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Key account management configurations and their effectiveness: A quasi-replication and extension

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ABSTRACT

Two important areas in the key account management (KAM) literature deal with different KAM frameworks and KAM performance drivers. In particular, scholars have derived taxonomies of KAM configurations and identified organizational determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market. The present paper contributes to the KAM literature with a quasi-replication and extension of two seminal papers providing an update of different KAM configurations along with the determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market. Using recently collected survey data from a sample of 411 managers, and considering KAM capabilities and KAM communication, we find evidence of five unique KAM configurations that differ from the findings of Homburg et al. (2002), thereby doubtless reflecting a professionalization of the KAM domain. Furthermore, updating Workman et al. (2003), we find that KAM capabilities are important determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market, and that social media communication increases KAM effectiveness. These insights contribute to building a cumulative up-to-date body of knowledge about KAM and provide guidance for managers to improve their KAM.

1. Introduction

Key account management (KAM) –also labeled strategic, global, or corporate account management – is an established approach to organizing business relationships with important customers and an important field of research. KAM encompasses the "performance of additional activities and/or designation of special personnel directed at an organization's most important customers" (Workman Jr, Homburg, & Jensen, 2003, p. 7). Two important domains of the KAM literature concern KAM frameworks and KAM performance drivers (Kumar, Sharma, & Salo, 2019). First, although there is a general consensus that KAM is beneficial for firms (Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015), previous research shows that there is more than one way to introduce and practice KAM (e.g., Millman & Wilson, 1995; Spencer, 1999; Wengler, Ehret, & Saab, 2006). Depending on characteristics such as the activities involved, the actors at play, the resources deployed, or the degree of formalization, different configurations of KAM occur in managerial practice. Also, introducing and managing a KAM system in a company represents a major effort in terms of costs and time required, and important barriers to a successful implementation of KAM exist (Leischnig, Ivens, Niersbach, & Pardo, 2018). As a consequence, it is important to understand the possible effect of each of the numerous potential performance drivers of KAM identified in the literature.

Moreover, while organizational configurations and performance drivers are viewed as rather stable (Dess, Newport, & Rasheed, 1993; Kumar et al., 2019), both internal and external forces may shape them over time over time. In the KAM domain, one major internal force relates to the professionalization logic, reflected via the emergence of associations such as the Strategic Account Management Association (Storbacka, 2016). Increased experience and systematic improvements in the management of strategic customers can result in effective and efficient

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routines through which a company achieves its key account-related objectives better than companies lacking such KAM capabilities. One major external force at play is that of the impact of digitalization on KAM, in particular on the communication with the KA (Herhausen, Miočević, Morgan, & Kleijnen, 2020). Based on an empirical study, Lacoste (2016, p. 39) states that "social media will play a larger role in key account management, allowing additional research on the transversal role of key account management and changes in supplier and key customer relationships." Hence, one may expect that this shaping finds its expression in the implementation and practice of KAM. Together, these developments call for research that updates different previously identified types of KAM configurations, along with the determinants of their effectiveness and performance.

Accordingly, we have two objectives for this research (see Fig. 1), namely updating and extending the studies from Homburg, Workman Jr, and Jensen (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003). Both articles are reference articles, and both are exceptionally influential in the KAM literature, with a total of 584 and 362 citations on Google Scholar in July 2021. However, both articles also rely on data collected over 20 years ago, and since then KAM has undergone significant professionalization (Storbacka, 2016) as well as major environmental shift to become increasingly digital (Herhausen, Miočević, et al., 2020), thus reshaping the KAM function. Moreover, theoretical and methodological developments (e.g., conception and measurement of firm-level capabilities) allow researchers today to explore the evolving KAM phenomenon in more detail (Guesalaga, Gabrielsson, Rogers, Ryals, & Cuevas, 2018). (See Table 1.)

Our first objective is to update and extend the influential KAM configuration study from Homburg et al. (2002). This study empirically identified, at the time, eight typical KAM configurations, thus supporting prior anecdotal evidence that a standard "one size fits all" approach to KAM does not exist. Specifically, we draw and build upon their four-dimensional conceptualization of KAM (i.e., activities, actors, resources, and formalization) to empirically derive a taxonomy of KAM configurations. Drawing on recent KAM literature, we add two further dimensions – KAM capabilities and KAM communication – for a more complete and holistic description of KAM configurations. Hence, we seek to update the findings from Homburg et al. (2002), and we pose the following research question (see Fig. 1A):

> **Research question 1:** Does this study produce the same taxonomy of KAM configurations as in Homburg et al. (2002) with a new data collection from a comparable population and when considering KAM capabilities and KAM communication as additional dimensions of KAM configurations?

Our second objective is to update and extend the important study of organizational determinants of KAM effectiveness from Workman Jr et al. (2003). These authors developed a model based on organizational variables to identify the antecedents of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market. We use the same set of variables and extend their analysis by considering KAM capabilities and KAM communication as additional dimensions that likely determine KAM outcomes. Moreover, we use a semiparametric approach to capture the effects of KAM cluster membership on the outcomes. Thus, we seek to update the findings from Workman Jr et al. (2003) with the following research question (see Fig. 1B):

> **Research question 2:** Does this study produce the same determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market as in Workman Jr et al. (2003) with a new data collection from a comparable population, when considering KAM capabilities and KAM communication as additional determinants, and when accounting for KAM cluster membership?

To achieve these objectives and answer the research questions, we collected survey data from 411 senior managers, consisting mainly of managing directors, VPs of marketing, sales, or sales and marketing, and KA managers.[1] Our study embraces a "staged approach"—that is, we systematically alter our quasi replication in stages. We start by closely imitating the research design described in Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003) with data drawn from a largely comparable population that differs only in the time of data collection. We then use the same (or slightly adapted) measures and similar methods to re-estimate the models from the original papers. This renders possible identification of any differences in results due to composition of the sample. In the second stage, we add KAM capabilities and KAM communication to reflect internal and external changes in the KAM environment.

Our quasi-replications and extensions make several contributions to the KAM literature. First, conducting updated empirical examinations of the conceptual approaches used in the original studies provides new empirical evidence on the ongoing importance of KAM configurations and organizational determinants for KAM effectiveness and performance in the market. Second, newly collected data introduces a temporal contextualization that allows us to compare the findings from the original studies, based on data collected during a rather "nascent" KAM period, with our findings from a much more professionalized KAM period (Kumar et al., 2019). Finally, adding KAM capabilities and KAM communication to the original models provide important nuances in the understanding of KAM configurations and the drivers of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market.

2. Previous research and theoretical background

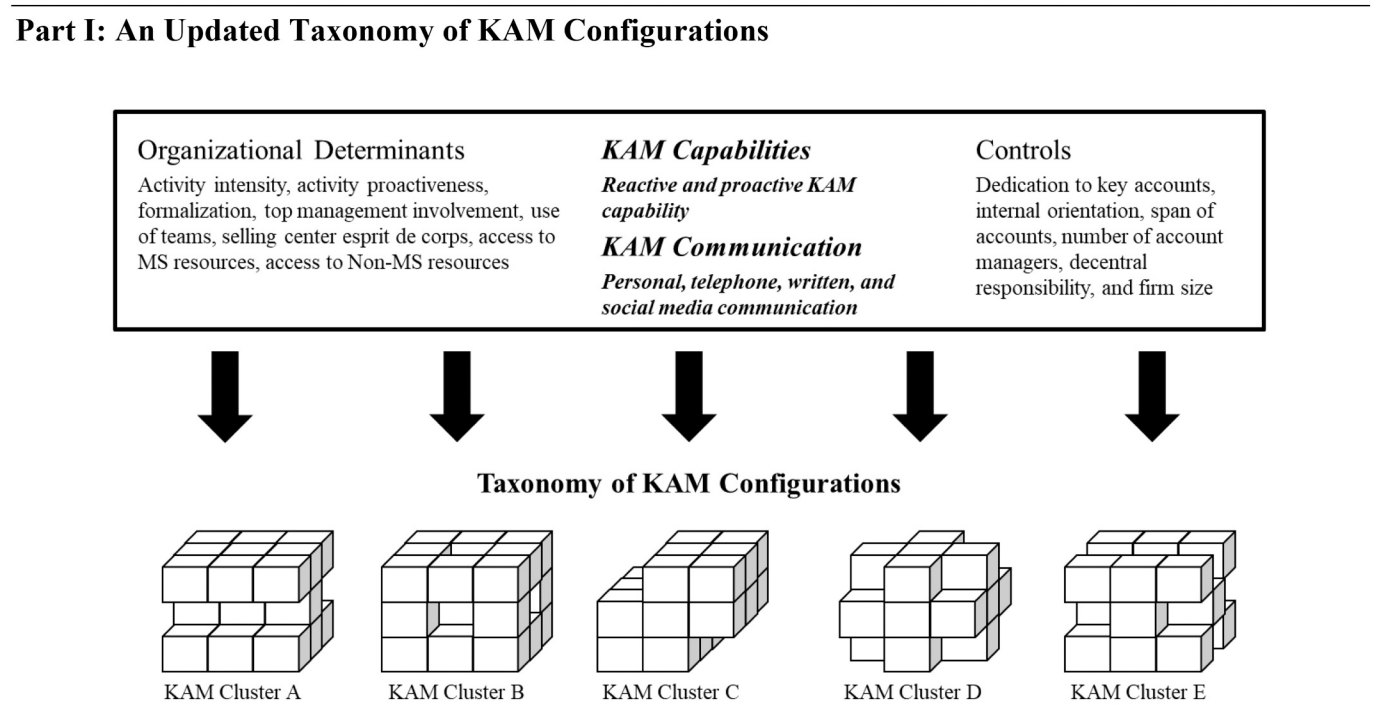
2.1. Taxonomical research in KAM

Companies introduce KAM for different reasons, including enhanced customer orientation, optimized internal processes, or increased sales and sales productivity (Wengler et al., 2006). They thus need to take design decisions regarding such aspects as KAM resource allocation, formalization of activities, or actors involved in KAM. As a result, they may and in fact do introduce KAM in different ways or different configurations.

