Bachelor Thesis

Sales performance

A study of the correlation between personality traits and sales performance in the Swedish car dealership market

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Abstract

Background: When a company is employing new salespeople, much is expected from these. The company is hoping that the new candidate is going to perform well and contribute to the fullest. One of the big questions that the organization has to face is how to evaluate and sift through sales candidates in order to find the best suited one. Previous studies have shown to some extent that a person's personality can be connected to how well they are performing in different occupations. One commonly used framework for assessing personality is the Five Factor Model (FFM) which is able to account for different traits without overlapping. One way to assess a person's personality traits is by the use of the big five inventory questionnaire (BFI).

Purpose: To describe if there is a correlation between personality traits and sales performance in the Swedish car dealership market.

Method: The research was a quantitative study of two Swedish car dealerships, where 60 out of 72 employees at Hedin Bil & Holmgrens Bil answered the BFI questionnaire. The response rate was 83%. The survey was sent out by mail to the two companies whose responsible managers divided their sales staff in three different groups (good performing, average performing and bad performing) according to the company’s organizational goals.

Conclusion: The conclusion of this study is that one of the hypotheses was supported and four rejected by the salespeople participating. The only hypothesis that was supported was that Neuroticism would correlate negatively with sales performance.

Keywords
Personality traits, Five Factor Model, Big five inventory, Sales performance, Car dealership companies
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1 Introduction

This research focuses on if there is a certain set of personality traits that are connected to sales performance among salespeople in the Swedish car dealership industry. The following chapter will present the background of the subject together with previous research on the same field of study in order to create an understanding for the reader.

Every company consists of different departments such as sales, marketing, logistics, finance, HR, R&D and design and production. All of these different functions play an important part in the company and they are all dependent on each other. Without a well-functioning logistic department, the production will not be able to produce the products which in turn will affect the outcome of the sales department. This provides an authentic example on how the different departments function together in order to add customer value (Johnson. et al., 2008). Consequently, there is no doubt that all functions of a company are dependent on one another (Porter, 1987). Furthermore, Porter (1987) describes that every business unit is a collection of discrete activities ranging from sales to accounting that allows it to compete (Ibid). The value chain consists of two sorts of activities; primary and support activities. The primary activities consist of logistics (both inbound and outbound), operations, service as well as marketing and sales. It is through these activities that the company achieves competitive advantage (Ibid). All of these functions are being operated by different actors and the sales department is no exception. Actors, which for example can be salespeople changing positions for various reasons such as retirement, replacements and career advancement. This is one of the reasons why companies are forced to evaluate and recruit new sales candidates from time to time.

Hutt & Speh (2012) claim that the sales force is being entrusted with the organization’s most valuable asset, namely the company’s relationship with its customers. “Nothing happens until somebody sells something” (Kotler, et al. 2008, p.779) is a statement which highlights the importance of sales within an organization. As Zoltners, Sinha, and Lorimer (2008) present in their study on sales force effectiveness they conclude that the salesforce represents a large investment for most companies. “The importance of the
sales force goes beyond its costs - it is the salespeople entrusted with the company’s most important asset: its customers” (Ibid).

The risk involved in new hiring plays a key role and the evaluation process is a way of dealing with just that. No new hiring can be totally risk free but a reduction should be desirable when striving for organizational stability (Ingram et. al, 2012). One of the big questions that the organization has to face is how to evaluate and divide sales candidates by predicting their sales performance. Previous studies have shown to some extent that this is closely related to a person’s personality traits. In an American study conducted by Barrick (1991) concluded that extraversion and conscientiousness is a strong predictor of sales performance. Klang (2012), who investigated B2C telesales in a Swedish business setting, further strengthened this. However, insufficient studies have been conducted on business-to-business (B2B) markets in Sweden and according to Hutt & Speh (2012) B2B customers represent a highly lucrative and complex market worthy of separate analysis in comparison to organizations targeting households.

1.1 Background

The first modern studies that were aimed to explore different personality traits among people was conducted in the 1920’s during the first world war to examine if the testees were suitable for combat or not (Hultman et al 2008; Nezami & Butcher, 2000). Researchers have since then tried to establish the discussion regarding personality as a valid job performance predictor, but it was not until after Barrick and Mount (1991) published their meta-analysis in the early 90’s that provided evidence that personality can predict a person’s job performance. This lead to an increase of interest in the use of personality test in high-stakes selection environments (Morgeson, 2007). The public research that has been done in this field is primarily conducted in the US and a lot has been researched for internal use within big organizations for own hiring processes (Ingram et.al, 2012). On the Swedish market however the authors only managed to find one study that is connected to this subject. This study is linked to Business-to-Consumer (B2C) with telemarket-salespeople as participants. The authors found only a limited amount of B2B studies conducted in the swedish markets, which only motivates this study even more.
In 2013 the Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) carried out a research of the 30 most common professions in Sweden, where B2B salespeople were ranked number 5 with 96,178 professionals (SCB, 2013). In this study 60 car dealership salespeople participated, all employed by the two privately owned car dealers in Sweden. The number of salespeople working within B2B car dealerships the authors did not manage to find any specific numbers about. There is however 938 car dealerships located in Sweden (Motorbranschens riksförbund, 2015) and in 2014 was 303 948 new cars registered in Sweden which is an increase by 12.7 % more than the previous year (Bilsveden, 2015). Based on this information, or in other words the quantity, one can understand the complexity of screening for candidates is not to underestimate for sales managers working in the car dealership industry.

While it is possible to increase a salesperson’s knowledge base, the personality traits necessary to perform well in sales are harder to identify and to change (Chen et al., 2012). Therefore, if there is a correlation of personality traits and performance, sales managers can take advantage of this and facilitate the evaluation processes of new sales candidates in a more efficient way.

One commonly used framework for assessing personality is the Five Factor Model (FFM), which is a widely accepted personality framework (Barrick, 1991) and is used by both Barrick and Klang in their research on job performance. The Big 5 is a ‘robust set of five factors which has been recovered from almost every major personality inventory and from analyses of the more than 15,000 trait adjectives in English and those in many other languages’’ (Judge & Ilies, 2002, p.798).

Since the FFM model has proved to be a good tool for studies like this it will be used for this research, where the personality-performance relationship in the Swedish car dealership industry is investigated.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Statistics from arbetsförmedlingen (2014) indicate high near-future recruitment levels of B2B salespeople, which in combination with BLS’s statistics mean a large number of applicants to sort through. The problem is that the evaluation process is time consuming
and thereby costly (Ingram et al., 2012). By knowing which personality traits your future employee would need to possess to be able to maximize, not only the company’s, but also the person's potential to the fullest would be a huge advantage.

The importance of hiring the right salespeople can be a crucial decision for every organization and according to Brehmer, Lilly & Tippins (2013) one of the hardest task a sales manager has to face. Several researchers have concluded in previous studies, that some personality traits among salespeople are directly related to better sales performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salagdo, 1997). In Sweden, however the research topic is limited. The studies that have been conducted cannot be generalized as an universal guideline tool since the countries and the markets differ, both in their corporate and social culture.

What the term performance signifies differs between organisations and can be measured in numerous ways. McCloy et al (1994) attempts to define job performance as how resourceful an individual is when contributing in line with the organisation’s objectives. A list of more concrete measures of sales performance is presented by Henry Porter (1975) where contribution to profit, return on assets managed, sales cost ratio, market share, and achievement of marketing goals are brought forward. While not all managers agree upon which is the most accurate method, Porter states that a good choice is to decide which method best meets the individual organization’s needs.

The interesting part of performance is what exactly separates the bottom performers from the top.

