



SALES STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP IN THE COLOMBIAN AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

Estratégias de venda e relacionamento com o cliente no setor automotivo colombiano

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Abstract

This article examines how sales strategies implemented by vehicle sellers in the Colombian automotive sector influence the development of strong customer relationships and shape purchasing decisions. Using a qualitative descriptive-interpretive approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six intentionally selected sellers to explore their experiences, perceptions, and sales practices in real commercial settings. Findings reveal that professional trajectory acts as a key resource, enabling sellers to identify customer profiles, anticipate objections, and optimize negotiation processes. Results also indicate that omnichannel communication, benefit-oriented explanations, and rapid response are widely used and valued strategies. Trust emerges as the central axis of the seller–customer relationship, grounded in transparency, continuous guidance, and clear information. The study concludes that commercial effectiveness in the automotive market depends on integrating communication skills, digital competencies, and ethical practices that enhance customer experience and increase the likelihood of purchase.

Keywords

Sales strategies, customer relationship, Colombian automotive sector, commercial trust, buyer experience

Resumo

Este artigo examina como as estratégias de vendas implementadas por vendedores de veículos no setor automotivo colombiano influenciam o desenvolvimento de relacionamentos sólidos com os clientes e moldam as decisões de compra. Utilizando uma abordagem qualitativa descritivo-interpretativa, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com seis vendedores selecionados intencionalmente para explorar suas experiências, percepções e práticas de vendas em ambientes comerciais reais. Os resultados revelam que a trajetória profissional atua como um recurso-chave, permitindo que os vendedores identifiquem perfis de clientes, antecipem objeções e otimizem os processos de negociação. Os resultados também indicam que a comunicação omnichannel, as explicações orientadas para os benefícios e a resposta rápida são estratégias amplamente utilizadas e valorizadas. A confiança emerge como eixo central da relação vendedor–cliente, fundamentada na transparência, no acompanhamento contínuo e nas informações claras. O estudo conclui que a eficácia comercial no mercado automotivo depende da integração de habilidades de comunicação, competências digitais e práticas éticas que melhorem a experiência do cliente e aumentem a probabilidade de compra.

1. Introduction

The Colombian automotive sector has consolidated itself as one of the most dynamic and competitive markets within the national economy (Global, 2025). In this context, vehicle sales representatives play a fundamental role, becoming the primary link between companies and consumers (Agama, 2025). Their capacity to apply effective sales strategies and to build solid relationships with customers directly influences service perception, the trust generated, and ultimately, purchasing decisions (Álvarez et al., 2018). However, despite the importance of this role, questions remain regarding the extent to which these strategies affect the customer experience and commercial outcomes (Rodríguez & Pérez, 2025). In this context, the study addresses the following research question: How do sales strategies applied by vehicle sellers in the Colombian automotive sector influence the construction of customer relationships and purchasing decisions?

Understanding how these elements interact becomes essential for identifying best practices, recognizing weaknesses, and proposing improvements that strengthen commercial management within dealerships and companies engaged in vehicle sales (Zech et al., 2024). Therefore, this research seeks to analyze the relationship between the sales strategies implemented in the Colombian automotive sector and their influence on the construction of long-term customer relationships. This analysis will provide relevant insights to optimize service processes, increase consumer satisfaction, and improve commercial performance in a market that increasingly demands quality, transparency, and innovation. Based on this problem, the general objective of this study is to analyze how the sales strategies implemented by vehicle sellers in the Colombian automotive sector influence the construction of trust-based customer relationships and the purchase decision process (Rodríguez et al., 2026).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 The automotive sector and its commercial dynamics

The automotive sector is recognized as one of the most competitive and dynamic markets within both the global and Latin American economies (Kalmanovitz, 2019). In Colombia, this sector is characterized by intense competition among brands, a growing supply of new and used vehicles, and the incorporation of digital technologies into information and purchasing processes (Rincón et al., 2017). Vehicle commercialization involves not only product display but also a complex relational process in which factors such as trust, perceived service quality, dealership reputation, and the seller's ability to guide the customer play significant roles (Promise et al., 2025). Owing to the high economic and emotional value of the product, the seller–customer interaction becomes decisive in the purchasing decision (Maldonado, 2021).

2.2 Sales strategies

Sales strategies comprise the set of actions, techniques, and procedures used by a salesperson to positively influence the customer's purchasing decision. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2017), these strategies aim to understand needs, communicate value, and persuade the consumer that the proposed offer is the most convenient. In the automotive field, such strategies include identifying buyer profiles, managing technical vehicle information, persuasive argumentation, demonstrations, test drives, negotiation, and post-sale follow-up (Ijomah et al., 2017).