Configuration research has a long-standing tradition in management. A configuration "represents a number of specific and separate attributes which are meaningful collectively rather than individually" (Dess et al., 1993, p.775–776). Identifying configurations in management practices allows the researcher to express complex relationships between variables and constructs while avoiding oversimplifications. Taxonomical research, and more generally research that takes a configuration perspective, has also a long tradition in marketing (Moncrief, 1986). Its purpose is to grasp and describe the conceptual and/or practical variance in a domain, and to relate different configurations to performance outcomes. Regarding supplier-customer relationships, authors have observed that, given the differences between companies in terms of their resources, goals, cultures etc., and the availability of parameters that allow differentiation of their sales approach (instruments, structures etc.), it is likely that a concept such as KAM materialize in multiple ways (Ivens, 2005).

Arguably, the taxonomical study conducted by Homburg et al. (2002) constitutes a seminal piece, as it represented the first large-scale

[1] Our data allows conducting a cross-sectional quasi-replication of the initial research. However, it is not equivalent to longitudinal research that would monitor modifications of individual KAM configurations as implemented in single companies and over time as well as the determinants of such modifications. Thus, we are unfortunately not able to consider evolution over time in the KAM configurations and determinants of KAM outcomes. Future studies should try to overcome this limitation in order to uncover the transformative dynamics in KAM by using a longitudinal, real-time study or a retrospective, historical study.



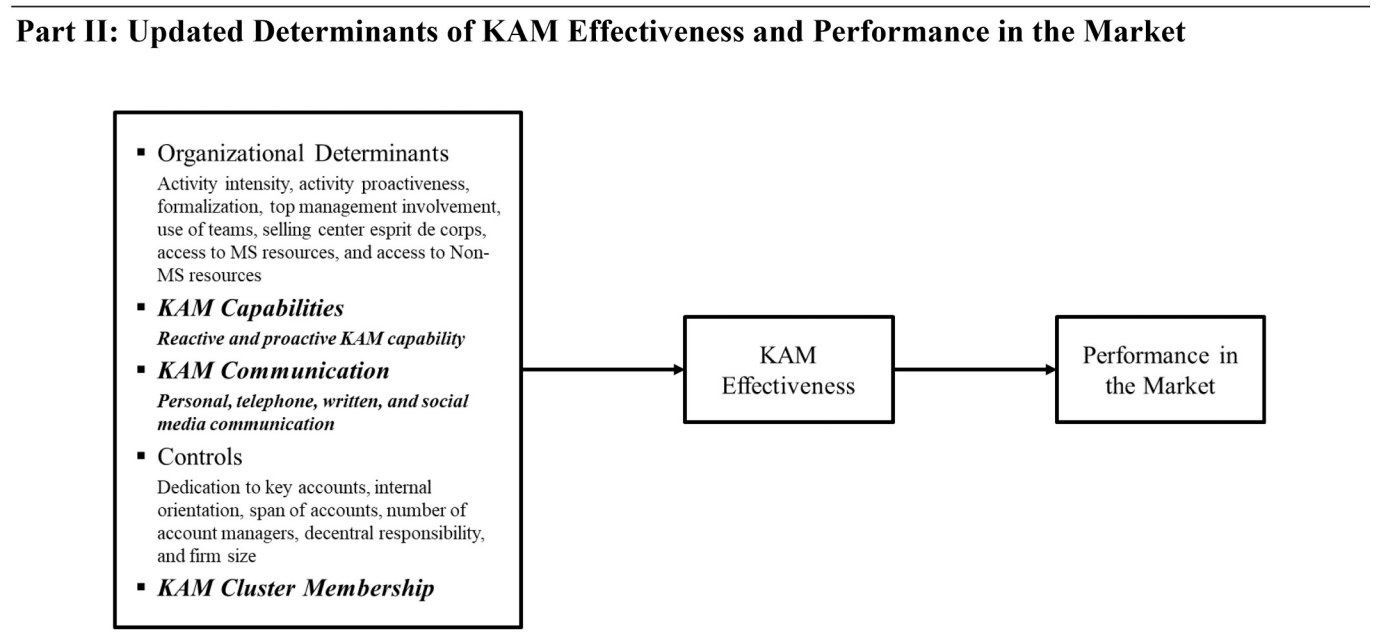


Fig. 1. Conceptual approach for this study.
The extension compared to Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003) are highlighted in bold and italics.

empirical study that contrasted conceptual contributions with actual real-world cases. Roughly twenty years after the first academic publications that presented the concept and discussed its relevance, this empirical study documented the fact that companies had in fact come to adopt KAM, whilst also demonstrating that there was no unique way of implementing KAM. Rather, different firms emphasized different dimensions of KAM, leading to more or less elaborate KAM configurations. Its central role for KAM research is confirmed by a recent bibliometric analysis (Kumar et al., 2019).

The key finding of Homburg et al. (2002) is that of the existence of different configurations via which KAM is implemented in firms. The authors identified eight different KAM configurations on the basis of a cluster analysis, deduced from a framework encompassing four dimensions of KAM design (i.e., actors, resources, activities, and formalization). While the first three dimensions are frequently used to describe business relationships and networks (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995), formalization is drawn from organization theory. One main merit of this study lies in the description of different KAM configurations which, in a second step, allowed the analysis of differences in performance between the configurations. At the time of its publication, it illustrated that earlier conceptual contributions such as Millman and Wilson (1995) described an important real-world phenomenon, namely the fact that

Table 1
Summary details of Homburg et al. (2002)/Workman Jr et al. (2003) and this study.

	Homburg et al. (2002), Workman Jr et al. (2003)	This Study
Conceptual Goals	1. A taxonomy of KAM configurations 2. Organizational determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market	1. An updated taxonomy of KAM configurations 2. Updated organizational determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market
Sample	385 respondent from Germany and the United States: ■ 19% managing director, CEO, VP of region, head of BU ■ 49% VP marketing, VP sales, VP sales and marketing ■ 9% head of KAM, key account manager ■ 19% sales manager, product manager ■ 3% Other	411 respondent from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland: ■ 28% managing director, CEO, VP of region, head of BU ■ 30% VP marketing, VP sales, VP sales and marketing ■ 27% head of KAM, key account manager ■ 14% sales manager, product manager ■ 1% Other
Main Variables	Activity intensity Activity pro-activeness Top management involvement Use of teams Selling center esprit de corps Access to marketing and sales resources Access to non-marketing and sales resources Approach formalization KAM effectiveness Performance in the market	Activity intensity Activity pro-activeness Top management involvement Use of teams Selling center esprit de corps Access to marketing and sales resources Access to non-marketing and sales resources Approach formalization KAM effectiveness Performance in the market Reactive KAM capability Proactive KAM capability Communication mode
Methods	1. Hierarchical clustering 2. Structural equation modeling (not accounting for KAM clusters)	1. Latent class analysis (robustness test with hierarchical clustering) 2. Semiparametric path modeling to account for the KAM clusters
Main Findings	Eight prototypical KAM approaches (Top-Management KAM, Middle-Management KAM, Operating-Level KAM, Cross-functional KAM, Unstructured KAM, Isolated KAM, Country-Club KAM, No KAM) Top Management-Driven KAM leads to highest KAM effectiveness, Cross-functional KAM leads to highest performance in the market Organizational determinants are positively related to performance in the market via KAM effectiveness (full mediation)	Five prototypical KAM approaches (Top Management-Driven Cross-Functional KAM, Middle Management KAM, Window-Dressing KAM, Country-Club KAM, and Non-formal KAM) Top Management-Driven Cross-Functional KAM leads to highest KAM effectiveness and performance in the market Organizational determinants, KAM capabilities, communication mode, and KAM Cluster membership are positively related to performance in the market via KAM effectiveness (partial mediation)

Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003) use the same dataset and the same measurement in their studies.

KAM is an umbrella concept under which diverse ways of strategically managing important customers exist.

