in the realization of projects (Ahmed & Lucianetti, 2024). The results of the study corroborated this hypothesis, demonstrating that the bricolage behaviour displayed by salespeople had a positive impact on their confidence in problem solving (H1). As salespeople engage in bricolage, they develop a sense of resourcefulness and creativity (Epler & Leach, 2021; Epler *et al.*, 2023). Also, successfully finding solutions with limited resources builds their confidence in their ability to tackle problems. Each successful improvisation reinforces their belief in their capability to handle challenges, thus boosting their overall problem-solving confidence (Soliman, 2014; Sturm & Bohndick, 2021).

Furthermore, the literature review highlighted the multidimensional nature of exhibitor performance at trade fairs, encompassing activities such as sales-related efforts, information gathering, relationship building, image building, and motivational activities (Hansen, 2004). It was proposed that the problem-solving confidence and bricoleur behaviour of salespersons would positively impact exhibitor performance (H2 and H3 respectively).

Regarding H2, which suggests significant positive effects of problem-solving confidence on exhibitor performance, the study's findings indicate that individuals with high problem-solving confidence tend to approach challenges proactively and find effective solutions without hesitation. This confidence can lead to quicker resolution of issues, better customer interactions, and improved decision-making (Soliman, 2014), all of which contribute to better exhibitor performance. When salespersons feel capable of solving problems, they are more likely to engage positively with customers and handle complex sales situations effectively. Consequently, interactions at a trade fair are crucial for professionals to establish connections, exchange knowledge, and significantly enhance their business activities. (Li, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2022). Across contexts, self-confidence emerges as a paramount factor, facilitating effective communication and collaboration in problem-solving efforts (Favorina *et al.*, 2023; Hendriana *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, confidence creates a secure space for experimentation and learning, fostering a proactive approach to problem-solving (Maczulskij & Viinikainen, 2023).

Observing H3, which suggests that bricoleur behaviour exerts a positive influence on exhibitor performance, salespersons who exhibit this behaviour can quickly adapt to changing

conditions and make the most of the available resources at the exhibition. They can handle unexpected issues, such as changes in customer demand or logistical problems, in a flexible and innovative manner (Epler & Leach, 2021). This adaptability can lead to smoother operations and better customer experiences, ultimately enhancing exhibitor performance. Additionally, bricoleur salespeople can establish and strengthening lasting relationships with customers and partners (Arditoo *et al.*, 2020). The ability of these salespersons to adapt to individual needs and create innovative solutions contributes to the building of genuine connections and mutual trust (Jia & Wan, 2022). This, in turn, reinforces the public perception of the company as a reliable, creative, and customer-oriented, because autonomy (Endres *et al.* 2022) and proactivity of salespeople (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022) are fundamental ingredients for a positive connection between the exhibitor and the visitor. Finally, these salespeople also contribute to an energised and productive working environment during the trade fair, creating a positive atmosphere that benefits both employees and customers (Jung *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, exhibitors benefit greatly from the presence of bricoleur salespeople, who adeptly tackle challenges such as intense competition, resource management, effective communication, and adaptability to unforeseen circumstances commonly encountered at trade fairs (Silva *et al.*, 2022).

It is also worth mentioning that the results suggest that bricoleur behaviour, combined with confidence in problem-solving, enhances the salesperson's influence on exhibitor performance more than bricoleur behaviour alone. This combination of skills can be translated into a new competency, labelled "bricolage thinking". In practice, this is an integrative approach that combines the creative use of available resources (Epler & Leach, 2021) with self-confidence in problem-solving (Soliman 2014), allowing for quick and innovative responses to complex challenges. At a trade fair, a salesperson who combines bricoleur behaviour with confidence in problem-solving can improvise solutions to overcome logistical challenges, adapt to changes in customer demand, and make the most of the available resources. This ensures a positive experience for visitors and significantly improves the exhibitor's performance. These salespeople possess the expertise for spotting sales opportunities even in adverse circumstances and are experts at gathering pertinent market information, competitor insights, and emerging trends. Their capacity to improvise and swiftly adapt to customer demands often translates into successful sales. Moreover, their proactive view and intrinsic curiosity frequently yield valuable insights (Gerschewski *et al.*, 2020; Silva *et al.*, 2022). Bricoleur salespeople who display confidence and determination in problem-solving at trade fairs boost the exhibitor's image, motivate the team, and build trust with customers (Kang *et al.*, 2019). These findings highlight that investing in the development of bricoleur salespeople can significantly improve exhibitor performance. By fostering a culture of confidence, adaptability, and proactive problem-solving, exhibitors can maximize their success at trade fairs, benefiting from opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and business growth.