Sales strategies can be classified into approach strategies, negotiation strategies, closing strategies, and loyalty strategies. Each fulfills a fundamental role in commercial interaction. For example, approach strategies aim to create an environment conducive to communication; negotiation seeks to overcome objections; closing focuses on achieving the final agreement; and loyalty strategies aim to maintain long-term relationships for future transactions (Hu & Basiglio, 2024).

2.3 Customer relationship

The customer relationship is central to high-involvement purchasing processes, such as vehicle acquisition. Authors such as Berry (1995) and Grönroos (1994) highlight that the creation of long-lasting relationships depends on trust, perceived service quality, timely communication, and the seller's ability to understand the consumer's needs. In this sense, the seller–customer relationship is not transactional but relational: it entails a continuous interaction process based on empathy, transparency, and credibility.

In the Colombian automotive sector, this relationship becomes particularly relevant because customers often seek specialized advice when making a high-cost decision (Gómez & Velasco, 2024a). The sales representative must demonstrate technical knowledge, commercial ethics, and communication skills that inspire confidence and reduce perceived risk. Customer satisfaction therefore derives not only from the vehicle purchased but also from the treatment received throughout the process (Gaspar, 2021).

2.4 Consumer behavior in vehicle purchasing

Consumer behavior in the automotive market is influenced by rational factors price, performance, safety, fuel consumption and emotional factors status, design, brand, prestige. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), buyers' decision-making is affected by motivations, prior experiences, social influences, and perceived value. In the case of vehicles, the decision is generally planned, comparative, and accompanied by information-seeking (Figueroa et al., 2024).

The seller plays a key role in this phase by assisting customers in evaluating options, understanding technical features, and resolving doubts. Social interaction has a significant impact on the process, meaning that the seller's behavior can strengthen or weaken the customer's purchase intention. Thus, the coherent application of commercial strategies and the construction of a solid relationship can determine sales success (Delgado de la Espriella, 2025).

2.5 Digital technologies and the transformation of the sales process

In recent years, the automotive sector has undergone a transformation driven by digitalization. Social networks, dealership websites, and CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems have modified the role of the seller, who now requires digital competencies to attract customers, respond to inquiries, conduct follow-ups, and strengthen commercial relationships. The literature indicates that consumers conduct online research beforehand, compare prices, and read reviews prior to visiting dealerships (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), thereby altering expectations and demands in the sales process.

Sellers must now combine traditional strategies with digital ones, such as managing social media messages, creating informative content, engaging in virtual interactions, and providing remote assistance. This requires constant adaptation to the new dynamics of the market (Barbosa et al., 2021).

2.6 Importance of sales strategies in satisfaction and purchase decisions

Various studies have demonstrated that sellers' commercial strategies directly influence customer satisfaction and purchase likelihood. Clarity of information, transparency, empathy, and post-sale follow-up strengthen the perception of trust, thereby increasing loyalty and generating positive referrals. In the highly competitive automotive sector, differentiation does not lie solely in the product offered but also in the buying experience shaped throughout the interaction (Capgemini Research Institute, 2024). Therefore, analyzing how sellers apply these strategies and how they build relationships with customers makes it possible to understand the impact of these actions on commercial success and the sector's overall market dynamics (Chavarro et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

The present study is grounded in a qualitative approach, as its central purpose is to deeply understand how sales strategies are applied in the Colombian automotive sector and how these strategies influence the relationship built between sellers and their customers (Páramo, 2008; Bunge, 1997). This approach allows the exploration of perceptions, experiences, meanings, and practices in real contexts, providing an interpretative perspective that is not limited to numerical data (Devi Prasad, 2019). The design is descriptive-interpretative, as it seeks to describe the commercial dynamics observed through sellers' experiences and to simultaneously interpret how these practices affect trust, communication, and customers' decision-making processes (Maldonado, 2024).

The target population comprises vehicle sellers affiliated with the Colombian automotive sector, including both new- and used-car dealerships. A purposive sample of six (6) sellers will be selected, meeting criteria such as a minimum of one year of experience in vehicle sales, frequent direct contact with customers, current employment, and voluntary participation. This type of sample does not aim for statistical representativeness but for depth and richness of information, consistent with qualitative principles (Aguilera et al., 2020; Bunge, 1980).