Trait theory has been researched almost throughout the entire 20th century (Allport, 1937; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1993; Oghazi et al 2012) and applied several times in job performance settings. An individual’s traits can be described as a set of characteristics that are enduring throughout an entire lifetime, and which do not easily change (Chen et al., 2013). While top performers often score similarly on certain factors, earlier findings suggest that the low performers must be measured and compared as well, as both parties often inhabit one or more of the same traits (Ilies & Judge, 2012; Brehmer, Lilly and Tippins, 2013; Oghazi et al 2009).
The five factor model is a set of broad personality dimensions that are used when trying to define human personality. The model is sometimes referred to by the acronym OCEAN (O’keefe et al., 2012). OCEAN consists of the following personality factors (Bateman & Crant, 1993):

- Openness
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

By knowing which of these traits that are more likely to correlate with both good and bad sales performance, a company could take use of this when evaluating new candidates and thereby minimize the risk of hiring the “wrong” candidate for the job.

1.3 Purpose of Study

To describe if there is a correlation between personality traits derived from the FFM and sales performance in the Swedish car dealership market.

1.4 Research Question

- Which specific personality traits derived from the five factor model are connected to sales performance in the Swedish car dealership market?

1.5 Delimitations

Not all companies are willing to take part of studies and therefore the authors were not able to reach all the companies that they wanted to which also would provide a better generalization. The majority of the companies that the authors managed to reach out to that wanted to take part of this study was car dealers located in Sweden. Therefore this study will focus on B2B salespeople in the automotive industry in Sweden.
2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework gives the reader a good insight on different topics that are relevant for the chosen subject, which also will provide the reader with the necessary knowledge throughout the research.

2.1 Trait Theory

‘In psychology, the major approach in the study of human personality is trait theory. Trait theory measures the habitual patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior’’ (Chen et.al, 2013). Chen also states that Gordon Allport (1937), a pioneer in the personality traits approach, studied traits in the mid-1930s. He attempted to consolidate the diversity of personality theories at that time. Allport defined traits as an organized mental structure that differs among individuals and that influences and monitors behaviors.

While traits are not very likely to predict isolated behaviour, they work better when aggregated. Scott Lilenfelt (2011, p.565) states that “traits can be useful for predicting overall behavioural trends - such as whether someone will be a responsible employee”. This theory is of great value for this research because traits are somewhat stable over time and differ between individuals which will play a vital role when investigating the correlation of personality traits and sales performance.

2.1.1 Five factor model

The five factor model (FFM) is a set of broad personality dimensions that are used when trying to define human personality. The model is sometimes referred to by the acronym OCEAN (O’Keefe et al., 2012). OCEAN consists of Openness, represents flexibility of thought, and tolerance of and, sensitivity and openness to feelings, experiences, and new ideas; Conscientiousness, the degree of organization, persistence, and motivation in goal-directed behavior; Extraversion, described by a need for stimulation, activity, assertiveness and quantity and intensity of interpersonal interaction; Agreeableness, represented by a compassionate rather than antagonistic interpersonal orientation; and
finally, Neuroticism, which is described as degree of emotional instability (Bateman & Crant, 1993)

As mentioned, the dimensions are broad and each represents a wide range of smaller sub-traits. The Big five were first assessed by two U.S. Air Force researchers, Ernest Tupes and Raymond Christal (1961,1992) as a facilitation of personality trait measurement (John & Shrivastava, 1999).

Leaetta. M.Hough (1992) criticizes the big five’s function as a prediction of job performance by claiming that they are too broad and heterogeneous. Vinchur et al. (1998) however, found Extraversion and Conscientiousness useful in the prediction of sales success.

2.1.2 Big five inventory
The big five inventory (BFI) was created by John & Srivastava in 1999 and was created due to the numerous amount of different personality tests that were available at that time. After decades of research a general taxonomy (namely the big five) was established. From this numerous different tests have been created with different intentions. The BFI is a 44 question self-report questionnaire which assesses the dimensions of a person’s personality. From answering this survey the participant will be given a rate on the different dimensions from FFM. The different dimensions are also organized into different facets such as Figure.1 is showing. The whole BFI survey can be found in appendix C.
2.2 Value-chain

All the different activities in an organization can be described in a value chain. The value chain reflects the individual performances such as the history, strategy, economics of the activities themselves (Porter, 1985). When constructing a value chain it is important to consider the organization’s activities in a particular industry, hence an industry or a sector wide value chain will be too broad since it might avoid important sources of competitive advantage (Ibid). According to Porter (1985) in competitive terms, the value is the amount buyers are willing to pay for what a company provides them. The primary activities in the value chain are inbound logistics/material handling.
and warehousing), operations (transforming inputs into the final product), outbound logistics (order processing and distribution), marketing and sales (communication, pricing and channel management) and service (installation, repair and parts). The support activities of the value chain consist of firm infrastructure, human resource management, technology development and procurement. These functions are all working together to create a product that is valuable to the customers (Ibid). The margin (as can be seen in figure 2) is the difference between the total value and the collective costs of performing the different activities in the value chain. Sales growth in combination with customer retention is one way of increasing operating profit (Walters, 1999).

Figure 2 - The Generic Value Chain

Source: The generic Value Chain (Porter 2004).

2.3 Performance

Performance can be defined as “the ability to perform” in terms of efficiency or “the execution of an action” according to the merriam webster dictionary (2015). There are numerous forms of different types of performance that are linked to organizational aspects such as firm performance, organizational performance, sales performance etc.
Henry Porter (1975) mentions five methods for organizations to measure sales performance. He additionally points out, as well as McCloy et. al, (1994) that there is no agreed upon method which is better than the other, but rather a matter of organizational interest.

- **Contribution to profit:** The total markup generated by the salesperson from closed deals.

- **Return on assets managed:** The remaining profit after initial sales investment.

- **Sales cost ratio:** The ratio of sales expenses divided by the dollar sales volume.

- **Market share:** If product quality, pricing, advertising effectiveness and activity of competitors remains relatively constant, an increase in profits is could be considered an increase in sales success.

- **Achievement of company marketing goals:** The measuring of desired performance and increase in market share as opposed to the comparison of companies in an industry. “An example might be to increase our market share from 15% to 25%, provided net profits as a percent of sales do not go below 10%.” (Porter, 1975).

As the listed methods of performance measuring are equally valid, there is no need to specify the method used by the respondents. This supports the use of subjectively measured performance through supervisory ratings, which are expected to be in line with organizational objectives (Oghazi 2014; Oghazi 2013; McCloy et. al, 1994). The big five personality dimensions have previously shown to be related to job performance through supervisory ratings (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, 1992).

2.4 Motivation

Motivation is defined as the level of physical and mental energy a person is willing to commit to a certain activity. This willingness comes from within and is usually referred
to an individual’s needs, or driving forces that provokes action (Barrick et al, 1999). This theory of motivation is relevant due to the fact that a number of needs which motivate people are fulfilled through work. Regardless of which industry and position; people are motivated by different things and underlying reasons will influence your actions in a sales context. Some examples being the need for status among the sales team, belongingness in the group and for achievement (Ibid). In general, people who are currently or have been working as salespeople are more narcissistic and have stronger need for achievement than individuals who never have been employed in sales (Ibid).

As previously mentioned, people have different amounts of motivation but also different kinds of motivation working as a driving force, this phenomenon refers to goal orientation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The orientation of motivation concerns the underlying attitude and goal that give rise to a certain action and in the research area of motivation, intrinsic- and extrinsic motivation is widely studied. This method involves looking at whether motivation arises from outside (extrinsic) or inside (intrinsic) the individual and this can be applied to various settings such as organizations, sports related and educational practices (ibid).

### 2.5 Trait competitiveness

It is in the human nature to compete against each other but people differ in their innate needs to compete and succeed. Trait competitiveness according to Spence and Helmreich (1983) refers to the “enjoyment of interpersonal competition and the desire to win and be better than others”. Trait competitiveness is also defined as both an internal and intentional desire for an individual to engage in interpersonal competition (Kohn, 1992).

Furthermore, traits related to motivation show stronger correlation with sales performance than other personality traits (Mostaghel et al 2012; Wang & Netemeyer, 2002). These findings have led to further more extensive research with the correlation of trait competitiveness and a high-performing sales force (Ibid).