Concerning the findings that corroborate H4A, H4B, H4C, H4D and H4E various implications arise. The results align with the theoretical understanding of exhibitor performance and are confirmed by the analysis of the dimensions that constitute exhibitor performance, as discussed by Hansen (2004) and Zhang *et al.* (2023). Indeed, performance at trade fairs is unequivocally multidimensional, encompassing a wide range of activities and objectives that extend beyond mere business transactions. They provide an environment conducive to developing and enhancing various aspects of a company's performance, from product sales to the strengthening of relationships and the building of a solid brand image (Hansen, 2004; Rai & Nayak, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2023).

Considering the specific context of this study, this combined approach of the bricoleur salesperson (Epler & Leach, 2021) and confidence in problem-solving (Soliman, 2014) enhances their ability to maximise exhibitor performance across multiple dimensions, from generating sales and gathering information to building strong relationships and promoting a positive brand image (Hansen, 2004). A creative, confident, and adaptable salesperson can highlight the exhibitor and attract customers' attention with unique sales approaches. Confidence allows for effective handling of objections, turning potential problems into sales opportunities, while bricoleur behaviour enables efficient use of resources to gather valuable information. This combination facilitates interaction with a wide range of customers and the collection of diverse insights, as well as building and maintaining strong relationships. Confidence in problem-solving helps to address conflicts and maintain a positive image for the exhibitor. The ability to resolve issues and adapt promotes a motivating environment, encouraging the team to achieve their goals.

Finally, the study's results significantly expand the theories of the Resource-Based View (Sivathanu & Pillai, 2020), Bricolage Theory (Lévi-Strauss, 2021), and Stressor Events Theory (Lerman *et al.*, 2020). All theories considered they explain how sellers' behaviours and resource utilisation contribute to sustainable business performance in challenging and stressful environments, such as trade fairs. Firstly, the findings corroborate the idea that creativity and the effective utilisation of available resources are fundamental to attain success in complex and challenging environments such as trade fairs. The results demonstrate that bricoleur behaviour not only enhances confidence in problem-solving but also optimises exhibitor performance. Secondly, the study provides a detailed insight into how demanding events, such as trade fairs, require specific skills to manage pressure and complexity. These theories justify the necessity for bricoleur behaviour (Epler & Leach, 2021) and confidence in problem-solving (Soliman, 2014) to tackle the unique challenges presented by these events, showing how these skills can mitigate the impact of stress on exhibitor performance. Collectively, these theories support the idea that the ability to use resources creatively and solve problems confidently is crucial for success in complex and high-pressure environments. Thus, they form an essential theoretical framework for understanding and defining the concept of "bricolage thinking". This concept represents an integrated set of competencies involving the creative use of resources and confidence in problem-solving, indispensable for effectively navigating complex and high-pressure environments such as trade fairs.

5.2. Insights from Trade Fair Performance

ANOVA analysis identified significant differences between groups across multiple control variables affecting the various di-

mensions of exhibitor performance. In "information-gathering activities", professionals with over 20 years of experience were more competent in these activities. In "relationship-building activities", male salespeople, those born between 1966-1980, and those from medium-sized companies exhibited greater competence in relationship-building activities. Similar trends were observed in "image-building activities", with additional significance found for salespeople from companies exporting over 50% of their turnover and those participating in multiple trade fairs annually. "Motivational activities" dimension indicated greater competence in these activities for salespeople from companies exporting 25% - 50% of their turnover and those from Portuguese companies.

These results suggest that salesperson experience can provide an advantage in identifying and obtaining relevant data about the market, competitors and trends during trade fairs. Typically, more experienced salespeople are more insightful when asking questions, have a more comprehensive knowledge of the market and have a larger network of contacts, which helps in collecting information. The results also indicate that certain demographic characteristics, such as gender and age, may play a role in salespeople's ability to establish and strengthen connections with customers and partners. Therefore, certain gender stereotypes can influence salespeople's behavioural expectations and customer perceptions. Additionally, age can be associated with different levels of experience, maturity, and interpersonal skills, all of which can influence how salespeople build relationships. The study also suggests that the organizational context, such as the focus on internationalization and participation in trade fairs, can influence the ability of salespeople to deal with challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented at trade fairs. These companies are late exporters and usually participate in various fairs and are more exposed to diversified markets, cultures and business practices. This can provide sellers with a broader experience, offering networking, reputation and motivation.