2.2. Determinants of KAM outcomes

The KAM literature has studied several outcome variables of KAM, such as account satisfaction, profitability, or share-of-spend, as well as their determinants (Sharma & Evanschitzky, 2016). Among the most important KAM outcomes are KAM effectiveness and performance in the market (Davies & Ryals, 2014), and both variables constitute the dependent variables in Workman Jr et al. (2003). KAM effectiveness is defined as "the extent to which an organization achieves better relationship outcomes for its key accounts than for its average accounts" (Homburg et al., 2002, p. 46). Performance in the market is defined as "the extent to which the firm achieves market-related goals such as revenue growth, market share, customer satisfaction, and retention of customers" (Workman Jr et al., 2003, p. 11).

Several studies have analyzed the determinants of these outcomes of KAM. Apart from Workman Jr et al. (2003), these studies encompass, for example, work that studied the effects of organizational (Davies & Ryals, 2014; Guenzi et al. 2009), relational (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Ivens & Pardo, 2016), and capability-based (Guesalaga et al., 2018; Ivens, Leischnig, Pardo, & Niersbach, 2018) drivers of KAM performance. Several reviews of the KAM literature highlight that research on drivers of KAM performance remains among the top research priorities for the field, regarding both potential theoretical and managerial implications (Kumar et al., 2019).

2.3. Capabilities in KAM

Despite a growing interest in capabilities from industrial marketing scholars (Morgan, Miočević, & Herhausen, 2019), until recently the KAM literature has paid little attention to KAM capabilities. Extant contributions are scattered and discuss different types of capabilities from different perspectives, such as global account management, international KAM, and KAM-forms without regionally specified focus. These include lower-order KAM capabilities such as the skills KA managers need (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015) or higher-order KAM capabilities located at the firm-level. The latter encompass two perspectives. Firstly, global account management is seen as an inter-organizational capability that a supplier and a buyer firm develop jointly (Shi, Zou, & Cavusgil, 2004). This is the only article that takes a relationship perspective on capabilities. Secondly, Shi, Zou, White, McNally, and Cavusgil (2005) as well as subsequent articles (Guesalaga et al., 2018; Ivens et al., 2018; Jean, Sinkovics, Kim, & Lew, 2015) locate KAM capabilities on the supplier side.

For our purpose, we adopt the latter perspective, and define KAM capabilities as complex bundles of skills and accumulated knowledge that materialize in routines used to manage strategically important customers involving multiple actors as well as input flows. The first part of this definition refers to the fact that organizational capabilities, such as KAM, require that individual and organizational actors need to use both their know-how and their skills in a coordinated manner. This may refer to KA managers, their team members, but also actors from departments such as supply chain management, operations, or customer service who are involved in the management of a key account. The second part of the definition highlights that this occurs in a manner that can be regularly reproduced by the actors. In line with Ivens et al. (2018), we focus on the distinction between proactive KAM capabilities (or inside-out capabilities) and reactive KAM capabilities (or outside-in capabilities). Note that the extant conceptualizations of KAM capabilities do not refer to the individual account manager, but to the organizational level.

2.4. Communication in KAM

Another stream of research that has developed in the KAM literature concerns KAM communication (see, for example, Lacoste, 2016; Storbacka, 2016). KAM communication can be defined as the management of information exchange processes by the organizational actors involved in KAM (such as the KA manager or members of the KAM team) with the KA (Ivens & Pardo, 2007). Communication constitutes a critical factor determining the successful development of relationships between a supplier firm and its KAs (Schultz & Evans, 2002) and has been

described as "the glue that holds together" actors in a business relationship (Mohr & Nevin, 1990, p. 36). Communication takes place through different channels, such as personal conversations, written messages, and increasingly through social media (Cartwright, Liu, & Raddats, 2021). The existence of relationship-specific investments as well as the limitation of explicit (written) agreements may increase the parties' vulnerability in business relationships, especially such as those involved in KAM. A regular flow of relevant information between the partners nurtures the relationship and offers protection against negative outcomes (Heide & John, 1992).

In the business relationship literature, communication has always held a prominent position in explaining relationship outcomes and development (Hakansson & Snehota, 1995). As regards relational exchange, studies demonstrate that communication is often seen as an antecedent to relational performance outcomes (Ivens, 2005). More specifically, Ryals and Humphries (2007) identified communication as one of the most central dimensions in KAM. These authors argue that communication in KAM (that is in a highly relational setting) differs from non-KAM communication in terms of frequency and quality and, in turn, has an impact on the agility of the relationship and its performance. In particular, KA managers today need to find a balance between more classical personal communication on the one hand and digital, time-efficient, but less personal communication tools on the other. Note that the predominant conceptualization of communication in the KAM literature does not relate to the individual KA manager level, but to the organizational level.

3. Methodology: data collection and measurement

3.1. Preliminary interviews and scale development

Our research objective was to conduct to quasi-replications and extensions of Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003), and we assessed most of the constructs using scales from the original studies. However, we were challenged to increase the response rate from very qualified but also very busy respondents, making the final questionnaire as concise as possible. In addition, no existing scales captured the specificity of reactive and proactive capabilities in KAM. We thus conducted preliminary interviews with 31 KA managers in two workshops to refine existing scales, to develop new scales, and to pretest the questionnaire.

During the first workshop, 17 managers reviewed the construct definitions of existing scales and provided input with a view to refining operationalization. This was then incorporated into the questionnaire. In particular, the managers viewed activity proactiveness as a concrete construct which has a simple, clear object and a single meaning, and consequently we used a single item measurement. To develop the new capability scales, we followed a four-step procedure. First, we specified the constructs through a review of relevant literature (e.g., Herhausen, 2016). Second, we operationalized both constructs, developed initial item pools, and refined these items on the basis of feedback from the managers. Third, we developed a seven-point scale anchored by "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree", with six items for reactive KAM capability and five items for proactive KAM capability. Fourth, as we detail subsequently, we tested the psychometric quality of the scales in the study. This step led us to exclude two items from the reactive KAM capability scale and one item from the proactive KAM capability scale. In the second workshop we administered the questionnaire to 14 managers and observed first-hand the completion time, possible obstacles in the questionnaire flow, and comprehension problems in items or instructions. Following the completion of the questionnaire, we discussed their experience with the respondents to refine it further.

3.2. Research context and sample

Our objective was to have a sample comparable to the sample of Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003), which collects data from managers capable of providing a reliable overview of the marketing and sales organization of their firm. Given that it is difficult to motivate such highly-qualified respondents for participation in a quantitative study, we relied on participants and alumni of several sales and KAM executive education programs from a major European business school, and we further teamed up with a sales and marketing consultancy specialized in industrial marketing. All potential respondents came from firms in the "DACH Region" (i.e., from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland), and the data collection took place in German. We approached 1231 potential respondents with an invitation email to an electronic survey, and promoted participation to potential respondents attending the executive courses. As incentives, we offered a benchmark analysis of the different ways of practising KAM, and a workshop to discuss options for improvement. After two reminders, we received 411 fully completed questionnaires, for an effective response rate of 33%.

The description of our sample in Appendix 1 shows that most respondents are senior-level managers with an average tenure of 14 years in their firm. The firms show considerable variety in revenues, size, and the number of KA managers. Moreover, 84% of firms are from the same industries as the firms in the Homburg et al. (2002) study that we used as benchmark: 15% are from chemical and pharmaceutical, 43% from machinery, 13% from computer and electronics, 4% from banks and insurances, and 9% from food and packaged goods.

To assess potential non-response bias within our sample, we compared early versus late respondents across the firm and respondent characteristics summarized in Appendix 1. The first 25% of responses were treated as early respondents, and the last 25% as late respondents. Chi-square tests did not reveal any significant difference between the two groups. As the independent and dependent variables in the model are all measured from the same key informant, we used various procedures to ex-ante reduce the risk of common method bias (i.e., we employed different response scales for different variables, physical separation of the dependent variables from the independent variables within the questionnaire, neutral wording of all questions, assurance of respondent anonymity, and data confidentiality). We also highlighted that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers, and emphasized that the benchmark report would be meaningless for the participants in case of exaggerated answers. In addition to these preventive procedures, we also assessed ex-post whether common method bias constitutes an issue within our data, as detailed in the measurement model section.

3.3. Measurement of constructs

In the spirit of a quasi-replication (Bettis, Helfat, & Shaver, 2016), our aim was to follow the original operationalization of Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003) wherever possible. However, we adapted some of the original measures based on the feedback from the preliminary interviews. We followed common double-blind translation-back-translation procedures to translate English measures into German. All constructs and items are shown in the Appendix 2.

We measured *activity intensity* with six items capturing the extent to which different activities are more pronounced for KAs compared to average accounts in the firm and *activity proactiveness* with a single item ("Activities are proactively driven by the initiative of KA managers"). *Approach formalization* was measured with four items capturing the extent to which formal criteria, guidelines, and procedures for KAM are present in the firm, *top management involvement* with four items capturing the extent to which the top management allocates resources and attention to KAM, and *use of teams* with three items capturing the extent to which teams are responsible for KAM. We measured *selling center esprit de corps* with two items capturing the team spirit of people involved in KAM, and *access to marketing and sales resources* with four items as well as *access to non-marketing and sales resources* with three items capturing the ease at which the KA coordinator obtains contributions for KAs from different marketing and sales or non-marketing and

sales functions, respectively.