Research conducted by Brown et al, (1998) has shown that positive impact of trait competitiveness on sales performance is contingent when being exposed to a highly competitive climate. These findings are supported by (Schrock, Wyatt A., et al. 2014;
Shah et al (2010) who suggest that managers should recruit sales people with high trait competitiveness and thereafter foster a competitive internal environment in order to generate the best sales performance outcomes for the company.

3 Research model and Hypothesis

3.1 Research model

Based on the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter, the five factor model and the dimensions included are a reasonable framework to use. Since this study is about identifying the correlation of personality traits and sales performance in the Swedish car dealership industry, the following research model was proposed:

![Research Model Diagram]

The research model’s parameters and their relation will be further explained in the sections below as well as establishing hypotheses connected to the parameters.
3.2 Research hypotheses

The authors have developed five specific hypotheses based on the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter. The reason for doing so is to construct an overall better view of what this study aims to identify. The following hypotheses include variables which were identified as important parameters in previous research within the chosen areas of study. Furthermore, the hypotheses are based on one of each dimension of the five factor model and the unique correlation they have to sales performance. In order to measure sales performance, the authors have defined sales performance as a matter of organizational interest. This will be done through supervisory ratings which are expected to be in line with organizational objectives.

3.2.1 Extraversion

The first hypothesis that was created for this research is based on the extraversion dimension from the FFM. Previous studies suggest that extrovert individuals are more likely to excel in occupations that require individuals to socialize and to interact with other individuals (Barrick & Mount, 1991). The same researchers also found that extraversion could predict how well a person might perform in a sales occupation. This is applicable on both managers and the salespeople itself since these jobs mean high interaction with other people (Ibid). An extravert person's desire to excel and obtain rewards has also been identified which makes the authors believe that the connection between extraversion will be a determinant in sales success also in the B2B context. Therefore the following hypothesis will be tested:

\[ H1: \text{Extraversion will positively relate with supervisory ratings to sales performance}. \]

3.2.2 Conscientiousness

According to Costa and McCrae (1992) conscientiousness relates to a desire to exercise self-control and thereby follow the dictates of your conscience which leads to that the employees seek to fulfill their obligations. Just like extraversion, researchers have also found a consistent relationship between conscientiousness and job performance; regardless of what job the person has (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salagdo, 1997). Klang (2012) also states that the negative side of conscientiousness may create annoying
fastidiousness, a compulsive neatness or workaholic behavior. Low scores on conscientiousness may not lack moral principles, but these people are not good at applying them. The big meta-analysis that was conducted by Mount & Barrick (1991) showed that conscientiousness correlated positively over five occupational groups and their job performance. Therefore the following hypothesis will be tested:

\[ H2: \text{Conscientiousness will positively relate with supervisory ratings to sales performance.} \]

### 3.2.3 Neuroticism

Neuroticism refers to individuals who tend to be shy, angry, insecure, depressed, vulnerable and anxious (Costa & McCrae, 1992). A person who rates low on neuroticism is usually calm and secure which leads to that this person is more likely to cope with stress and being able to control their impulses (Ibid). According to John & Srivastava (1999) there are six sub dimensions of neuroticism who all relate bad to sales performance. These are anxiety, anger, hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability. Emotional stability (the opposite of neuroticism) is the second most important characteristic that affects the employability of candidates (Dunn et. al, 1995). Rothmann & Coetzer (2003) showed in past research that emotional stability can predict job performance. From these assumptions it seems reasonable to believe that neurotic salespeople will perform worse compared to salespeople who are less neurotic. Therefore the following hypothesis will be tested:

\[ H3: \text{Neuroticism will correlate negatively with supervisory ratings of sales performance} \]

### 3.2.4 Agreeableness

According to Costa & McCrae (1992) agreeableness refers to individuals who tend to be trusting, helpful, forgiving, soft hearted and compassionate. Individuals who rate low on agreeableness tends to be egocentric, pessimistic, suspicious, distrustful and lack the desire to cooperate with others. Researchers tend to disagree on the effect of agreeableness. Barrick and Mount (1991) found no correlation between agreeableness and overall job performance but that agreeableness is connected to teamwork and that
this can predict success in specific occupations. So depending on the occupation, agreeableness can be a contributing factor. The authors however believe that the agreeableness of the salespeople will be rated lower since this is a very individualistic profession and competition, which is a driver of the salesperson itself. Since agreeableness is not seen as an important predictor of job performance, as in this research, a job containing large social component. So being trusting, helpful and forgiving has a smaller impact on job performance compared to extrovert traits like being talkative, active and assertive (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Therefore the following hypothesis will be tested:

\[ H4: \text{Agreeableness will correlate negatively with supervisory ratings of job performance.} \]

### 3.2.5 Openness

Openness refers to an individual who tends to be creative, imaginative and curious. Openness also contains the sub dimensions that John & Srivastava (1999) mention as having many ideas, lot of fantasy, very aesthetic etc. People that are scoring low on openness can be conventional in behavior and conservative in the outlook. People that are scoring high on openness have positive attitudes towards their own ideas and experiences in life (Klang, 2012). Findings indicate that openness predicts success in specific occupations and specific work tasks. Barrick & Mount (1991) found openness to be a valid predictor for training proficiency. However for the overall job performance there was a weak correlation. Salgado (1997) did however find a relation to skilled labor performance. High scores may indicate that the person might prefer fixed routines (which the work of a car dealership salesman is). Therefore the following hypothesis will be tested.

\[ H5: \text{Openness will positively relate with supervisory ratings on sales performance.} \]
4 Methodology

The methodology chapter will contain different clarifications and definitions of the methods that have been used in this paper. It also shows the data sources, data collection method and collection instrument used.

4.1 Research approach

The following sections will contain clarifications and definitions of different research methods. Furthermore, the authors will underline the reasoning for using a deductive quantitative approach as a research method and thereby be able to fulfill the purpose; To investigate if there is a correlation between personality traits and sales performance in the Swedish car dealership market.

4.1.1 Inductive vs Deductive research

Researchers can choose to take either an inductive or a deductive approach to their research. Whereas deductive serves as the most common view of the relationship between theory and research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The distinction between inductive and deductive is the stance the researcher take while conducting a research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In a deductive stance; previous research done within a particular area of study works as a foundation by applying already existing theories and concepts. In contrast, the inductive stance is based on empirical data and the researcher develops own models and theories based on their findings. In other words, in an inductive method the theory is the outcome of the research (Ibid)

According to Oghazi (2009) the best-suited approach when the empirical research is conducted by using quantitative models and hypotheses derived from already existing theories is a deductive approach. Therefore, the chosen research approach for the paper is deductive as the authors want to investigate the correlation of sales performance and personality traits based on already existing theories and models.
4.1.2 Qualitative vs Quantitative

When a researcher is trying to investigate something new or simply trying to expand the existing body of knowledge he or she needs to decide whether to conduct a qualitative or quantitative research. Both approaches are meant to clarify the researcher’s aims and strengthen this. The main goals of a quantitative research in broad terms are to entail the collection of numerical data and to reveal the relationship between theory and research as deductive (Beheshti et al 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2011). The hypothesis that is created in a quantitative research is very narrow with and is an informed speculation, which is set up to be tested, about the possible relationship between two or more variables (Ibid). The quantitative research deals with numbers and statistics to create generalizations.

When the researcher is using a quantitative approach, he or she is primarily using post positivistic claims for developing knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Mostaghel et al 2015; Oghazi 2014). A qualitative research however can be described as a research that is concerned with words instead of numbers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The hypothesis that is (if) created in a qualitative research is broad which attempts to get a whole picture out of the context. A qualitative approach is suitable for earlier phases of a research project since this gives a good in-depth view of the research (Explorable.com). The qualitative study gathers large amounts of data from a few number of entities or numbers.

For this report, a quantitative approach has been chosen since this study focuses on getting a perception of salespeople from B2B companies operating in the car dealership market in Sweden and if their personality traits might be connected to how well they are selling. Numerous people needs to be reached with even more salespeople who are participating in this study, therefore the quantitative approach was decided as more suitable.