Finally, the findings suggest that sales representatives originating from Portuguese firms exhibit greater proficiency in cultivating networks and enhancing the corporate image and reputation, surpassing their counterparts from Kosovo. This outcome likely stems from Portugal's status as a member of the European Union, affording it a lengthier legacy of engagement in sales and entrepreneurial endeavours in contrast to Kosovo. Consequently, Portuguese companies may benefit from a solid base of experience and established practices for developing networking and managing corporate image.

6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study offers some practical implications for salespeople and managers of companies participating in trade fairs. Regarding company managers, the study highlights the importance of nurturing a culture of trust, adaptability and proactive problem solving among sales teams. By investing in the development and training of bricoleur salespeople, exhibitors can significantly improve their performance. This could prove especially beneficial during high-pressure situations like trade fairs, where businesses frequently encounter severe competition and must positively distinguish themselves within this environment. Furthermore, apart from its applicability to resource-limited companies, adopting a bricoleur approach can serve as a potent strategy for maximizing impact and making the most of available resources. Exhibitors can thus capitalize on the numerous opportunities presented by trade fairs, taking advantage of the presence of bricoleur salespeople confident in their problem-solving skills. These salespeople positively influence several dimensions of exhibitor performance, including sales-related activities, information gathering, relationship building, image building, and motivational activities.

Regarding the organizational context, late exporters and companies that participate less in trade fairs will have to adjust their strategies. For example, if possible, increasing frequency and participation in trade fairs can provide more exposure to the company, its products and services. They can also invest in strengthening relationships with existing customers and business partners. These companies can seek support from trade fair organizations, chambers of commerce, and development agencies in order to get guidance and resources. It is also important for companies to recognize the differences between producers and service providers. For example, understanding the different needs and preferences of service customers versus product customers can inform the development of more effective sales approaches, such as emphasizing personalized solutions for service customers and product demonstrations for product customers.

Therefore, the interaction highlighted in this study between the Resource-Based View theory, Bricolage theory, and Stressful Events theory has direct implications for management, particularly in the context of trade fairs. The findings suggest that managers must consider the efficient allocation of resources, the encouragement of creativity and improvisation, and the implementation of effective stress management and resilience strategies to optimise exhibitor and sales team performance. In this regard, it is essential for managers to adopt a leadership style that fosters experimentation with innovative solutions without fear of failure, creating an environment that promotes the strategic use of available resources while providing emotional and strategic support to cope with the demanding pressures of trade fairs. By implementing this approach, salespeople develop greater autonomy, confidence, and improvisational ability, enhancing their capacity to solve problems quickly and effectively. Consequently, the overall performance of both the team and the exhibitor is significantly improved, ensuring greater success in the competitive trade fair environment.

Regarding salespeople, this study suggests that they should adopt the bricoleur mentality, which involves adaptability, creativity and resilience. This mindset allows them to effectively navigate unforeseen challenges and pressure situations typically found at trade fairs. Salespeople should also focus on increasing their confidence in problem solving. Therefore, this study encourages salespeople to develop an integrated competency in using resources creatively and solving problems confidently. This capability, referred to as "bricolage thinking", empowers them to respond innovatively to complex challenges encountered at trade fairs. By combining the bricoleur approach with problem-

solving confidence, salespeople can improvise solutions, adapt to dynamic customer demands, and optimize resource utilization. This improves exhibitor performance and promotes a proactive and innovative culture within the team, driving continuous improvement and success at trade fairs.

Finally, experienced salesperson can leverage their insights and should recognize the role of demographic characteristics, such as gender and age, in shaping customer perceptions and behavioural expectations. Thus, tailoring sales approaches based on these factors can lead to more effective relationship building and sales interactions. Salespeople must also adapt to the organizational context, including factors such as the focus on internationalization, type of company and participation in trade fairs. Understanding the unique dynamics of the company context where they work can help them deal with challenges and capitalize on opportunities more effectively.

7. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The study findings support the hypotheses regarding the influence of bricoleur behaviour and problem-solving confidence on exhibitor performance at trade fairs. For salespeople and managers, the study highlights the importance of nurturing a culture of trust, adaptability, and proactive problem-solving. Investing in the development of bricoleur salespeople can significantly improve exhibitor performance at trade fairs. Salespeople should adopt the bricoleur mentality and focus on increasing their confidence in problem-solving, while also recognizing the role of demographic characteristics and organizational context in shaping sales approaches and interactions. The concept of " bricolage thinking" has emerged as an integrated and crucial competency for exhibitor performance at trade fairs, combining the bricoleur mindset with confidence in problem-solving.

Although the study offers valuable insights, it is essential to recognize its limitations. Firstly, the findings are derived from a particular context and sample, potentially restricting their applicability to other settings or demographics. Additionally, the study overlooks the industry context of the exhibitors. Hence, it would be prudent for future research to address this aspect since diverse sectors can stimulate distinct competition dynamics at the trade fair. Comparative studies spanning various industries or regions could yield profounder insights into the details of trade fair involvement. Future studies could also explore additional factors influencing exhibitor performance at trade fairs, such as organizational culture and leadership style. Longitudinal studies could also investigate the long-term impact of bricoleur behaviour and problem-solving confidence on exhibitor success. Finally, this study introduces the theoretical framework of "bricolage thinking", albeit in its nascent stage. Future research endeavours could delve deeper into this concept, offering practical insights that could be important for companies and professionals seeking to boost their performance at trade fairs through innovation and proficient problem-solving skills.

8. SUPPLEMENTARY FILE

A supplementary file with material related to the article can be accessed at the following URL: https://ojs.ehu.eus/index.php/CG/article/view/27591

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Centre for Organisational and Social Studies of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (CEOS.PP) for the support provided throughout this research. The authors also extend our appreciation to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and constructive suggestions, which have greatly contributed to the improvement of this article.

This work is financed by Portuguese national funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, under the project UIDB/05422/2020.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study.

10. REFERENCES

Ahmed, M., & Lucianetti, L. (2024). Entrepreneurial leadership in online freelancing: bricolage and project success. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 31*(8), 105-124. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-01-2023-0007

Arditto, L., Cambra-Fierro, J., Fuentes-Blasco, M., Jaraba, A., & Vázquez-Carrasco, R. (2020). How does customer perception of salespeople influence the relationship? A study in an emerging economy. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 54*(1), 101952. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101952

Armstrong, J. S. & Overton, T.S. (1977). Estimating non-response bias in mail surveys. *Journal of Marketing Research, 14*(3), 396-402. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224377701400320.

Baier-Fuentes, H., Andrade-Valbuena, N., Gonzalez-Serrano, M., & Gaviria-Marin, M. (2023). Bricolage as an effective tool for the survival of owner-managed SMEs during crises. *Journal of Business Research, 157*(1), 113608. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113608

Brown, B., Locander, J., & Locander, W. (2022). Should I Stay or Should I Go? The Cascading Impact of Performance Pressure on Supervisor Bottom-Line Mentality and Salesperson Hypervigilant Decision Making, Emotional Exhaustion, and Engagement. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 29*(3-4), 353-368, https://doi.org/10.1080/1051712X.2022.2121502

Carlson, J., & Ross, W. (2022). When polychronicity affects salesperson performance: The effects of improvisation, role ambiguity, and sales job complexity. *Industrial Marketing Management, 107*(1), 323-336. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.10.010

Cavazos, D.E., Rutherford, M. & Ashton, T. (2023). The temporal dynamics of attribute-based firm reputation: examining short-term and long-term reputation and regulation in the U.S. automobile industry. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 31*(7), 3519-3531. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-05-2022-3260

Charoensukmongkol, P., & Suthatorn, P. (2021). Linking improvisational behavior, adaptive selling behavior and sales performance. International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, *70*(7), 1582-1603. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPPM-05-2019-0235

Chaudhary, S., Dhir, A., Ferraris, A., & Bertoldi, B. (2021). Trust and reputation in family businesses: A systematic literature review of past achievements and future promises. *Journal of Business Research, 137*(1), 143-161. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.07.052

Chen, F. F., Sousa, K. H., & West, S. G. (2005). Testing Measurement Invariance of Second-Order Factor Models. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *12*(3), 471-492. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328007sem1203_7