We used the newly developed scales for *reactive KAM capability* and *proactive KAM capability* and measured the communication mode with four items capturing how important *personal communication*, *telephone communication*, *written communication*, and *social media communication* are in cooperating with the KAs, adapted from Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, and Garud (1999) on a seven-point scale, anchored by "not important" and "very important". As outcomes, we considered *KAM effectiveness* with seven items capturing how well KAs perform in comparison to average accounts, and *performance in the market* with seven items capturing how well the firm has performed in comparison to competitors over the last three years.

In addition to the constructs above, the literature also suggests several descriptive variables to characterize KAM configurations (Sharma and Evanschitzky 2006; Guenzi, Pardo, & Georges, 2007). Similar to Homburg et al. (2002), we do not use these variables as input for the taxonomy; rather, they enrich our interpretation of the different KAM configurations. We further use them as controls when estimating the determinants of KAM outcomes. These include dedication to KAs ("What percent of working time does a KA manager spend on his/her KAs on average?"), internal orientation ("What percent of working time spent does a KA manager use for internal coordination on average?"), span of accounts and number of account managers, decentralized responsibility ("Where do activities for KAs take place in your company, compared to activities for customer that are not KAs?"), and firm size in annual revenues. Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 2.

3.4. Measurement model

To assess reliability and validity of our constructs, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis. The result indicated good fit of the model (χ2(d.f.) = 2226.60 (1219); $p < .01$; CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.89; RMSEA = 0.04; SRMR = 0.05). In addition, all squared correlations were smaller than the average variance extracted from the respective constructs, in support of the measure's discriminant validity. To explore common method bias, we restrained all items to load on only one factor in a confirmatory factor analysis. The fit statistics did not show a good fit, indicating that a single factor does not account for the variance in the data (χ2(d.f.) = 7564.11 (1274); $p < .01$; CFI = 0.38; TLI = 0.36; RMSEA = 0.11; SRMR = 0.11). We also included a marker variable in the questionnaire (scale to assess respondents educational background: "My education was rather (1) technologically-oriented to (7) managerial-oriented"), which is theoretically unrelated to the dependent constructs. The marker variable showed no significant correlations to KAM effectiveness ($r = -0.01$, $p = .92$) and performance in the market ($r = 0.06$, $p = .20$). Thus we found no evidence of common method bias in our data.

4. A taxonomy of KAM configurations

4.1. Analysis

We conducted latent class analyses (LCA) to identify different KAM configurations. Compared to the hierarchical clustering algorithm used by Homburg et al. (2002), LCA has the advantage of being model-based. Thus, LCA overcomes problems associated with K-means cluster analysis, such as sensitivity to outliers, the need to use interval or ratio data, the order in which data is entered, the lack of objective criteria to judge the suitability of solutions, and the fact that K-means cluster analysis may produce solutions that might not be appropriate. Specifically, we use a mixture model that posits that there is an underlying unobserved categorical variable with C unknown classes that can be inferred from our set of measured response variables, and that the KAM population is divided into C mutually exclusive and exhaustive latent classes. Thus, the objective of LCA is to categorize each respondent into one of the C classes using the observed variables and identify variables that best distinguish between the classes. The mathematical model for LCA considers y_j as element j of a response pattern y and an indicator function $I(yj = rj)$ that equals 1 when the response to variable $j = r_j$ and equals 0 otherwise. The probability of observing a particular vector of responses is thus:

$$P(Y = y) = \sum_{c=1}^{C} \gamma_c \prod_{j=1}^{J} \prod_{r_j=1}^{R_j} \rho_{j,r_j|c}^{I\left(y_j = r_j\right)}, \quad (1)$$

where g_c is the probability of membership in latent class c and $\rho_{j,\,rj|c}^{I(y_j=r_j)}$ is the probability of response r_j to item j, conditional on membership in latent class c. The g parameters represent a vector of latent class membership probabilities that sum to 1, and the r parameters represent a matrix of item-response probabilities conditional on latent class membership. We primarily apply AIC3, the adapted Akaike Information Criterion with a per-parameter penalty factor of 3, to select the best model. AIC3 is calculated as:

$$AIC3_c = -2ln[L(\Theta|c)\,] + 3k_c, \quad (2)$$

where $L(\Theta|c)$ is the value of the maximized log-likelihood function of the model with C clusters and k_c is the effective number of parameters required to estimate this model. We use AIC, BIC, and cluster interpretability as supplementary selection criteria.

The LCA models were estimated for solutions with one to eight classes using a robust maximum-likelihood estimator (ct. Herhausen, Kleinlercher, Verhoef, Emrich, & Rudolph, 2019). To avoid converging on a local solution, we estimated each LCA with 1000 random sets of start values, with 100 iterations for each of these random starts, and retained the 100 best solutions for final stage optimization. We began by testing and evaluating the fit of a one-class model to the data against decision criteria that involved both empirical and theoretical considerations. We then repeated this process, each time specifying an additional class, until several fit indices and theoretical considerations were reconciled and optimized. We determined the most likely class membership based on the classification probabilities.

4.2. Results

For the initial model, we obtain a minimum AIC3 (6539.94) for a four-class solution with easy interpretability (Table 3). Based on the KAM configurations and the labels from Homburg et al. (2002), we label the four clusters as "Top Management-Driven (TMD) Cross-Functional KAM" (49%) because this cluster has a highly formalized KAM, the highest value on all determinants, and the best outcomes of all clusters, "Middle Management KAM" (28%) because in comparison to the other clusters top-management involvement is rather low, "Window-Dressing KAM" (19%) because this cluster has the lowest internal orientation and highest span of accounts, and "Non-formal KAM" (4%) because this cluster has the lowest values on nearly all determinants and the highest value on decentralized responsibility.

For the model with the extended determinants, including KAM capabilities and KAM communication, we find a minimum AIC3 (19,672.38) for a five-class solution (Table 3). Table 4 shows how respondents move between classes from the four-class to the five-class solution. The three clusters "TMD Cross-Functional KAM" (55%), "Middle Management KAM" (28%), and "Non-formal KAM" (3%) remain largely stable compared to the initial solution while the "Window-Dressing KAM" (10%) decreased in size. Moreover, an additional cluster has emerged that we label "Country-Club KAM" (4%) because top-management involvement and communication intensity are high while most other determinants score low. With regard to reactive and proactive KAM capability, the "TMD Cross-Functional KAM" cluster scores highest while the "Non-formal KAM" cluster scores lowest. The "Country-Club KAM" cluster scores highest on personal, telephone, and written communication, and the "TMD Cross-Functional KAM" cluster

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlations.

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.	22.
1.	Activity intensity	*0.65*																					
2.	Activity pro-activeness	0.22	–																				
3.	Formalization	0.25	0.29	*0.77*																			
4.	Top management involvement	0.07	0.23	0.34	*0.80*																		
5.	Use of teams	0.22	0.31	0.42	0.25	*0.76*																	
6.	Selling center esprit de corps	0.23	0.44	0.40	0.40	0.42	*0.75*																
7.	Access to MS resources	0.23	0.29	0.24	0.44	0.20	0.47	*0.74*															
8.	Access to non-MS resources	0.17	0.24	0.12	0.41	0.25	0.37	0.50	*0.67*														
9.	Reactive KAM capability	0.10	0.28	0.22	0.36	0.19	0.34	0.30	0.37	*0.86*													
10.	Proactive KAM capability	0.13	0.21	0.32	0.39	0.21	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.27	*0.77*												
11.	Personal communication	0.14	0.21	0.20	0.15	0.11	0.18	0.15	0.02	0.16	0.14	–											
12.	Telephone communication	0.18	0.25	0.14	0.20	0.09	0.13	0.15	0.11	0.14	0.11	0.46	–										
13.	Written communication	0.12	0.15	0.11	0.15	0.05	0.13	0.16	0.11	0.08	0.16	0.21	0.37	–									
14.	Social media communication	0.07	0.10	0.20	0.13	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.09	−0.02	0.11	0.15	–								
15.	Dedication to key accounts	0.13	0.13	0.15	0.12	0.11	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.06	0.01	0.11	0.06	0.07	0.02	–							
16.	Internal orientation	0.08	0.01	−0.06	−0.07	−0.07	−0.10	−0.09	−0.06	−0.12	−0.07	0.07	0.08	0.03	−0.15	0.11	–						
17.	Span of accounts	−0.13	−0.04	0.03	−0.02	−0.10	−0.01	−0.13	−0.13	0.01	−0.06	0.01	−0.01	0.01	0.04	−0.05	−0.14	–					
18.	No. of account manager	0.10	0.06	0.18	0.09	0.06	0.09	0.06	0.02	0.08	0.08	0.02	0.06	−0.01	0.13	−0.07	−0.04	0.01	–				
19.	Decentralized responsibility	−0.07	−0.06	0.02	−0.05	0.05	−0.06	−0.04	−0.13	−0.02	0.02	−0.02	−0.09	−0.05	0.05	−0.02	−0.09	0.06	0.10	–			
20.	Firm size (annual revenues)	0.15	0.09	0.26	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.03	−0.10	0.02	0.06	0.12	0.06	−0.08	0.06	0.09	0.14	0.03	0.29	0.14	–		
21.	KAM effectiveness	0.28	0.21	0.26	0.24	0.17	0.27	0.28	0.23	0.33	0.28	0.12	0.17	0.12	0.24	0.06	−0.12	0.00	0.10	0.03	0.15	*0.63*	
22.	Performance in the market	0.09	0.19	0.26	0.34	0.13	0.28	0.32	0.23	0.34	0.37	0.10	0.13	0.10	0.13	−0.02	−0.13	0.02	0.08	0.08	0.12	0.38	*0.69*
Mean		5.20	5.50	4.09	4.78	4.22	4.74	5.46	4.65	4.91	4.95	6.34	5.87	5.48	2.93	59.91	48.04	8.00	76.09	4.26	4.95	5.02	4.85
SD		0.86	1.16	1.46	1.30	1.40	1.20	0.89	1.09	1.09	1.28	0.86	1.02	1.18	1.60	20.06	17.12	5.22	306.60	2.71	1.25	0.70	0.88