4.2 Research design

The research design for this study has been chosen in order to be able to achieve the purpose of this study. The choice of research design becomes very important since this will influence the group’s research during this project. There are three types of research designs that can be used;
Exploratory design | Causal research design | Descriptive approach
--- | --- | ---
Conducted to create a clear understanding of specific situations. The researcher is meant to discover data gradually and imply it to answer questions. (Ghauri & Grönhaug, 2005). | Used to see if one variable is determining the value of another variable. This is meant to conclude the cause and effect of a relationship. This gives the researcher the reason why some events happen at certain times (Ghauri & Grönhaug, 2005). | Focuses on a group or entities when answering who, what, when, where and how questions. Can be designed in cross sectional or multiple cross-sectional where more variables can be compared at the same time (Bryman & Bell 2011).

Table 1 - Research design

When deciding on which approach might be best suited for this research the descriptive approach was chosen. Due to the objective of this study being to investigate if there is a correlation between sales performance and personality traits many variables needs to be measured, therefore the descriptive approach was chosen to be most suitable.

4.3 Data sources

There are two different methods to be used when gathering the data for the result and analysis chapter; primary and secondary data. As the name reveals, primary data is firsthand information gathered by the authors themselves for their specific purpose, using interviews, surveys and observation. In contrast, secondary data has already been collected by someone else for a different purpose. Both of the data sources have some advantages and disadvantages researchers should take into consideration when evaluating which sources to base and confirm their research and findings upon; the table below features some of it:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>• Tailored for the research question</td>
<td>• Time-consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Costly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information is coherent and up to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Reducing cost &amp; time</th>
<th>May not be optimal for the research problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity for cross-cultural analysis</td>
<td>Difficult to interpret the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity for longitudinal analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Data sources

Source: (Boije & Hox 2005; Bryman & Bell 2011, p.314).

The authors have decided to collect both secondary and primary data. All of the data that is used to build the theoretical framework together with the already existing concepts of models associated with personality traits as well as documents about past researches. In contrast the primary data will be gathered from the salespeople and responsible managers through a questionnaire. The primary information gathered will be working as a cornerstone for this paper since the objective is to investigate salespeople active within Swedish car dealership market.

4.4 Research strategy

When conducting a study there are different research strategies that can be chosen. The table below presents the five major research methods and gives a brief overview of the different alternatives. According to Yin (2009) defining the research question is probably the most important step that has to be taken in a research study so the researcher should be patient and take the time needed to decide which strategy that is best suited. The authors agreed that the survey approach was the most suitable since a great amount of data and numbers from specific groups was needed for this study. And as the survey research methods answers on who, what, where, how many and how much this would be the best suited approach.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Requires control of Behavioral Events</th>
<th>Focuses Contemporary Events?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>How, why?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Who, What, Where, How many, How much?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Analysis</td>
<td>Who, What, Where, How many, How much?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How, Why?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>How? Why?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Research strategies

Source: (Yin, 2009, p.8)

4.5 Data collection method

Without a proper working data collection method, the results in the study might go to waste. If chosen correctly the study will ensure that the end results can be trustworthy. For a quantitative study that is using primary data there are three ways of doing this, namely; experiments, observations and surveys (Parida et al 2014; Oghazi, 2009). Due to an inability to observe the focus groups, lack of resources and with a given time frame the survey method was chosen to be the most suitable one for this study. The survey method is the most generally used research strategy, which is good when striving to obtain descriptive and cross-sectional data (Ibid).

The survey that was used is the BFI which is a well-recognized personality test that has derived from the FFM which both are described in chapter two. As Gosling et al., (2003) strengthens that the big five frameworks has become the most widely used and
extensively most researched model of personality, however, it is not accepted universally. The survey was sent out to two different companies both working within the car dealership market. Before the survey was sent out an initial contact was made with the companies (see appendix A) and the research was introduced together with information on what role the sales/marketing manager had (see appendix B). The role of the sales manager was to categorize his sales staff in high, average, and low performing by distributing the surveys to respective group. The categorization was made according to the organization’s own objectives, which did not need to be specified by the companies.

4.6 Data collection instrument

This section will give the reader an insight on how the construction of the survey is made together with the operationalization and questionnaire design. After this, a pretesting will be made in order to create a high overall quality of the survey.

### 4.6.1 Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct, Variable</th>
<th>Type of scale and its construction</th>
<th>Items used</th>
<th>Questions/Adopted From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Eleven-items 5-point semantic differential scale anchored by: 1-5 likert scale.</td>
<td>5. Is original, comes up with new ideas. 10. Is curious about many different things. 15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker. 20. Has an active imagination. 25. Is inventive. 30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences. 35R. Prefers work that is routine.</td>
<td>John, O. P., &amp; Srivastava, S. (1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For more information regarding this see chapter 2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Conscientiousness | 40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas.  
| 41R. Has few artistic interests.  

| Extraversion | 3. Does a thorough job.  
| 8R. Can be somewhat careless.  
| 13. Is a reliable worker.  
| 18R. Tends to be disorganized.  
| 23R. Tends to be lazy.  
| 28. Perseveres until the task is finished.  
| 33. Does things efficiently.  
| 38. Makes plans and follows through with them.  

| Conscientiousness | Ten-items 5-point semantic differential scale anchored by:  
| 1-5 likert scale. |  |

| Extraversion | Eight-items 5-point semantic differential scale anchored by:  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-5 likert scale.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For more information regarding this see chapter 2.2</td>
<td>2R. Tends to find fault with others 7. Is helpful and unselfish with others 12R. Starts quarrels with others 17. Has a forgiving nature 22. Is generally trusting 27R. Can be cold and aloof 32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone 37R. Is sometimes rude to others 42. Likes to cooperate with others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For more information regarding this see chapter 2.2</td>
<td>Eight-items 5-point semantic differential scale anchored by: 1-5 likert scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 - Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>29. Can be moody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34R. Remains calm in tense situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39. Gets nervous easily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.2 Questionnaire design

The first step was deciding which design the questionnaire should have and going over advantages and disadvantages of different designs. Thereafter, the decision was made to collect data via a self-report inventory survey. Because the quality of the data collected from the survey depends on the question asked when gathering it. Therefore, the questions had to be easy to understand and relate to and it is of great value to use a previously validated questionnaire because it will help the researches saving resources in terms of time. (Oghazi, 2013),

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) designed to measure the Big Five dimensions was used to collect the data (See appendix C). The specific survey used was developed by John & Srivastava (1999), due to the many different personality tests that existed at that time, they decided to create a more general and accepted framework. Although the multidimensional personality inventory which consists of 44 items total is brief, it provides short phrases with relatively accessible vocabulary, and thereby makes it uncomplicated for the participants to understand and contribute.

4.6.3 Pretesting

After the questionnaire was created the authors tested to see if it was working or not on the mail attached survey. The BFI test is already a proven personality test, so the matter if the questions are in order and will provide an accurate answer is certain, even though this was a new study on a new sample group the authors thought there was no need to test it together with “experts” on the field. The survey that the authors sent out is a replica of the original BFI created by John and Srivastava (1999). The major concern for the authors was however which database that should be used to gather the data.
Google’s own forms was used for this and gave the results expected. The data could both be translated to excel and SPSS (a statistical analysis program).

4.6.4 Sampling

When conducting a study it is optimal to collect data from an entire population. This is however a very hard thing to do due to time and cost. Therefore, it is suitable to create a smaller representative sample of the population, which reflects the chosen population accurately (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As Saunders (2003) states, access may impact on the ability to select a representative sample of participants or secondary data in order to answer the stated research questions in an unbiased way and to produce reliable and valid data. It is important that the researcher considers the access to the companies that will be investigated since this can affect the data that is gathered (Ibid). “A perfect representative sample is one that exactly represents the population from which it is taken” (Ibid). Since there are 96,178 (as of 2013) people working within B2B sales it is extremely hard to reach out to all of these (SCB, 2013). Since the majority of the respondents came from the car dealership market the authors chose to narrow down the study to this field. Therefore a sample study will be made on the car dealership market and B2B salespeople from this specific market will be analyzed.