Claro, D., P., Plouffe, C.P., & Vieira, V.A. (2023). Sales compensation plan type and sales opportunity coverage: "Double-edged" sword effects on sales performance. *Industrial Marketing Management, 113*(1), 153-167. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2023.05.022

Clegg, J. R., & Diller, K. R. (2018). Challenge-based instruction promotes students' development of transferable frameworks and confidence for engineering problem solving. *European Journal of Engineering Education, 44*(3), 398-416. https://doi.org/10.1080/03043797.2018.1524453

Collier, J. (2020). *Applied Structural Equation Modeling using AMOS: Basic to Advanced Techniques (1st ed.)*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003018414

Dash. G. & Paul. J. (2021). CB-SEM vs PLS-SEM methods for research in social sciences and technology forecasting. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 173*(1), 121092. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.121092

Display Wizard (2024). Trade Show Statistics That Will Blow Your Mind! [2024 Update], available at: https://www.displaywizard.co.uk/trade-show-statistics/, accessed in Jully 2024

Endres, H., Helm, R., Schmitz, C. & Hofstetter, C. (2022). Do business customers perceive what salespeople believe? Perceptions of salesperson adoption of innovations. *Journal of Product Innovation Management, 40*(1), 120-136. https://doi.org/10.1111/jpim.12645

Epler, R. & Leach, M. (2021). An examination of salesperson bricolage during a critical sales disruption: Selling during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Industrial Marketing Management, 95*(1), 114-127. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2021.04.002.

Epler, R., Schrock, W., Leach, M., White, K. & Hochstein, B. (2023). Managing ambiguity: salesperson bricolage behavior and its organizational determinants. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*. https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2023.2198239

Ewe, S.Y., & Ho, H.H.P. (2023). Psychological capabilities for salespeople's sustainable work performance in financial services sector. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41264-023-00228-6

Favorina, D., Masrukan, M.S. & Isnarto, M. (2023). Analysis of Problem Solving Ability in View Of Self Confidence in a PBL Learning Model. Based on Blended Learning with Diagnostic Assessment. *International Journal of Education and Research, 11*(2), 53-64.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D.F. (1981). Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39-50. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104

Franck, R., & Dampérat, M. (2022). Influence of sales force automation on salesperson performance: A study of interpersonal and intrapersonal mediators. *Recherche et Applications En Marketing (English Edition), 37*(3), 59-85. https://doi.org/10.1177/20515707221131150

Gao, R. (Chuang Rang), Murphy, W. H., & Anderson, R. E. (2020). Transformational leadership effects on salespeople's attitudes, striving, and performance. Journal of Business Research, *110*, 237-245. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.01.023.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2021). *IBM SPSS Statistics 27 Step by Step. A Simple Guide and Reference (17th Ed.)*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003205333

Gerçek, M. (2024). Exploiting limitations: Examining the concept of "bricolage" in management studies through a bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Research in Business*, *9*(2), 554-584. https://doi.org/10.54452/jrb.1470459

Gerschewski, S., Evers, N., Nguyen, A., & Froese, F. (2020). Trade Shows and SME Internationalisation: Networking for Performance. *Management International Review, 60*(1), 573-595. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-020-00421-y

Ghemawat P. (2001). Distance still matters. The hard reality of global expansion. *Harvard Business Review, 79*(8), 137-162.

Good, M., & Schwepker, C. (2022). Business-to-business salespeople and political skill: Relationship building, deviance, and performance. *Journal of Business Research, 139*(1), 32-43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.09.035

Hansen, K. (2004). Measuring performance at trade shows. *Journal of Business Research, 57*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0148-2963(02)00269-2

Haon, C., Sego, T., Drapeau, N. & Sarin, S. (2020). Disconnect in trade show staffing: a comparison of exhibitor emphasis and attendee preferences. *Industrial Marketing Management, 91*(1), 581-595. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.03.016

Hendriana, H., Johanto, T., & Sumarmo, U. (2018). The Role of Problem Based Learning to Improve Students' Mathematical Problem-Solving Ability and Self Confidence. *Journal on Mathematics Education, 9*(2), 291-300.

Heppner, P.P., Dong-Gwi L., & Lu T. (2012). *Problem-Solving Appraisal and Psychological Adjustment'*, in Shane J. Lopez, and C. R. Snyder (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology, 2nd Ed. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0032.