$|r| \geq 0.10$ is significant at $p < .05$ and $|r| \geq 0.13$ is significant at $p < .01$ (two-tailed tests). The square root of the AVE is in italics. All constructs were measured on 7-Point Likert Scales except dedication to key accounts and internal orientation (in percent, 0 to 100); span of accounts and no. of account manager (in absolute numbers), decentralized responsibility (10-Point Scale, 1 = "fully central" to 10 = "fully decentral"), and firm size (annual revenues in million EUR on 7-Point Scale, 1 = "<2", 2 = "3 to 10", 3 = "11 to 50", 4 = "51 to 100", 5 = "101 to 1000", 6 = "1001–10,000", and 7 = ">10,000").

Table 3
Cluster description.

	First Stage: Organizational Determinants					Second Stage: Extended Determinants						
	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	5		Sample
	TMK	MMK	WDK	NFK		TMK	MMK	WDK	CCK	NFK		Mean
	(*n* = 200)	(*n* = 117)	(*n* = 77)	(*n* = 17)	**F-Test**	(*n* = 226)	(*n* = 115)	(*n* = 40)	(*n* = 19)	(n = 11)	**F-Test**	(*n* = 411)
Activities												
Activity intensity	**5.43**^{a}	5.05^{b}	5.02^{b}	*4.18*$_{c}$	16.97**	**5.43**^{a}	5.17^{b}	4.69^{c}	*4.19*^{c}	4.28^{c}	20.34**	5.20
Activity pro-activeness	**5.94**^{a}	5.16^{b}	5.43^{b}	*3.12*$_{c}$	49.88**	**5.98**^{a}	5.48^{b}	4.50^{c}	3.71^{c}	*2.73*^{d}	76.13**	5.50
Formalization												
Formalization	**4.59**^{a}	3.39^{b}	4.32^{a}	*1.86*$_{c}$	38.90**	**4.68**^{a}	3.65^{b}	3.43^{c}	2.44^{d}	*1.73*^{d}	36.31**	4.09
Actors												
Top management involvement	**5.45**^{a}	3.83$_{c}$	4.86^{b}	*3.11*$_{d}$	73.66**	**5.41**^{a}	3.84^{b}	4.31^{b}	**5.41**^{a}	*2.35*^{c}	65.96**	4.78
Use of teams	**4.82**^{a}	3.63$_{c}$	4.09^{b}	*1.88*$_{d}$	47.82**	**4.73**^{a}	3.87^{b}	3.93^{b}	2.23^{c}	*2.00*^{c}	35.37**	4.22
Resources												
Selling center esprit de corps	**5.31**^{a}	3.99$_{c}$	4.93^{b}	*2.24*$_{d}$	94.22**	**5.38**^{a}	4.09^{b}	4.05^{b}	3.85^{b}	*2.27*^{c}	70.84**	4.74
Access to MS resources	**5.93**^{a}	4.95$_{c}$	5.30^{b}	*4.01*$_{d}$	72.40**	**5.92**^{a}	4.81^{b}	5.11^{b}	5.66^{a}	*3.52*^{c}	81.45**	5.46
Access to non-MS resources	**5.22**^{a}	4.06$_{c}$	4.44^{b}	*3.12*$_{d}$	60.24**	**5.18**^{a}	3.83^{b}	4.49^{a}	4.79^{a}	*2.85*^{c}	59.07**	4.65
Capabilities												
Reactive KAM capability						**5.45**^{a}	4.17^{b}	4.66^{b}	5.16^{a}	*3.43*^{c}	31.34**	4.95
Proactive KAM capability						**5.36**^{a}	4.32^{b}	4.48^{b}	4.53^{b}	*4.05*^{b}	27.57**	4.91
Communication Mode												
Personal communication						6.55^{a}	6.44^{a}	*4.83*^{c}	**6.70**^{a}	5.82^{b}	56.24**	6.34
Telephone communication						6.13^{a}	5.94^{b}	*4.23*^{b}	**6.41**^{a}	4.99^{b}	48.81**	5.87
Written communication						5.66^{a}	5.49^{a}	*4.43*^{a}	**5.87**^{a}	4.91^{a}	11.45**	5.48
Social media communication						**3.16**^{a}	2.66^{b}	2.85^{b}	2.47^{b}	*2.04*^{b}	3.31*	2.93
Descriptive Variables												
Dedication to key accounts	**63%**^{a}	58%^{b}	58%^{b}	*46%*^{c}	4.99**	**63%**^{a}	60%^{a}	53%^{b}	49%^{b}	*47%*^{b}	5.23**	60%
Internal orientation	48%^{a}	51%^{a}	*43%*^{b}	**54%**^{a}	4.24**	47%^{b}	51%^{b}	*42%*^{b}	**59%**^{a}	46%^{b}	4.22**	48%
Span of accounts (median)	*5*^{c}	*5*^{c}	**16**^{a}	8^{b}	323.24**	*5*^{b}	*5*^{b}	**8**^{a}	*5*^{b}	**8**^{a}	1.65	5
No. of account managers (median)	**16**^{a}	12^{b}	11^{b}	*5*^{b}	1.78	**16**^{a}	12^{b}	12^{b}	10^{b}	*5*^{c}	1.63	12
Decentralized responsibility	4.22^{a}	*4.05*^{a}	4.47^{a}	**5.25**^{a}	1.19	4.25^{a}	4.36^{a}	4.21^{a}	*3.12*^{a}	**5.57**^{a}	1.54	4.26
Firm size (annual revenues)	**5.09**^{a}	*4.72*^{a}	4.97^{a}	4.88^{a}	2.15	**5.09**^{a}	4.98^{a}	4.43^{a}	*4.32*^{a}	4.82^{a}	3.81**	4.95
Outcomes												
KAM effectiveness	**5.21**^{a}	4.78^{c}	5.00^{b}	*4.48*^{c}	13.70**	**5.23**^{a}	4.85^{b}	4.74^{b}	4.50^{b}	*4.27*^{b}	16.47**	5.02
Performance in the market	**5.12**^{a}	*4.44*^{c}	4.86^{b}	4.50^{c}	17.53**	**5.17**^{a}	4.46^{b}	4.47^{b}	4.65^{b}	*4.30*^{b}	19.07**	4.85

**$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, two-tailed tests. All means are based on most likely class membership. Reported values are mean values if not otherwise noted.
In each row, cluster means that have the same superscript are not significantly different ($p < .05$). Means in the highest band are assigned "a," means in the next highest band "b," and so forth. Means in the highest band are printed in bold; means in the lowest band are in italics. MS = Marketing and Sales. TMK = Top Management-Driven Cross-Functional KAM; MMK = Middle Management KAM; WDK = Window-Dressing KAM; NFK = Non-formal KAM; CCK = Country-Club KAM.

Table 4
Cluster change between solutions.

First Stage: Determinants from Homburg et al. (2002)	1. TMD Cross-Functional KAM	2. Middle Management KAM	3. Window-Dressing KAM	4. Non-formal KAM	Total
Second Stage: Extended Determinants					
1. TMD Cross-Functional KAM	95%	3%	43%	–	***55%***
2. Middle Management KAM	1%	71%	35%	12%	***28%***
3. Window-Dressing KAM	2%	18%	17%	6%	***10%***
4. Country-Club KAM	2%	8%	5%	17%	***4%***
5. Non-formal KAM	–	–	–	65%	***3%***
Total	***49%***	***28%***	***19%***	***4%***	

TMD = Top-Management Driven.

scores highest on social media communication.

5. Determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market

5.1. Analysis

In line with our conceptual approach, we consider the effects of the organizational determinants, KAM capabilities, and KAM communication on KAM effectiveness and performance in the market. Following Workman Jr et al. (2003), we further consider the impact of KAM effectiveness on performance in the market.[2] We use a semiparametric approach to account for the five KAM clusters, represented by the five latent classes (Herhausen, Emrich, Grewal, Kipfelsberger, & Schoegel, 2020). Thus, our equations to test the final model are as follows:

[2] To increase comparability to Workman et al. (2003), we omit access to non-marketing and sales resources from our model. Including access to non-marketing and sales resources as a predictor would reveal non-significant effects on KAM effectiveness (b = 0.03, $p = .58$) and on performance in the market (b = −0.02, $p = .71$).