4.6.5 Sampling frame

The representative samples are drawn from a listing of the full population referred to as sampling frame, i.e., a population list from which to choose the suiting samples (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Oghazi and Philipson, 2013). The full population of this research in particular is vastly extensive, minding the fact that B2B sales representatives is listed number five of the most common professions in Sweden. Since the research was narrowed down to the car dealership market and not many companies chose to participate in this study a generalization cannot be created, but however the end results may be interesting for the two companies and other car dealership organizations.
4.6.6 Sample selection

It is important that the selected samples are directly relevant to the field of which the study is concerned (Saunders, 2003). This research is focused on B2B salespeople employed by two car dealership companies in Sweden. The organizations were chosen due to the management’s stated interest in developing academic research and some because of their wide staff which can provide accurate and time-effective statistics. The two companies are Holmgrens bil and Hedin bil. All of the answering participant are employed by these companies and have a B2B sales role. Both companies were initially contacted via phone and were informed about the study, further instructions were then sent out on mail.

4.7 Data analysis method

A quantitative data analysis is a statistical technique used to describe and analyze variation in quantitative measures (Chambliss & Schutt, 2003). When conducting a data analysis method the researcher needs to select the most suitable statistical techniques. The decision that the researcher is making in the early stage of the research will have implications on the sort of analysis that will be done (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The authors of this study decided to use SPSS 20 in order to analyze the data since this is suitable for a quantitative study.

4.7.1 Data examination and Descriptive Statistics

Once all the data was gathered from the surveys, the next step was to analyze and assess the data. The most suitable tool for this was to use the SPSS since this is a commonly used tool for quantitative studies. The authors downloaded a free trial version of SPSS. SPSS can convert raw data into numbers and figures (IBM, 2015) so it more easily can be interpreted and understood which also is known as descriptive statistics (Oghazi, 2009). According to Larson (2006), descriptive statistics goes under 3 general classes, namely; location statistics which is the mean, mode, median and quantiles. Dispersion statistics, which is variance, standard deviation, range and interquartile range. The last class is shape statistics which can be the skewness and kurtosis. The mean is all the variables calculated together and divided by the number of variables (Larson, 2006).
Range is a simple dispersion statistic technique which takes the difference between the maximum and minimum observed values (Ibid). The standard deviation is the average deviation from the mean. If all values are similar to each other the standard deviation will be lower than if the value were more spread out (Ibid). These three concepts have been explained since the authors used this when calculating the descriptive data analysis.

4.7.2 Multiple regression analysis

When a quantitative variable is to be examined in relationship to any other factors, multiple regression is an appropriate data analysis method (Berger, 2003). In order to measure and determine if there is a certain relationship between two variables, an adjusted $R^2$ calculation is needed. Berger (2003) describes $R^2$ as “A useful application of multiple regression analysis used to determine whether a set of variables contribute to the prediction of Y beyond the contribution of a prior set”. This method is i.e., a suiting tool and will be used for this particular study when attempting to assess the outcome of the stated hypotheses.

In order to do this, a beta value for the multiple regression analysis needs to be determined; by computing how the increase of an independent variable affects the dependent variable, the beta value shows whether a hypothesis is supported or not (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

4.8 Quality criteria

The following section will explain and clarify the different steps used to ensure this study meet the quality requirements. Moreover, the authors will highlight the importance of validity, as it is in many ways the most important criterion of a research (Bryman & Bell, 2010). Validity is defined as “the concern with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (ibid, p.729) and there are different aspect of validity, four to be precise, to take into consideration and these are given a sub-heading of their own.
4.8.1 Content Validity

Content validity refers to the degree to which a measure covers the range of meanings included within the concept (Rubin & Babbie, 2012). In order to establish content validity the researchers have to make judgments whether the measure covers the different universe of facets that make up the concept (Ibid) Although, regardless how much confidence they may have in those judgements, it is critical to provide evidence to ascertain whether the measure really measures what is it intended to measure.

According to Bryman & Bell (2008) one desirable method to test content validity is by asking people with experience in the chosen field of study. The authors believed that enough evidence was provided regarding the validity of the BFI test it was not sent out to different experts. One can however criticise that this is a new area of study and a new target group therefore the survey needs to be revised by experts. As Gosling et al., (2003) mentions that the BFI survey is one of the most explored and used personality tests in the world. From this assumption the authors chose not to get the test revised.

4.8.2 Construct Validity

The level of construct validity indicates to what extent the operationalization measures the concept of interest (Bagozzi et. al., 1992). The theory consists of two aspects; convergent validity and discriminant validity (Oghazi, 2009). Convergent validity indicates to what extent multiple attempts of measurement generate the same result, while discriminant validity is ‘‘the degree to which measures of different concepts are distinct’’ (Bagozzi et al., 1992).

In this research the convergent represents the correlation between one variable and another, and the discriminant assesses the distinction between one variable and another. These validity measures were tested in SPSS by checking the correlation of variables.

4.8.3 Criterion Validity

Criterion validity refers to “the degree to which an instrument relates to an external criterion that is believed to be another indicator or measure of the same variable that the instrument intents to measure” (Rubin & Babbie, 2012. p.105). What Rubin and Babbie mean by this is that criterion validity is meant to measure the relationship between
different variables that are brought up in the study or research. By using SPSS the authors are able to test and measure the relationship between the different factors (being the results from the BFI test together with the supervisory ratings on performance) to see the impact the different variables has on the other.

4.8.4 Reliability

The most fundamental in terms of reliability in a quantitative research is the importance to see the consistency of a measure of a concept. However, according to Bryman & Bell (2011) there is a tendency while conducting a quantitative research to rely on a single indicator of concepts. The authors are well aware of this mistake and in order to strengthen the overall reliability of this research multiple indicators was used to avoid deficiency.

4.8.4.1 Difference between measurers and indicators

As table 5 suggests there is three desirable factors to consider when evaluating if a measure is reliable or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stability</th>
<th>The issue of whether or not a measure is stable over a period of time. In other words; to be ensured that the results related to that measure for a sample of respondents remain stable.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal reliability</td>
<td>The aggregated coherence of the indicators in a multiple-indicator measurement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-observer consistency</td>
<td>When more than one observer is involved in the recording of observations or the translation of data into categories. It is the matter of subjective judgement that can result in a lack of consistency in the researcher's decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 - Difference between measures and indicators

Source: (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.158)
5 Analysis and Result

In this section the authors analyzes and presents the results of the study’s survey. In order to present the data in an unmistakable way, the data has been statistically analyzed through the use of the SPSS program. First, the response rate and descriptive statistics are presented. Thereafter, the measures used to test and ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected. Finally, a regression analysis will be presented which is used to test the hypotheses chosen for this study.

5.1 Response rate

The survey was sent out to two car dealership companies in Sweden that chose to participate in this study. Due to the work that the responsible manager has to put down on categorizing the sellers, not many companies chose to participate in the study. The authors were also looking for large sized car dealership companies with as many sales representatives as possible since a variance is needed among the salespeople. Since the companies chose to participate in this study and want to take part of the end results it lies in their interest as well to contribute with as many respondents as possible. A total of 72 surveys were sent out by the two different companies to their sales staff and the authors received 60 of these which gives a response rate of 83% which is considered to be a good response rate (Baruch & Holtom, 2008). The authors believe that the high response rate is connected to the fact that both the companies are interested in the results of this study and that both sales managers have encouraged their sales staff to answer the survey provided.

5.2 Descriptive Statistic

In table 6 the descriptive data from the survey is summarized to give the reader an overview of the data. The survey that was sent out to the respondents via google's own survey form contained the BFI survey which consists of 44 questions related to the FFM. In the left column abbreviations for each of the questions. These stand for the different factors: extraversion (EX), agreeableness (AG), conscientiousness (CO), neuroticism (NE) and openness (OP). The N column shows how the number of
respondents. The survey was not able to be sent in unless the questions were answered; therefore it is no missing numbers. The minimum and maximum indicates the lowest and highest total on each of the questions. The mean in this table indicates the average response for each questions. The last column indicates the standard deviation.

### Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>EX1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>1.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>0.712</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>0.688</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0.790</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.72</td>
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</tr>
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<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.865</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>1.106</td>
</tr>
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<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2.27</td>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>0.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP9</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>1.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 - Descriptive Statistics

5.3 Reliability

In order to test the reliability of the five variables the Cronbach’s alpha (1951) test was used in the SPSS program. Alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0 to 1 and may be used to describe the reliability of multi-point formatted questionnaires or scales (Santos, 1999). Nunnaly (1978) has indicated in previous research that 0.7 is considered to be an acceptable reliability coefficient, although lower thresholds are sometimes used in the literature. Therefore, the authors of this study have accepted 0.6 as a reliable coefficient level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion (EX)</td>
<td>0.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness (AG)</td>
<td>0.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness (CO)</td>
<td>0.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism (NE)</td>
<td>0.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness (OP)</td>
<td>0.556</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 - Cronbach’s Alpha

From the reliability test above, the results show that four of the constructs are reliable with the following values; 0.725 (EX), 0.763 (AG), 0.753 (CO) and 0.708 (NE) as they are all above the 0.6 limit to determine if the coefficient level is reliable or not. In other words, these constructs are reliable and thus can be used again at another time to measure the same thing. However, Openness (OP) has a value of 0.556, which is unfortunately lower than the limit. This indicates that it is not reliable and consequently cannot be used to measure this construct again.

5.4 Validity

A correlation analysis has been made to test the validity of the questions used. The correlation between the different personality traits and performance factor all had a correlation below 0.9, which can be seen in table 8 below. If the results would be over
0.9 this would indicate high correlation (Bryman & Bell, 2011) since the results have low correlation it shows that the different variables are measuring different factors which gives high construct validity. Higher correlation can be found between the different personality traits, but it is however the performance factor that is worth looking at. Discriminant validity is present since the measures of the different concepts are distinct (Bagozzi et al., 1992).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
<th>Conscientiousness</th>
<th>Neuroticism</th>
<th>Openness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.421**</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>-.330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.421**</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>-.330</td>
<td>-.279</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.271</td>
<td>-.609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to undertake hypothesis testing, the authors conducted a multiple regression analysis to see whether the hypotheses presented in chapter 3 were supported or not. The guideline for establishing if a hypothesis should be supported is that $p$ must be smaller than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$) otherwise it should be rejected from the study. Table 9 below shows the adjusted $R^2$ value, which is 0.853 or 85.3%. This indicates that 85.3% of the dependent variable (performance factor) is determined by all of the independent variables (neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and extraversion).

### Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.930$^*$</td>
<td>.865</td>
<td>.853</td>
<td>.787</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a. Predictors: Openness, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion*

Table 10 is used to test if the hypotheses will be supported or rejected. When analysing the coefficients there are two values that can indicate if the hypothesis will be supported or rejected. The significance level (or $p$-value) indicates the statistical significance of every independent variable. The authors chose to put the significance level at 0.05 since this will strengthen the significance of the findings. All values above this reject the hypotheses. The beta value indicates how much each independent variable is increasing.
when the dependent variable increases with 1. This indicates the impact of each independent variable on the dependent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.229</td>
<td>.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>-.211</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>-.406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>-.189</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>-.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>.425</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Performance factor

Table 10 – Coefficients

5.5.1 Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis “extraversion will positively relate with supervisory ratings to sales performance” will be rejected from looking at the results. The significance level is 0.122 which is very close to the acceptable level. The beta value is 0.705 which is considered to be high beta value.

5.5.2 Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis “conscientiousness will positively relate with supervisory ratings to sales performance” will also be rejected from looking at the results. The beta value is -0.371 and a p-value of 0.403 reject this hypothesis.
5.5.3 Hypothesis 3
The third hypothesis “neuroticism will correlate negatively with supervisory ratings of sales performance” is supported with a beta value of 0.533 and a p-value of 0.002 which is considered to be a very significant level.

5.5.4 Hypothesis 4
The fourth hypothesis “agreeableness will correlate negatively with supervisory ratings of job performance” is rejected with a beta value of -0.406 and a p-value of 0.293.

5.5.5 Hypothesis 5
The last and final hypothesis “openness will positively relate with supervisory ratings on sales performance” will also be rejected with a beta value of 0.490 and a p-value of 0.075. This is however very close to the accepted level.

6 Conclusion
The aim of this chapter is to present a summary section that will remind the reader why the authors conducted the study. Thereafter the following sections will discussions of hypothesis testing, here the authors show which hypothesis was rejected and accepted, as well as explain what the result means. Furthermore, the authors will present both the theoretical and managerial implications of the research; whereas the theoretical section will adress theories from a research-oriented perspective. The managerial implications will concentrate on practical suggestions for managers. Finally, the authors will also recommend propositions for future research within this area of study.

6.1 Discussion
This study is based on an analysis of two car dealership companies located in Sweden and their salespeople that are involved in B2B sales. The study sought to gather data and information regarding if there is a certain set of personality traits that are connected to sales performance based on the five factor model. To be able to define sales performance the authors chose to let the responsible manager of each company divide
their sales staff in three different groups (good performing, average performing and bad performing) according to how well the staff meet the organizational goals.

The evaluation process when hiring a new employee is both time consuming and costly (Ingram et al., 2012), which is one of the motives for this study. By knowing which personality traits your future employee would need to possess could reduce the risks when hiring new personnel. Previous studies have shown to some extent that sales performance is connected to certain personality traits among salespeople (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salagdo, 1997).

The fact that many of the hypotheses were rejected, the authors believe this is due to that this area has never been researched before. The work of a B2B car retail salesperson differs heavily from other areas that have been studied. With a pretest on the car retail market the authors would have been able to design their own hypotheses. The authors however believe that a good foundation has been put for future research.

6.2 Discussion of Hypothesis Testing

This section of the study will present the final aim of this study, to test the proposed research model which was presented in chapter three. The research model was based on different empirical studies that were deemed relevant for this research. The results from the analysis of the hypotheses will be compared to already existing conceptual and empirical work on the topic.

The results from the tests reveal that one out of the five hypotheses is supported and the other four were rejected which will be discussed in the following sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Supported/Rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

37
H1 Extraversion | Rejected
H2 Conscientiousness | Rejected
H3 Neuroticism | Supported
H4 Agreeableness | Rejected
H5 Openness | Rejected

Table 11 - Hypotheses Results

6.2.1 Extraversion will positively relate with supervisory ratings to sales performance

The first hypothesis that was developed is based on the dimension Extraversion, derived from the FFM. Previous studies suggest that extrovert individuals are more likely to excel in occupations that require individuals to socialize and to interact with other individuals (Barrick & Mount, 1991). The same researchers also found that extraversion could predict how well a person might perform in a sales occupation. This lead to the formulation of this hypothesis; to determine if extraversion will positively relate to sales performance.