Jha, S., Balaji, M.S., Ranjan, K.R. & Sharma, A. (2019). Effect of service-related resources on employee and customer outcomes in trade shows. *Industrial Marketing Management, 76*(1), 48-59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2018.07.012

Jia, M. & Wan, C. (2022). Why are strangers trusted more during trade fairs? A literature review on the conceptual model of general trust formation. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 37*(11), 2205-2216. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-03-2021-0164

Jung, S., Boo, S. & Choe, H. (2023). The Impact of Boothscape on Exhibitor Behavior, Performance, and Satisfaction: An Internal Service Climate Theory Perspective. *Event Management, 27*(5), 659-673. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599523X16830662072062

Kang, Ryu, S., & Lee, S.H. (2019). I need to be your only friend: the effect of salesperson network centrality on opportunistic behavior. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 39*(2), 159-171. https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134

Katie; S., Carmel; F., & Deborah, E. (2022). "It's More Than Sales!" Re-examining Exhibitor Motivations: Insights from the Conference Sector". *Event Management, 26*(8), 1785-1800. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948694748

Kim, B., Kim, K., Park, C. & Lee, J. (2020). Effects of Exhibitors' Trade Show Participation on market performance: longitudinal research. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 25*(12), 1343-1358. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2020.1851275

Kincheloe, J. L. (2001). Describing the Bricolage: Conceptualizing a New Rigor in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 7*(6), 679-692. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040100700601

Kincheloe, J. L. (2005). On to the Next Level: Continuing the Conceptualization of the Bricolage. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(3), 323-350. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405275056

Lee, H. Y., Park, C. W. & Kim, B. (2021). Study on the exhibition performance and efficiency of exhibitors in overseas trade show: Company characteristics and exhibition participation. *Global Business & Finance Review, 26*(2), 49-66. https://doi.org/10.17549/gbfr.2021.26.2.49

Lerman, M.P., Munyon, T.P. & Carr, J.C. (2020). Stress Events Theory: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Entrepreneurial Behavior. Perrewé, P.L., Harms, P.D. and Chang, C.-H. (Ed.) Entre-

preneurial and Small Business Stressors, Experienced Stress, and Well-Being (Research in Occupational Stress and Well Being, Vol. 18), Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 35-63. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-355520200000018003

Lévi-Strauss, C. (2021). *Wild Thought - A New Translation of "La Pensée sauvage*. University of Chicago Press

Li, P.C. (2020). Industrial exhibitors' resource commitment to booth personnel: A study of select predictors and consequences. *Industrial Marketing Management, 91*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.08.010

Li, Q., He, H., Sun, J., & Leung, X. (2022). Networking for better information-gathering performance at trade shows: A multigroup analysis. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *51*(1), 462-470. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2022.04.015

Liu, Y., Hochstein, B., Bolander, W., Bradford, K., & Weitz, B. A. (2020). Internal selling: Antecedents and the importance of networking ability in converting internal selling behavior into salesperson performance. Journal of Business Research, *117*, 176-188. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.04.036

Maczulskij, T., & Viinikainen, J. (2023). Self-confidence predicts entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial success. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights, 19*(1), e00382. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvi.2023.e00382.

Markham, A. N. (2018). *Bricolage*. In E. Navas, O. Gallagher, & X. Burroughs (Eds.), Keywords in remix studies (pp. 43-55). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315516417.

Mateus, S., & Sarkar, S. (2024). Bricolage - a systematic review, conceptualization, and research agenda. Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, *36*(7-8), 833-854. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2024.2303426

McKelvie, S. J. (1978). Graphic rating scales - How many categories?. *British Journal of Psychology, 69*(2), 185-202. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8295.1978.tb01647.x

Mormile, S., Piscopo, G. & Adinolfi, P. (2023). Confidence and coincidences in executive decision-making during periods of crisis. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 31*(5), 1228-1242. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-11-2022-3518

Nayak, J.K. (2019). An exhibitor's perspective: factors affecting selection of industrial trade shows in India and the importance of spot sales. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 26*(2), 125-140. https://doi.org/10.1080/1051712X.2019.1603356

Nielsen, B. B., & Raswant, A. (2018). The selection, use, and reporting of control variables in international business research: A review and recommendations. Journal of World Business, *53*(6), 958-968. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2018.05.003

Panagopoulos, N. G., Rapp, A. A., and Ogilvie, J. L. (2017). Salesperson Solution Involvement and Sales Performance: The Contingent Role of Supplier Firm and Customer-Supplier Relationship Characteristics. *Journal of Marketing, 81*(4), 144-164. https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0342