Table 5
Determinants of KAM Effectiveness and Performance in the Market.

	First Stage: Model 1 including Organizational Determinants				Second Stage: Model 2 including Extended Determinants			
	KAM Effectiveness		Performance in the Market		KAM Effectiveness		Performance in the Market	
	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)	b	(se)
Activities								
Activity intensity	0.192	(0.047)**	−0.061	(0.047)	0.149	(0.047)**	−0.080	(0.050)
Activity pro-activeness	0.053	(0.051)	0.021	(0.049)	−0.051	(0.044)	−0.061	(0.050)
Actors								
Top management involvement	0.091	(0.053)	0.164	(0.051)**	0.033	(0.053)	0.135	(0.052)**
Use of teams	−0.009	(0.052)	−0.048	(0.050)	−0.030	(0.047)	−0.075	(0.048)
Resources								
Selling center esprit de corps	0.069	(0.059)	0.066	(0.057)	0.037	(0.049)	0.017	(0.049)
Access to MS resources	0.127	(0.054)*	0.125	(0.052)*	0.088	(0.044)*	0.095	(0.045)*
Formalization								
Formalization	0.114	(0.053)*	0.101	(0.051)*	0.003	(0.050)	0.029	(0.050)
Capabilities								
Reactive KAM capability					0.214	(0.051)**	0.151	(0.052)**
Proactive KAM capability					0.107	(0.041)**	0.163	(0.040)**
Communication Mode								
Personal communication					−0.011	(0.081)	−0.074	(0.081)
Telephone communication					0.091	(0.071)	0.041	(0.073)
Written communication					0.010	(0.045)	0.002	(0.044)
Social media communication					0.157	(0.044)**	0.019	(0.044)
Controls								
Dedication to key accounts					−0.007	(0.044)	−0.082	(0.044)
Internal orientation					−0.055	(0.045)	−0.018	(0.047)
Span of accounts					0.027	(0.051)	0.040	(0.050)
No. of account manager					−0.002	(0.015)	−0.010	(0.014)
Decentral responsibility					0.017	(0.043)	0.053	(0.042)
Firm size					0.092	(0.050)	0.065	(0.049)
Relationship Outcome								
KAM effectiveness			0.281	(0.046)**			0.164	(0.051)**
Support Points								
Intercept	4.070	(0.457)**	2.010	(0.442)**				
Cluster 1: TMD Cross-Functional KAM					3.609	(0.953)**	3.101	(0.958)**
Cluster 2: Middle Management KAM					3.720	(0.855)**	2.917	(0.846)**
Cluster 3: Window-Dressing KAM					3.533	(0.781)**	2.527	(0.774)**
Cluster 4: Country-Club KAM					2.761	(0.881)**	1.747	(0.891)*
Cluster 5: Non-formal KAM					3.365	(0.791)**	3.099	(0.799)**
R-Square	0.171		0.238		0.272		0.308	
AIC			1783.350				1754.085	
BIC			1799.412				1797.200	
Log likelihood			−872.675				−826.042	
Change in Log likelihood							46.633*	

**$p < .01$, *$p < .05$. Significance is based on two-tailed tests, standardized results.
MS = Marketing and Sales, TMD = Top-Management Driven.

$$KE_f = \sum_{c=1}^{5} \pi_c \alpha_{1,5} + \beta_{1-7} ID_f + \beta_{8-9} KC_f + \beta_{10-13} CS_f + \beta_{14-19} C_f + \sum_{c=1}^{5} \varepsilon_{1,5}, \quad (3)$$

$$PM_f = \sum_{c=1}^{5} \pi_c \alpha_{1,5} + \beta_{1-7} ID_f + \beta_{8-9} KC_f + \beta_{10-13} CS_f + \beta_{14-19} CO_f + \beta_{20} KA_f + \sum_{c=1}^{5} \varepsilon_{1,5}, \quad (4)$$

where the f subscript indicates the firm, β indicates regression coefficients, $\sum_{c=1}^{5} \pi_c \alpha_{1,5}$ represents latent support points on the intercept for cluster c, $\sum_{c=1}^{5} \varepsilon_{1,5}$ denotes the error term for support point c, *ID* is a vector of the organizational determinants, *KC* is a vector of the KAM capabilities, *CS* is a vector of communication mode, *CO* is a vector of controls, *KE* is KAM effectiveness, and *PM* is performance in the market. We estimate Eqs. 3 and 4 simultaneously by maximizing the log-likelihood function. The maximum variance inflation factor is 1.75 and, well below the thresholds for multi-colinearity concerns.

5.2. Results

We first estimated a simpler model that largely mirrors the analyses of Workman Jr et al. (2003), as reported in Model 1 in Table 5. We find that activity intensity (b = 0.19, $p < .01$), access to marketing and sales resources (b = 0.13, $p < .05$), and formalization (b = 0.11, $p < .05$) are positively related to KAM effectiveness. Top management involvement (b = 0.16, $p < .01$), access to marketing and sales resources (b = 0.13, $p < .05$), formalization (b = 0.10, $p < .05$), and KAM effectiveness (b = 0.28, $p < .01$) are positively related to performance in the market.

Adding KAM capabilities, KAM communication, and the latent support points in Model 2 increases model fit and the R-Square values. In this more advanced model, activity intensity (b = 0.15, $p < .01$), access to marketing and sales resources (b = 0.09, $p < .05$), reactive KAM capability (b = 0.21, $p < .01$), proactive KAM capability (b = 0.11, $p < .01$), and social media communication (b = 0.16, $p < .01$) are all positively related to KAM effectiveness. Top management involvement (b =

Table 6
Summary of KAM cluster results and relationship to previous typologies of KAM.

Cluster	Cluster Description	Programs from Shapiro and Moriarty (1983)	Relationships from Wilson (1995)	Taxonomies of Homburg et al. (2002)
Top-Management-Driven Cross-Functional KAM (55%)	The "Top Management-Driven Cross-Functional KAM" cluster has a highly formalized KAM, the highest value on all determinants, and the best outcomes of all clusters. Specifically, a lot of activity is proactively performed, top management involvement, the use of teams, and the availability of resources and capabilities are all high. Importance of social media communication, dedication to key accounts, and number of account managers are also highest among clusters. Firm size, KAM effectiveness, and performance in the market are also highest.	Corporate-Level Program	Partnership KAM/ Synergistic KAM	Top-Management KAM (10%), Cross-Functional KAM (12%)
Middle Management KAM (28%)	The "Middle Management KAM" cluster has a low top-management involvement in comparison to the other clusters. Moreover, a rather high amount of activity is performed, formalization is average, the use of teams is rather high, and availability of resources and capabilities is average. Importance of social media communication, dedication to key accounts, internal orientation, span of accounts, number of account managers, decentralized responsibility, and firm size are all close to the sample mean. KAM effectiveness and performance in the market are below average.	Operating Unit Level	Mid- KAM	Middle-Management KAM (20%)
Window-Dressing KAM (10%)	The "Window-Dressing KAM" cluster has the lowest internal orientation and highest span of accounts. Activity intensity and pro-activeness, formalization, top management involvement, the use of teams, and the availability of resources and capabilities are all below average. Importance of personal, telephone, and written communication are all lowest among clusters. Number of account managers and decentralized responsibility are close to the sample mean. Firm size, KAM effectiveness, and performance in the market are below average.	Part-Time Program	Pre-KAM	–
Country-Club KAM (5%)	The "Country-Club KAM" cluster has high top-management involvement and communication intensity while most other determinants score low. In particular, little activity is performed, formalization as well as the use of teams is low, and availability of resources is low. However, reactive KAM capability scores rather high, and personal, telephone, and written communication score highest among clusters. Social media communication and dedication to key accounts are below sample mean, span of accounts and number of account managers are in line with the sample mean, and decentralized responsibility and firm size are lowest across all clusters. KAM effectiveness and performance in the market are rather low.	–	–	Country-Club KAM (10%)
Non-Formal KAM (3%)	The "Non-Formal KAM" cluster has the lowest values on most variables: Little activity is performed, formalization is low, top management involvement as well as the use of teams is low, and availability of resources and capabilities is low. Importance of social media communication and dedication to key accounts are lowest among clusters. In contrast, the span of accounts and decentralized responsibility are high. KAM effectiveness and performance in the market are very low.	No Program	Pre-KAM	No KAM (12%)

0.14, $p < .01$), access to marketing and sales resources (b = 0.10, $p < .05$), reactive KAM capability (b = 0.15, $p < .01$), proactive KAM capability (b = 0.16, $p < .01$), and KAM effectiveness (b = 0.16, $p < .01$) are all positively related to performance in the market.

6. Discussion

6.1. Contributions to the KAM literature

This research had two objectives. First, it aimed at updating and extending the influential KAM configuration study from Homburg et al. (2002). For this purpose, we integrated two additional dimensions, i.e. KAM capabilities and KAM communication, into our taxonomy. Second, it aimed at updating and extending the organizational determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market from Workman Jr et al. (2003). We discuss results and contributions firstly related to our first research question, and subsequently related to our second research question.