As shown in table 10, hypothesis 1 had a p-value of 0.122 which indicates the rejection of the hypothesis. This reveals that based on the findings for this study; extraversion is not positively related to sales performance as suggested in previous research. It seems reasonable to believe that extroverted sales workers might be perceived as being too persuasive in their way of selling. The car dealership market differs from many other B2B markets since the customers are already interested in the product and thereby make the initial contact, not the other way around. Extraversion was rated high both among the good and the bad performing salespeople, but since the bad performing ones rated even higher than the good ones it might be a matter of appreciating what level of outgoingness that generates trust for the individual customer.
6.2.2 Conscientiousness will positively relate with supervisory ratings to sales performance

The second hypothesis that was developed is based on the dimension conscientiousness, derived from the FFM. Previous studies suggest that conscientiousness relates to a desire to exercise self-control which is related to a person's desire to fulfill their obligations. Just like extraversion, researchers have found a consistent relationship between conscientiousness and job performance. This lead to the formulation of this hypothesis; to determine if conscientiousness will positively relate to sales performance. The results found that conscientiousness had a p-value of 0.403, meaning that the hypothesis was rejected by the salespeople that participated in the study. The research that was conducted by Mount & Barrick (1991) showed that conscientiousness correlated positively over five occupational groups (professionals, police, managers, sales, and skilled/semiskilled). The authors believe that the main reason why this hypothesis was rejected is the fact that the supervisory ratings are very different from how the way the sellers are rating themselves. Klang (2012) found a strong relationship between supervisory ratings and how high the personnel were rating themselves on conscientiousness. However, the trait conscientiousness might not be something that is going in line with the organizational goals and therefor was rated lower by the two sales managers that were dividing their sales staff based on supervisory ratings.

6.2.3 Neuroticism will correlate negatively with supervisory ratings of sales performance

The third hypothesis that was developed is based on the dimension neuroticism, derived from the FFM. Previous research indicates that individuals that are ranking low on neuroticism are more emotionally stable compared with people that are ranking high. Emotional stability is the second most important characteristic that affects the employability of candidates (Dunn et al., 1995). Rothmann & Coetzer (2003) has shown in past research that emotional stability can predict job performance. This lead to the formulation of this hypothesis to see if neuroticism will negatively correlate to sales performance. The results found that neuroticism had a p-value of 0.002 which is well within the 0.05 limit. This means that people that are scoring high on neuroticism will correlate negatively with supervisory ratings. Neurotic salespeople are performing
worse compared to salespeople that are emotionally stable. People that rate high on neuroticism might be shy, insecure, depressed, vulnerable and anxious meaning they are not suitable car salesmen. Even if many of these traits are something that can be “hidden” the results clearly indicates that the personnel that are less emotionally stable are rating lower in supervisory ratings.

6.2.4 Agreeableness will correlate negatively with supervisory ratings of sales performance

The fourth hypothesis that was developed is based on the dimension Agreeableness, derived from the FFM. Previous research conducted by Barrick & Mount (1991) found no correlation between agreeableness and overall job performance. Although, agreeableness is connected to teamwork (ibid) and can therefore predict success in specific occupations. The authors however believe that the agreeableness of the salespeople will be rated lower since this is a very individualistic profession as well as competitive, which is a driver for the salesperson itself. This lead to the formulation of this hypothesis to determine if agreeableness will negatively relate to sales performance. The results found that the p-value for agreeableness was 0.293 meaning the survey participants rejected the hypothesis. Barrick and Mount (1991) found that agreeableness can predict success is specific occupations. The authors believed that the independent and egocentric (which is the opposite of high agreeableness) were supposed to get rated higher according to the supervisory ratings. These findings can indicate that teamwork might be an important factor when it comes to B2B car retail selling.

6.2.5 Openness will positively relate with supervisory ratings on sales performance

The fifth and last hypothesis that was developed was based on the dimension openness, derived from the FFM. Openness refers to people that tends to be creative, imaginative and curious. Previous research indicates that openness predicts success in specific occupations and specific work tasks. Openness and its correlation for the overall job performance showed a weak correlation. Salgado (1997) found a relation between openness and skilled labor performance. This lead to the hypothesis to see if openness will positively relate with sales performance. The results found that the p-value for openness was 0.075 which is very close to the accepted level, but still has to be rejected.
High scores on openness may indicate that a person prefers fixed routines which the authors believed that the work of a car dealership B2B salesman is. Since the significance level was close it still indicates that this dimension is important among car dealership salespeople. A reason to the result could be that the customer is already expecting and preferring a certain way of selling, making the development of new creative sales techniques fail. It is possible that in professions that reward innovative thinking and creativeness, Openness could predict successful performance.

6.3 Implications

This section will be devoted to the implications that this study has on theory and the use that managers working within B2B car sales can take use of when reading this study.

6.3.1 Theoretical implications

The issue of finding supporting theories from previous research in the same field became one of the reasons for the authors to exploit it. As seen in the theoretical framework, trait theory has been around since the early part of the 20th century (Allport, 1937), which raises the question as to why such a limited amount of studies in the Swedish B2B market were found. One possible explanation could be that organisations are unaware of the implications of trait theory, thus not encouraging research within the field in order to apply it on suitable parts of the value chain. The main contribution of this study is the raised awareness of trait theory and what it can aid in, primarily in the car dealership market.

6.3.2 Implications for managers

The information that has been presented in the theoretical implications is relevant to practitioners or managers looking for information on personality traits and its implication on sales performance in the Swedish market. This can lead to a lowering of the different risks that are involved when hiring new candidates for sales positions. The findings of this study suggest that there is a correlation between emotional stability (Neuroticism) and B2B sales performance. As making an inter-personal assessment of a
person’s emotional stability requires professional skills, the BFI test is recommended as a tool in the recruitment process of sales representatives. Unlike many previous researchers the authors did not manage to find a correlation between extraversion and sales performance. The mean in the group among bad salespeople (4.21) on extraversion came as a surprise to the authors since this was believed to be a good measuring unit to good sales performance as suggested in previous research. The mean among the good salespeople was lower than expected (4.04). In this study and context this might indicate that a salesperson that is overly extrovert might be perceived as “too much” among customers of the company. These are however mere speculations that are worth looking into in future research. The authors however, believe that by using a BFI personality test companies can exclude candidates that are ranking high on neuroticism, which has been proven by this study. The authors hope that this research can be interesting for managers within the B2B car dealership market who are looking to improve their methods when employing new candidates.

6.4 Limitations

There are limitations to every study and this is no exception. This section will present the study’s most noticeable limitations. The matter of participating companies is one of the limitations that need to be raised. The authors were looking for car dealership companies with many sales people engaged in B2B, but this was however a big issue since not many car dealers had sufficient employees. Another limitation connected to the matter of participants is that the person that was responsible for the staff had to divide these into different groups according to the company’s own organizational goals. This made many companies reconsider their participation in the study since this was deemed a time consuming process. The overall reliability of the study was acceptable but for one of the dimensions (openness) it showed a low reliability. This should be looked into in order to find a method to enhance its reliability. With more time the authors could look deeper into the participating companies in order to define sales performance to a universal measure instead of letting the companies subjectively divide the candidates into different groups.

In order to increase the reliability of this research, there could be an increased number of respondents, where the research investigates more companies to compare with. The
small sample size limited the statistical power, meaning that it was relatively hard to find significance for some variables.

6.5 Future research

In this subsection, the authors will put forward future research suggestions which arise from the research limitations for this particular study. The first suggestion is due to the sample size of only two car dealerships and 60 salespeople participating in the study, this is not enough to accurately generalize the findings for all dealerships in Sweden. Therefore, a bigger sample can aid future researchers feeling confident about making accurate generalization of their research.

The second suggestion is for future researchers to see if this study is applicable to other industries in Sweden as well, by conducting the same research on salespeople in different industries.

The third suggestion concerns the measurement of performance and how to divide the salespeople in three groups based on their performance. Since the survey of this particular study was sent out to sales managers and thereafter subjectively distributed to their sales reps, expectedly in line with organizational objectives (Porter, 1975; McCloy et. al, 1994). The issue with this is that the different sales managers may have different understandings of how sales performance is defined. Future studies could include a preset definition of sales performance in order to minimize possible skewed retrospection and see if the findings differ.

Finally, the authors encourage future researchers to include both motivation and trait competitiveness in their studies. This is mainly because traits related to motivation show stronger correlation with sales performance than other personality traits (Wang & Netemeyer, 2002). The purpose of doing so is to see how these two traits correlate with performance.
7 References


### Appendix A Introduction (Eng & Swe)

**Bachelor thesis**

*Which are the best selling personality traits?*

**Motivation of study**

Existing studies show that no matter the industry, numerous skills in both the technical and social field are required in order to become a successful salesperson. While technical knowledge can be obtained in forms of education and experience, individual’s ability to communicate it to customer and organization differs considerably. It is in other words primarily the individual’s personality that decides whether their sales career will be successful or not.