The primary data collection technique will be the semi-structured interview, as it provides a balance between the structure required to meet the study's objectives and the flexibility necessary for participants to freely express their experiences, perceptions, and meanings (Rodríguez, 2025). Interviews will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes, may be conducted in person or virtually, and will be audio-recorded with prior authorization to allow accurate transcription (Maldonado, 2009). The interview guide will be organized around thematic axes including work experience, applied sales strategies, customer relationship and communication, perceived impact of these strategies, and recent changes in sales dynamics due to technological or market factors (Table 1). The analytical categories guiding the interpretation were professional trajectory, applied sales strategies, trust building in customer relationships, and perceived influence of these strategies on purchase decisions and customer satisfaction.

Fieldwork will begin with contacting dealerships or selected sellers, clearly explaining the study's objectives and requesting authorization. Interviews will then be scheduled, informed consent will be obtained, and the guide will be applied. Once conducted, audio recordings will be transcribed verbatim to ensure content fidelity. Transcriptions will then be carefully reviewed for coherence and organized to facilitate analysis (Arias & Maldonado, 2025).

Data analysis will be carried out using thematic content analysis, which enables the identification of patterns, recurring ideas, emerging categories, and relevant meanings within participants' discourse (Castro et al., 2017). The process will include an initial general reading of the transcriptions followed by initial coding to highlight significant fragments related to approach strategies, negotiation processes, loyalty methods, trust-building, and perceptions of strategic impact (Bunge, 1969). Codes will subsequently be grouped into categories that allow structured interpretation. Finally, findings will be interpreted in relation to the research question, the general objective, and the theoretical framework, enabling the construction of solid and coherent conclusions (Barbosa et al., 2020; Table 1).

From an ethical standpoint, the study will guarantee anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. All participants will be informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the exclusively academic use of the information provided (Gómez, 2025). Real names of participants and dealerships will not be disclosed; pseudonyms will be used instead to safeguard their identity. Likewise, collected data will be securely stored and will not be shared with individuals unrelated to the research process (Maldonado, 2005).

Chat 1. Structure of the qualitative interview for the study of automotive sales strategies

Thematic axis	Question formulated	Purpose of the question	Connection to the research
Work experience	What has your career trajectory in the automotive sector been like, and what learnings do you consider most relevant in your work as a salesperson?	To identify the interviewee's professional context, their length of experience, and acquired knowledge.	It allows for an understanding of the salesperson's level of expertise, which influences the strategies they use and their relationship with clients.
Sales strategies	What sales strategies do you apply most frequently, and why do you consider them effective in your work context?	To explore the specific tactics employed by the salesperson and the rationale behind their choice.	It provides direct information about the commercial practices to be analyzed according to the general objective.
Relationship with the client	What actions or practices do you use to build and maintain a relationship of trust with your clients during the sales process?	To delve into the interpersonal dimension of the sales process.	It relates the strategies to the quality of the salesperson-client relationship, a central element of the research.
Impact of strategies	In what way do you consider your sales strategies influence the client's purchase decision and satisfaction?	To evaluate the real or perceived effect of the applied strategies.	It connects directly with the research problem, by measuring the impact of strategies on client behavior.
Sector transformations	What recent changes have you perceived in the vehicle sales process, and how have you adjusted your strategies to adapt to them?	To identify dynamics of change in the market and professional adaptations.	It allows for contextualizing the strategies within the transformations of the Colombian automotive sector.

Source: own elaboration based on: (López et al., 2025; Román et al., 2025; Camacho et al., 2023; Gómez et al., 2025 Bunge,1969).

4. Results

Content analysis allowed for the identification of central categories that describe professional experience, sales strategies, the building of trust, and the impact of commercial practices on client satisfaction (Carocci & Han, 2024). Below are the results, integrating *in vivo* codes and textual quotes that strengthen the qualitative interpretation.

4.1 Work trajectory and professional learnings

Interviewees reported heterogeneous work trajectories that have allowed them to acquire the technical and relational skills necessary to perform in the automotive sector. A participant with six years of sales experience highlighted the evolution of their profile from administrative and customer service roles towards a more strategic sales role (Jiménez, 2024):

“Mi trayectoria en el sector ha sido variada entre servicio al cliente, jefatura y finalmente un enfoque de 6 años en las ventas de automóviles.”

The accumulated experience allowed salespeople to develop internal categories about client types and to better understand the psychological dynamics of the purchasing process (Client Relationship Management in the Automotive Industry, 2025). The same interviewee added:

“En este tiempo he aprendido que existen dos tipos de clientes: el que sabe lo que quiere y el que toca aterrizarlo porque vive en una realidad alterada.”