6.1.1. An updated taxonomy of KAM configurations

This study replicates and extends the work of Homburg et al. (2002). In agreement with their results, we conclude that no uniform way of designing and implementing KAM in companies exists, suggesting that theoretical statements about KAM can only be formulated either for specific KAM configurations, or based on a discussion on how the more general relationship may be 'distorted' by the specific form of the KAM configuration. More specifically, our results provide evidence for the existence today of five distinct KAM profiles that we describe as "TMD Cross-Functional KAM", "Middle Management KAM", "Window-Dressing KAM", "Country-Club KAM", and "Non-formal KAM". Each of these segments demonstrates considerable differentiating characteristics with respect to their activities, formalization, actors involved, resources, capabilities, and communication. Table 6 summarizes the KAM configurations, describes their main characteristics, and compares them with Shapiro and Moriarty (1983), Wilson (1995), and Homburg et al. (2002).

Notably, some of the core clusters identified by Homburg et al. (2002) seem to hold good today, with the results demonstrating characteristics to a large degree in line with the initial clusters albeit with different degrees of presence. The "Cross-functional, dominant KAM" and "Top Management KAM" from Homburg et al. (2002) emerge prominently in a combined form for more than half of respondents which we label here "TMD Cross-functional KAM" (55%). The second biggest cluster is the "Middle Management KAM" (28%). A very similar cluster represented 20% of the cases in Homburg et al. (2002), indicating a progression towards this form of KAM over the years. The

"Country-Club KAM" (5%) presents a combination of features also identified in the initial research by Homburg et al. (2002). Decentralized responsibility and firm size scores the lowest across all clusters. With the exception of top-management involvement and communication intensity, this configuration is quite close to the Non-formal KAM.

The smallest cluster that we identify is labeled "Non-formal KAM" (3%). While companies in this cluster state that they practice a form of KAM, the activity is typically lateral in the sense that managers such as a VP sales are in charge of KAs in addition to their main responsibility. This may often be linked to the phenomenon of suppliers serving 'hidden key accounts' as described by Wengler et al. (2006). In practice, this part-time KAM configuration barely even pays lip service to the KAM concept and hence produces poor outcomes. When compared with the Homburg et al. (2002) study, this cluster directly mirrors their "No KAM" cluster. However, in our study it comprises a much smaller number of cases, suggesting that, over the past 20 years, an increasing number of companies have upped the level of formalization and, more generally, professionalism in managing their KAs.

Our data does not, however, support the ongoing existence of the three clusters "Isolated KAM", "Unstructured KAM", and "Operating Level KAM" from Homburg et al. (2002), thus indicating higher levels of professionalism in KAM in general. Finally, we note the emergence of a new cluster that we label "Window-dressing KAM" (10%). The window dressing KAM configuration closely resembles the work performed by traditional sales staff in the organization. The smaller companies in our sample, often with lesser overall resource availability, seem to favor practicing the window-dressing configuration. While it consists of a rather small percentage of all cases in our sample, the cluster might actually be more important as a positivity bias of self-referential answers may have led some respondents to "embellish" their situation.

6.2. *Updated determinants of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market*

Turning to the determinants of KAM outcomes, this study replicates and extends the work of Workman Jr et al. (2003). In agreement with their results and including the same constructs in our analysis, we find that activity intensity and access to marketing and sales resources are positively related to KAM effectiveness. These results confirm that KAM leads to positive outcomes when KA managers (and their teams) have the possibility to engage in customer-specific initiatives using all required resources (Guesalaga et al., 2018) inside the firm and dedicating major efforts to the specific needs of their KAs. At the same time, in both studies the use of teams is not significantly related to KAM effectiveness.

We also found notable differences compared with the original study. Regarding formalization, top management involvement, selling center esprit de corps, and activity proactiveness we do not observe the significant effects on KAM effectiveness from the initial research. Though activity proactiveness had a positive effect in our data and in Workman Jr et al. (2003), surprisingly for us we did not find this effect significant. However, a detailed inspection of the samples revealed a higher mean of 5.50 for our study, compared to 4.09 for Workman Jr et al. (2003), which suggests that the professionalization of KAM also made it more proactive, and hence firms can no longer take activity proactiveness as a differentiating factor for themselves. The same applies to the positive but non-significant effect of top management involvement in our study. In our data, the mean value for this construct is 4.78 while in the earlier study it was 3.90 with comparable standard deviations. Top management involvement has become a normal aspect of KAM and it does not differentiate between effective and ineffective companies.

We further observe a positive but non-significant effect of selling center esprit de corps. This result is all the more interesting as Workman Jr et al. (2003), p. 10) classified selling center esprit de corps as a resource-related construct linked to "the extent to which people involved in the management of key accounts feel obligated to common goals". We do not find the initial positive significant effects for this construct (as well as for top management involvement and use of teams). Interestingly, all three constructs seem to reflect the role of culture and human resources or actors at different levels in KAM. possibly, after all, companies have started to set up their KAM systems in a manner that in some way protects them from too strong a dependence on the human factor. Workman Jr et al. (2003), p. 15) observed: "activities and resources are more important than actors". While our results differ from their findings in several details, they seem reasonable in light of the permanent risk that companies face of losing either their KA managers or other key actors and associated consequences (Bendapudi & Leone, 2001).

Moreover, while Workman Jr et al. (2003) found, contrary to their theorizing, a negative effect of formalization, our study suggests a positive effect. The mean values (4.14 vs. 4.09) and the standard deviations (1.55 vs. 1.46) are very comparable in both studies. This indicates support for their initial claim regarding the advantages of formalization for KAM, based on the more general positive effects of formalization in marketing relationships (Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993).

When considering the additional determinants (while controlling for cluster membership), we find that both proactive and reactive KAM capabilities have significant positive effects on both KAM effectiveness and performance in the market. This is the case along with activity intensity which remains a significant positive driver of KAM effectiveness. For formalization, however, we no longer observe a significant effect, its role becomes almost neutral. These results confirm the impression that more than just the actual actors involved, or the access of KAM to marketing and sales resources, it is the establishment of organizational routines that determines the outcomes in KAM. Note that establishing a KAM capability in the form of such routines is conceptually different from KAM formalization. KAM formalization involved the establishment of policies for handling KAs (Workman Jr et al., 2003). KAM routines are more subtle and flexible 'reflexes' that help actors react in the appropriate manner in all situations (Guesalaga et al., 2018). Given the cross-functional nature of KAM, it appears that this involves routine forms of coordination that do not depend upon formal process charts, but rather an 'agile' response from varying groups of actors under the leadership of the KA manager.

Furthermore, in our extended model, the role of KAM capabilities is complemented by the role of KAM communication. In particular, social media communication has a significant positive effect on KAM effectiveness. This result is in line with authors who have recently suggested a positive link between B2B social media use and performance may exist (e.g. Herhausen, Miočević, et al., 2020). Interestingly, the correlations suggest that traditional communication (i.e., personal, telephone, written) and social media communication co-exist relatively independent from each other, emphasizing that KAM should use multiple communication channels to address their KAs, but giving increasing importance to social media as a complementary communication channel.

Considering the effects of the five KAM configurations, the "TMD Cross-Functional KAM" leads to the highest levels of KAM effectiveness and performance in the market. This finding provides valuable information for the ongoing discussion on the question of how KAM should best be established in an organization's structure and processes. The KAM literature has acknowledged that there are many ways of practicing KAM, going from official KAM programs through to a "de facto biological" KAM configuration (Pardo, Salle, & Spencer, 1995) that do not necessarily appear explicitly in the organization chart. Much of this stream of literature, however, remained descriptive or normative, and did not fully explore the question of which configurational choices may lead to the most positive outcomes. Our data suggests that KAM programs that explicitly appear among the units of a company and, in addition, receive strong support from top management, appear to outperform other configurations.

6.3. Managerial implications

Based on our findings, our key message to managers is to avoid a laissez-faire or superficial KAM (i.e., being part of the "Non-formal KAM" or "Window-Dressing KAM" cluster). Such configurations are associated with low effectiveness and low performance, and provide a misleading indication of the potential of KAM. A professional and consequent KAM program leads to better results as compared to trial-and-error, half-hearted, or window-dressing KAM configuration. This includes keeping top-management constantly involved in KAM, for example in the form of sponsorship for individual KA managers or regular workshops involving KAM actors and C-level managers.

A second result of our research for managers is that both top management and KA managers should jointly and actively work towards building KAM capabilities. This study suggests that proactive and reactive KAM capabilities in the form of cross-functional organizational routines make a major contribution to successful KAM. However, such routines do not emerge 'out of the blue'. They require managerial attention and collective learning processes. As a consequence, we recommend that managers involved in running and designing KAM programs in companies pay specific attention to the capability concept.

Third, while more strongly associated with private customers, social media communication has also found its way into KAM (Lacoste, 2016). The recent Covid pandemic has accelerated the already rapid digital transformation that was observable in KAM practice prior to the crisis. Our results suggest that KA managers can actually take advantage of social media communication to make KAM more effective. We do not recommend that companies try at all costs to transform KAM into a largely digital activity. However, top management and heads of KAM programs should consider how social media communication can be developed systematically to support and complement more traditional forms of communication between KA managers and their KAs.