Previous personality-sales-studies have been conducted in various industries around the world, among those one on direct tele-sales to swedish households. We can see a lack of B2B studies in the Swedish market, which drives us to conduct a study within this field.

**Objectives**

- Identify the personality traits which are related to high sales performance
• Lower the organization’s risk when hiring new sales reps
• Streamline the evaluation process in new hiring

Description of implementation
The role of the sales manager is to categorize his sales staff into High, Mediocre and Low-performing by distributing three different links to identical E-forms to each respective group. The categorization of sales reps is made according to the organization’s own objectives.

About us
We are three students who are writing our bachelor thesis at Linnaeus University in Växjö’s program; International Sales and Marketing. During this 3-year period, we have out of personal interest decided to focus on B2B sales in order to work within the field ourselves!

We hope that this study looks interesting for Holmgrens bil and we will gladly make further presentations if desired!

Best regards

Robert Monie
Adam Carlson
Johan Andersson

Examensarbete

Vilka personlighetsdrag säljer bäst?

Motivering av studie
Existerande studier visar att flertalet färdigheter inom både det tekniska och sociala krävs för att bli en lyckad säljare, oavsett bransch. Då teknisk kunskap går att erhålla i form av bl.a. utbildning och erfarenhet, så varierar individers förmåga att förmedla detta till kund och organisation betydligt. Med andra ord så är det främst en individs personlighet som avgör om det blir en lyckad säljkarriär eller inte.

Tidigare personlighetsstudier har gjorts på enskilda branscher runtom i världen samt en inom direkt tele-försäljning till svenska hushåll. Vi kan se en avsaknad av studier inom B2B på den svenska marknaden, vilket driver oss till att göra en studie inom detta område.

Målsättning

- Identifiera de personlighetsdrag som är relaterade till hög säljeförmåga
- Minska organisationens risktagande vid nyanställning av säljare
- Effektivisera utvärderingsprocessen vid nyanställning

Beskrivning av genomförande

Säljchefens roll är att kategorisera sin säljstab i Hög, Medioker och Lågpresterande genom att dela ut tre olika länkar till identiska E-formulär till respektive grupp. Kategoriseringen av säljare görs utefter organisationens egna målsättningar.

Om oss

Vi är tre studenter som avlägger vår kandidatuppsats på Linnéuniversitetet i Växjös program International Sales & Marketing. Under denna 3års period så har vi av rent intresse inriktat oss mest mot företagsförsäljning för att sedan axla säljrollen själva.

Vi hoppas att denna studie låter intressant för Holmgrens Bil och kommer gärna och presenterar mer ingående om önskas!

Vänliga hälsningar

Robert Monie
Adam Carlson
Appendix B  Informative E-mail for sales managers
(Eng & Swe)

Dear X,

Thank you for your contribution to our thesis! Your participation plays an important role for our final results and we hope that this report can contribute to a lowered risk in the hiring process of new business-to-business sales representatives.

Instructions: The role of the sales manager is to categorize his sales staff in High, Mediocre, and Low-performing by distributing the links below to respective group. The categorization is made according to the organization’s own objectives which do not need to be specified. The links lead to a questionnaire which takes approximately 5 minutes to answer.

Please send us a confirmation message when the last salesperson has answered, so that we can close the errand and move on to data analysis.

High performance
http://goo.gl/forms/x

Mediocre performance
http://goo.gl/forms/y

Low performance
http://goo.gl/forms/z

Thanks again and good luck!
Hej X,

Stort tack för ditt bidrag till vårt examensarbete! Din medverkan har en betydande roll för vårt slutresultat och vi hoppas att vår rapport kan bidra till en lägre risk vid nyanställning av företagssäljare.

**Beskrivning av genomförande:** Säljchefens roll är att kategorisera sin säljstab i Hög, Medioker och Lågpresterande genom att dela ut de nedanstående länkarna till respektive grupp. Kategoriseringen av säljare görs utefter organisationens egna målsättningar och behöver ej specificeras. Länken leder till ett formulär som tar ca 5min att svara på.

Informera gärna oss om hur många säljare som kommer att svara på enkäten, så att vi vet när alla svarat. Vi ser gärna att svaren är inskickade senast Ons 29 Apr om vi skall kunna möta vår studie-deadline.

**Högpresterande**  
http://goo.gl/forms/x

**Mediokert presterande**  
http://goo.gl/forms/y

**Låg/underpresterande**  
http://goo.gl/forms/z
Appendix C  Questionnaire (Eng & Swe)

How I am in general

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Disagree Strongly</th>
<th>2 Disagree a little</th>
<th>3 Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>4 Agree a little</th>
<th>5 Agree strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others*? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

I am someone who…

1. EX1 _____ Is talkative
2. AR1 _____ Tends to find fault with others
3. CO1 _____ Does a thorough job
4. NE1 _____ Is depressed, blue
5. OP1 _____ Is original, comes up with new ideas
6. EX2 _____ Is reserved
7. AR2 _____ Is helpful and unselfish with others
8. CO2 _____ Can be somewhat careless
9. NE2 _____ Is relaxed, handles stress well.
10. OP2 _____ Is curious about many different things
11. EX3 _____ Is full of energy
12. AR3 _____ Starts quarrels with others
13. CO3 _____ Is a reliable worker
14. NE3 _____ Can be tense
15. OP3 _____ Is ingenious, a deep thinker
Här är ett antal egenskaper som kanske eller kanske inte stämmer in på dig. Instämmer du till exempel i att du är någon som tycker om att umgås med andra? Skriv en siffra framför varje påstående för att ange hur mycket **påståendet stämmer eller inte stämmer.**

1. Stämmer absolut inte
2. Stämmer ganska dåligt
3. Stämmer varken bra eller dåligt
4. Stämmer ganska bra
5. Stämmer absolut

1. _____ År pratsam
2. _____ Tenderar att hitta fel hos andra
3. _____ Gör ett grundligt jobb
4. _____ Är deprimerad, nere
5. _____ Är originell, kommer med nya idéer
6. _____ Är reserverad
7. _____ Är hjälpsam och osjälvisk mot andra
8. _____ Kan vara något vårdslös
9. _____ Är avspänd, hanterar stress väl
10. _____ Är nyfiken på många olika saker
11. _____ Är full av energi
12. _____ Startar gräl med andra
13. _____ Är pålitlig i arbetet
14. _____ Kan vara spänd
15. _____ Är sinnrik, en djup tänkare
16. _____ Sprider mycket entusiasm
17. _____ Har en förlåtande läggning
18. _____ Tenderar att vara oorganiserad
19. _____ Oroar mig mycket
20. _____ Har livlig fantasi
21. _____ Tenderar att vara tystlåten
22. _____ Är i allmänhet tillitsfull
23. _____ Tenderar att vara lat
24. _____ Är känslomässigt stabil, blir inte upprörd så lätt
25. _____ Är uppfinningsrik
26. _____ Har en självhävdande personlighet
27. _____ Kan vara kall och distanserad
28. _____ Framhärdar tills uppgiften är slutförd
29. _____ Kan vara lynnig
30. _____ Värdesätter konstnärliga, estetiska upplevelser
31. _____ Är ibland blyg, hämmad
32. _____ Är omtänksam och vänlig mot nästan alla
33. _____ Gör saker effektivt
34. _____ Förblir lugn i spända situationer
35. _____ Föredrar rutinarbete
36. _____ Är utåtriktad, sällskaplig
37. _____ Är ibland ohövlig mot andra
38. _____ Gör upp planer och fullföljer dem
39. _____ Blir lätt nervös
40. _____ Tycker om att reflektera, leka med idéer
41. _____ 41. Har få konstnärliga intressen
42. _____ Tycker om att samarbeta med andra
43. _____ Blir lätt distraherad
44. _____ Har en utvecklad smak för konst, musik eller litteratur