Other interviewees complemented this perspective with similar observations:

“El tiempo le enseña a uno a distinguir quién realmente está en proceso de compra y quién solo quiere información.”

“Entre más experiencia tienes, más rápido lees al cliente y sabes cómo abordarlo.”

These perceptions suggest that professional trajectory operates as experiential capital that increases commercial efficiency and minimizes time losses on non-buyer profiles (Customer experience in the automotive industry in 2025, 2025).

4.2 Sales strategies used most frequently

Omnichannel emerged as a dominant strategy among participants. Salespeople use social networks, e-commerce platforms, and instant messaging to capture prospects and maintain the communicative flow (Hinojo et al., 2020). One interviewee stated:

“Uso múltiples canales: Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Mercado Libre... todo lo que permita tener contacto rápido con el cliente.”

Likewise, the technique of "explaining in benefits" is widely mentioned as an effective persuasion strategy:

“Explico el vehículo en beneficios y no en detalles técnicos. La gente compra lo que siente que le sirve, no lo que tiene más caballos de fuerza.”

Another salesperson noted:

“Uno debe traducir lo técnico a lo cotidiano; el cliente necesita entender cómo ese carro mejora su vida.”

Similarly, speed in response is identified as a critical factor for not losing opportunities:

“Tener todo al día es clave. Si te demoras en responder, el cliente se va con otro vendedor que le respondió primero.”

Together, these testimonies show that sales strategies are articulated around agility, clarity, and benefit-focused communication (Laverde et al., 2020).

4.3 Building trust and relationship with the client

Trust is positioned as the central axis of the relationship with the client. Interviewees state that transparency, although it may mean losing a sale in the short term, guarantees a stronger and more lasting bond. One participant expressed:

“Doy la información clara y real. Los pros y los contras. Puede que se caiga el negocio porque al colombiano promedio le encanta que le mientan, pero si pasa esa etapa, la confianza lo es todo.”

Another interviewee reinforces this idea:

“A veces ser honesto espanta al cliente, pero el que se queda termina siendo un cliente de por vida.”

Continuous accompaniment is also key:

“No abandono al cliente en ningún momento. Desde la primera cotización hasta que se entrega el carro, siempre estoy presente.”

The relational practices described by the salespeople coincide with principles of relationship marketing, showing that trust is not built only with information, but with consistency in treatment, commercial ethics, and availability to resolve objections (Martínez, et al., 2024).

4.4 Influence of strategies on purchase decision and client satisfaction

Participants agree that sales strategies directly influence the client's sense of security and their willingness to buy. The main interviewee maintained:

“Influyen porque permiten que el cliente tenga toda la información necesaria y sienta seguridad durante el proceso.”

The above is complemented by other voices:

“Cuando el cliente siente claridad, se baja la incertidumbre y sube la intención de compra.”
“La venta se gana cuando el cliente siente que uno no lo quiere engañar.”

Similarly, adequate management of expectations was highlighted as a decisive factor:

“Hay gente que quiere comprar un vehículo fuera de su alcance. Toca aterrizarlo, pero con respeto. Si se hace bien, lo agradecen y terminan comprando.”

Finally, rapid digital communication was highlighted as a strategy that improves satisfaction (Gómez y Velasco, 2024b):

“La experiencia mejora muchísimo cuando respondes rápido. El cliente siente que lo valoras.”

5. Discussion

The research findings allow for a deep understanding of how salespeople in the Colombian automotive sector build their professional practice by integrating experience, commercial strategies,

communication skills, and practices aimed at generating trust (Martinho, 2025). First, work trajectory emerged as a structural factor conditioning the effectiveness of sales strategies. The interviewees demonstrated that accumulated experience allows for a finer reading of the client, differentiating real purchase profiles and avoiding time losses in unproductive interactions. This finding aligns with what was proposed by Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), who state that interpreting consumer behavior requires cognitive-emotional skills that are strengthened with time and practice.