Peasley, M., Hochstein, B., Britton, B., Srivastava, R., & Stewart, G. (2020). Can't leave it at home? The effects of personal stress on burnout and salesperson performance. Journal of Business Research, *117*(1), 58-70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.014

Rai, S. & Nayak, J. K. (2020). The Essence and Measurement of Trade Show Event Experiences. *Event Management, 24*(2-3), 409-425. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599519X15506259856084

Román-Nicolás, S., & Rodríguez-Herrera, R. (2018). Cómo podemos distinguir a los vendedores éticos de los que no lo son: Implicaciones para el proceso de selección y formación de los comerciales. Cuadernos De Gestión, *11*(3), 85-99. https://doi.org/10.5295/cdg.100273sr

Santos, L.L., Borini, F.M., Oliveira, M.d.M., Rossetto, D.E. & Bernardes, R.C. (2022). Bricolage as capability for frugal innovation in emerging markets in times of crisis. *European Journal of Innovation Management, 25*(2), 413-432. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-06-2020-0225

Scheibe, D.A., Fitzsimmons, C.J., Mielicki, M.K. Taber, J., Sidney, P., Coifman, K., & Thompson, C. (2022). Confidence in COVID problem solving: What factors predict adults' item-level metacognitive judgments on health-related math problems before and after an educational intervention?. *Metacognition Learning, 17*(1), 989-1023. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11409-022-09300-3

Silva, P.M., Vale, V.T. & Moutinho, V.F. (2021). Trade fairs as an intelligence process: the perspective of companies/exhibitors. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism, 22*(3), 242-270. https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2020.1866139

Silva, P.M., Moutinho, V.F. & Vale, V.T. (2022). Examining the Relationship between Sales Force Proactiveness, Network Capability and Sales Performance: Evidence from International Trade Shows. *Journal of Promotion Management, 28*(5), 559-583. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2021.2009087

Silva, P.M., Paço, A.F, & Moutinho, V.F. (2023). The Trend of Omnichannel Trade Fairs. Are B2B Exhibitors Open to This Challenge? A Study on Portuguese Exhibitors. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing, 30*(1), 15-31. https://doi.org/10.1080/1051712X.2023.2174825

Sivathanu, B., & Pillai, R. (2020). An empirical study on entrepreneurial bricolage behavior for sustainable enterprise performance of startups: Evidence from an emerging economy. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, *12*(1), 34-57. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-01-2019-0009

Soliman, A. M. (2014). The Problem-Solving Inventory: Appraisal of problem solving in the Arab context, factor structure, and validation. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation, 3*(4), 252-267. https://doi.org/10.3109/09593985.2012.676941

Sturm, N., & Bohndick, C. (2021). The Influence of Attitudes and Beliefs on the Problem-Solving Performance. *Frontiers in Education, 6*(525923), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.525923

Vitali, V., Bazzani, C., Gimigliano, A., Cristani, M., Begalli, D. & Menegaz, G. (2022). Trade show visitors and key technological trends: from a literature review to a conceptual framework. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 37*(13), 142-166. https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-10-2021-0461

Watkins, M. (2021). *A Step-by-Step Guide to Exploratory Factor Analysis with SPSS*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003149347

Wu, L., Yu, L., & Wang, S. (2022). Knowledge Spillover at Trade Shows and Exhibitor Innovation. *Event Management, 26*(6), 1381-1393. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599522X16419948390934

Wu, S., Luo, Y., Zhang, H., & Cheng, P. (2024). Entrepreneurial bricolage and entrepreneurial performance: The role of business model innovation and market orientation. *Heliyon, 10*(4), e26600. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e26600

Xu, Y., Shieh, C., Esch, P., & Ling, I. (2020). AI customer service: Task complexity, problem-solving ability, and usage intention. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ), 28*(4), 189-199. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2020.03.005

Yu, S., & Benson-Rea, M. (2024). Transforming trade fair services in the post-Covid-19 era: A perspective from China. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism, 25*(1), 33-53. https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2023.2278796

Zhang, R., Rahman, A., Aziz, Y. & Sidek, S. (2023). Unpacking technological and interpersonal interaction on value co-creation and outcomes in trade show: A dyadic examining view. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 55*(1), 334-343. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2023.05.007