6.4. Limitations and future research directions

Although our research is based on a large data collection largely mirroring the approach used by Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003), our study has some limitations that offer promising directions for future research. First, more generally, it must be noted that quasi-replication studies face some challenges (Bettis et al., 2016). Our replication results can not considered as representative for the KAM context, and a single replication such as ours should not be the last word on the subject of KAM configurations and the determinants of KAM outcomes. Second, we relied on informants from firms that are not publicly listed, and we unfortunately have no access to objective performance data. For further research, it would be interesting and desirable to link the KAM configurations and KAM effectiveness to economic/financial performance measures over time. Third, the sample used here was somewhat biased in terms of company activity. Indeed, more than 50% of companies fall under the headings "Machinery" and "Computer and Electronics". It could be interesting, as regards future avenues for research, to distinguish potential specifics and differences relating to the firm activity dimension. Fourth, we have a certain geographically regional focus with our data. This was deliberate choice so as to maintain a proximity with the original samples for reasons of comparability. However, culture and other environmental factors may well influence KAM configurations and determinants of KAM outcomes (e.g., Murphy & Li, 2015). It would consequently be of interest to replicate and extant the studies in different cultural settings.

7. Conclusion

Our study has been deliberately and specifically developed around KAM and its organization given its critical importance for industrial firms in B2B markets. However, firms maintain numerous relationships across organizational boundaries with professional business partners of various kinds, for example with suppliers, alliance partners, or influencers. Among these relationships, some have higher strategic importance than others, that is, they are 'more key' for the company than relationships with similar actors. Ivens, Pardo, Salle, and Cova (2009) have developed the concept of relationship keyness to describe such relationships. Relationship keyness has led to the emergence of corresponding managerial roles going beyond supplier-customer relationships, to cover issues such as key supplier management (i.e., category management), alliance partner management, and key opinion leader management. While each of these roles has its specificities, they all have a common characteristic of being introduced in a systematic way in recent years only, particularly in SMEs. Moreover, they all dedicate human resources to the focused management of a company's most important relational resources, they typically do not dispose of hierarchical power, and they require specific skill sets that differ from classical line functions. Importantly, for all of them the implementation inside companies in the early years may have evolved rather organically over time. Our research, then, may serve as an example to provide more overarching insights, going beyond the company-customer interface, by suggesting that the increasing professionalization and formalization of managerial roles also impacts these domains. Indeed, earlier studies could fruitfully be replicated and extended, with the integration of theoretical concepts that have only gained importance in recent years such as organizational capabilities, and by considering the influence of external forces such as the digitalization of interfirm communication.

Appendix A. Appendix 1: Sample composition

A: Country of Respondent	
Germany	72%
Austria	4%
Switzerland	23%
B: Position of Respondent	
Managing director, CEO, VP of region, head of business unit	28%
VP marketing, VP sales, VP sales and marketing	30%
Head of KAM, key account manager	27%
Sales manager, product manager	14%
Other	1%
C: Tenure of Respondent in the Firm	
Up to 5 years	15%
5 to 10 years	20%
11 to 15 years	18%
16 to 20 years	21%
21 years and more	26%

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D: Annual Revenues of the Firm	
Up to 10 million Euro	3%
11 to 50 million Euro	11%
51 to 100 million Euro	14%
101 to 1000 million Euro	39%
1001 million Euro and more	33%
E: Firm Size	
Up to 50 employees	4%
51 to 500 employees	29%
501 to 2500 employees	26%
2500 to 10,000 employees	19%
10,001 employees and more	22%
F: Number of Key Account Managers in the Firm	
Up to 5 key account managers	29%
5 to 10 key account managers	14%
11 to 20 key account managers	22%
21 to 50 key account managers	18%
51 key account managers and more	17%
G: Industry	
Chemical and pharmaceutical	15%
Machinery	43%
Computer and electronics	13%
Banks and insurances	4%
Food and packaged goods	9%
Other	16%

Appendix B. Appendix 2: Measurement of variables

Constructs and Items	
Activity intensity	***α* = *0.81***
Compared to average accounts, to what extent do you do more in these areas for key accounts?	0.610
	.650
■ Product-related activities (e.g., product adaptation, new product development, technology exchange)	.550
■ Service-related activities (e.g., training, advice, troubleshooting, guarantees)	
■ Price-related activities (e.g., special pricing terms, corporate wide price terms, offering of financing solutions, revelation of own cost structure)	.700
■ Distribution and logistics activities (e.g., logistics and production processes, quality programs, placement of own employees in accounts facilities, taking over business processes from customer)	.700
■ Information sharing (e.g., sharing of strategy and market research, joint production plans, adaptation of information systems, access to top management)	
■ Negotiation management (e.g., internal coordination, coordination with external partners/service providers)	.66
Activity proactiveness	
Activities are proactively driven by the initiative of key account managers.	
Approach formalization	***α* = *0.85***
Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	
	0.630
■ We have established criteria for selecting key accounts.	.820
■ Within our organization, formal internal communication channels are followed when working on key accounts.	.890
■ To coordinate the parts of our organization working with key accounts, standard operating procedures have been established.	
■ We have put a lot of thought into developing guidelines for working with our key accounts.	.74
Top management involvement	***α* = *0.86***
Within our organization…	
■ top management allocates the required resources (money, time, personnel) for the KAM function.	0.770
■ top management systematically monitors the KAM function within the company.	.760
■ top management has no hesitation to spend a lot of time in order to contribute to the management of our accounts.	.860
■ top management actively participates in the designing of activities regarding our accounts.	.81
Use of teams	***α* = *0.80***
Within our organization…	
■ when there is a problem related to our key account relationships, a group is brought in to solve it.	0.740
■ key account–related decisions are made by teams.	.810
■ we have teams that plan and coordinate activities for key accounts.	.74
Selling center esprit de corps	***α* = *0.72***
People involved in the management of a key account…	
■ have a team spirit which pervades all functions involved.	0.790
■ work together optimally when serving key accounts.	.72

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(*continued*)

Constructs and Items	
Access to marketing and sales resources How easy is it for the key account coordinator to obtain needed contributions for key accounts from these groups?	***α* = *0.77***
■ Field sales	0.670
■ Customer service	.760
■ Product management	.680
■ Marketing	.60
Access to non-marketing and sales resources How easy is it for the key account coordinator to obtain needed contributions for key accounts from these groups?	***α* = *0.76***
■ Research and development	0.780
■ Finance and accounting	.570
■ General management	.82
Reactive KAM capability (newly developed) Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	***α* = *0.84***
■ We react quickly to changes in the needs of key accounts.	
■ We are flexible to adapt to changes we are asked for by key accounts.	
■ We are well prepared to accommodate changes in key accounts.	0.900
■ We have close personal relationships to our key accounts.	.790
■ We constantly monitor our level of commitment to key accounts. (excluded)	.710
■ We measure customer satisfaction of key accounts systematically and frequently. (excluded)	.64
Proactive KAM capability (newly developed) Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:	***α* = *0.92***
■ We anticipate changes in our key accounts, need before we are even asked.	
■ We understand the problems of our key accounts and work together proactively.	0.890
■ We present new solutions to our key accounts that they did not think about.	.900
■ We are always looking for clues that might reveal changes in what our key accounts value.	.860
■ We help key accounts anticipate developments in their markets. (excluded)	.77
Communication mode (adapted from Wiesenfeld et al., 1999) How important are the following communication channels in cooperating with your key accounts?	
■ Personal communication (e.g., meetings, workshops, conferences)	
■ Telephone communication (e.g., phone calls, conference calls, video conference)	
■ Written communication (e.g., email, mail, fax, written documentation)	
■ Social media communication (e.g., social media messenger and social media community)	
Dedication to key accounts How much percent of the working time does a key account manager spend on his/her key accounts on average?	
Internal orientation How much percent of the working time spent does a key account manager use for internal coordination on average?	
Size of KAM	
■ Span of accounts per manager	
■ Number of account managers	
Decentral responsibility Where do activities for key accounts take place in your company, compared to activities for customer that are not key accounts?	
Firm size (annual revenues) How much revenue does your company raise in a year (in EUR)?	
KAM effectiveness Compared to your average accounts, how does your organization perform with key accounts with respect to…	***α* = *0.86***
■ achieving mutual trust?	0.710
■ achieving information sharing?	.750
■ achieving a reputation of fairness?	.690
■ achieving investments into the relationship?	.740
■ maintaining long-term relationships?	.670
■ reducing conflicts?	.650
■ meeting sales targets and objectives?	.640
■ enabling cross-selling?	.550
■ providing additional services?	.54
Performance in the market Relative to your competitors, how has your organization, over the last three years, performed with respect to…	***α* = *0.89***
	0.760
■ achieving customer satisfaction?	.690
■ providing value for customers?	.780
■ attaining desired growth?	.630
■ securing desired market share?	.620
■ successfully introducing new products?	.570
■ keeping current customers?	.600

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(*continued*)

Constructs and Items	
■ attracting new customers?	.760
■ increasing revenues?	.82
■ implementation of higher prices?	

If not indicated otherwise, all measures are taken or adapted from Homburg et al. (2002) and Workman Jr et al. (2003).

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