Regarding sales strategies, the results show a transition towards omnichannel models in coherence with the digital transformations described by Lemon and Verhoef (2016). Salespeople use social networks, e-commerce platforms, and instant messaging to capture prospects, manage information, and strengthen initial interaction (Rodríguez et al., 2021). This diversification of channels reflects the need to adapt to a more informed and demanding consumer, who expects immediacy, clarity, and personalization. Likewise, the preference for explaining vehicles "in benefits and not in technical characteristics," as indicated by the interviewees, coincides with the postulates of Kotler and Armstrong (2017) on the importance of communicating value and not just product attributes. These findings also reinforce the idea that contemporary automotive sales increasingly depend on relationship-oriented commercial practices rather than purely transactional approaches, where communication, emotional intelligence, and trust management become strategic assets in the construction of customer value

The building of trust is reaffirmed as the central axis of the salesperson-client relationship, a principle widely supported by Grönroos (1994) and Berry (1995), who propose that relationship marketing is based on transparency, credibility, and honest communication. The testimonies show that salespeople recognize that sincerity can generate initial tensions and even the loss of a sale but in the long term it constitutes a relational resource that positively impacts loyalty. This indicates that trust is not a side effect, but a strategic component that conditions the satisfaction and purchase decision of the automotive client (Navigating the Road to Customer Centricity in the Automotive Sector, 2025).

Complementarily, continuous accompaniment and speed in response emerge as practices that strengthen the buyer's perception of security. These elements relate directly to the reduction of uncertainty, a critical component in high-involvement decisions, as noted by the literature on consumer behavior (Romashkina et al., 2020). In this sense, salespeople not only manage information, but also the client's emotions, expectations, and fears, which reinforces the integral character of their work. The findings suggest that sales strategies cannot be understood only as persuasive techniques, but as relational practices that combine communication skills, technical mastery, situational reading, and professional ethics (Parasetya et al., 2025).

Finally, the influence of strategies on satisfaction and purchase decision confirms the importance of coherence between the salesperson's discourse and the client's experience. The analyzed fragments show that clarity, honesty, and continuous accompaniment increase the probability of closing and strengthen the salesperson's reputation (Mazur, 2025). This phenomenon is coherent with the customer experience models reviewed in the theoretical framework and shows that the commercial process in the automotive sector is not linear nor transactional, but dynamic and emotionally complex (Rincón & Gómez, 2023).

Together, the results allow us to conclude that the most effective sales strategies are not only based on commercial techniques, but on the salesperson's ability to build relationships of trust, manage expectations, and adapt to the new digital dynamics of the Colombian automotive market. These conclusions constitute a solid basis for the formulation of recommendations and the elaboration of the study's final conclusions (Rodríguez, 2024).

6. Conclusions

The qualitative analysis carried out allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how the sales strategies and relational practices used by salespeople in the Colombian automotive sector

directly influence the client's experience, decision-making, and final satisfaction during the purchase process. The findings show that the salesperson's work is not limited to commercial persuasion, but constitutes a complex exercise that articulates communication skills, technical mastery of the product, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt to emerging market dynamics. From an academic perspective, the study contributes to the literature on relationship marketing in emerging automotive markets by demonstrating that experiential knowledge, omnichannel interaction, and trust-based communication constitute central mechanisms through which sales strategies influence purchase decisions

First, it is concluded that work trajectory is a determining factor in the consolidation of professional performance. Accumulated experience allows salespeople to develop their own criteria for classifying clients, anticipating objections, and managing time and available resources more efficiently. This empirical learning becomes relational capital that increases the effectiveness of the applied strategies.

Regarding sales strategies, the study confirms that omnichannel supported by the use of social networks, digital platforms, and instant messaging has become an essential component of contemporary commercial activity. Rapid response capacity, together with presenting the vehicle in terms of benefits and not only technical characteristics, constitutes one of the practices most valued by clients, who demand clear, timely, and personalized information.

Likewise, the research allows us to conclude that building trust is the articulating axis of the sales process. Transparency in information, honesty regarding delivery times and the vehicle's real conditions, as well as continuous accompaniment, strengthen the buyer's perception of security. Although this sincerity may generate initial tensions or even the loss of sales in some cases, salespeople agree that it constitutes a highly effective long-term loyalty strategy.

Similarly, it was evidenced that the applied strategies directly impact the purchase decision and client satisfaction. When the buyer receives clear, consistent information adapted to their needs, their level of uncertainty decreases and their willingness to complete the transaction increases. In this way, the salesperson-client relationship is configured as a collaborative rather than transactional bond, where the client's emotional experience takes on a central role.

Finally, it is concluded that the Colombian automotive sector requires salespeople capable of integrating digital competencies, communication skills, commercial ethics, and a deep understanding of consumer behavior. Technological transformations, growing competition, and new market expectations demand a constant updating of sales strategies, as well as a focus centered on the client's integral experience. These results constitute a fundamental basis for improving commercial practices, strengthening the salesperson-client relationship, and optimizing the performance of the automotive sector in Colombia.

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