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Sales Force Training and Performance of Tissue Manufacturing Firms in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between sales force training and performance of tissue manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria**.** The researcher adopted survey research design and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The population comprises the entire sales staff in sales/marketing department of the tissue companies under study. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and mean statistics. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, with the help of SPSS 23.0 and Microsoft Excel software, were used to test the hypotheses. The findings indicated that there is significant relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage, sales force orientation training significantly affects customer retention, there is significant relationship between seminar training and customer patronage and seminar training of sales force influences customer retention. The study recommends that there is need for orientation of sales staff to enhance their effectiveness in customer acquisition, patronage and retention. More so, there is need to always organize seminars for sales staff to improve their performance. The study concludes that the achievement of marketing performance in firms depends on the nature and effectiveness of sales force training through seminar, orientation among other factors.

Keywords: sales force training, performance, customer patronage, customer retention, seminar training.

Introduction

The contribution of human resource on the overall performance of manufacturing firms – like tissue firms – cannot be neglected. This is because it is the human resource that utilizes other organizational resources to achieve the business goals of the firms; hence the need for staff training and development (Hussain, Ali, Ibrahim, Noreen & Ahmad, 2025).

Based on the above, production organization that wishes to boost its performance indicators must effectively train and empower its sales staff. That is why Okonye (2016) asserted that the extent to which an organization achieves its goals and improves sales depends on the effectiveness of its human resources, especially the sales representatives. When the sales force is well trained, developed and empowered, they will play great roles and contribute in the overall marketing performance in the organization. According to Gituma (2017), training of sales force in organizations could be in form of orientation training, on the job training, seminar. The goal of all training of sales representative is to achieve improved marketing performance. When the organization is achieving high patronage, customer acquisition, and customer retention it means that improved patronage will be achieved.

Sales force training according to Broide and Suth (2015), should include product knowledge and development of selling skills. Success at selling comes when the skills are performed automatically without consciously thinking about them. A training programme includes knowledge about the company and its products, competitors and their products, selling procedures and techniques, work organization including report preparation and relationship management. Training in management of long-term customer relationship as well as context specific selling skills should be given. This is followed by in-the-field training where skills can be practiced face to face with customers. The best salespeople do not always make the best sales managers as other skills like teaching and motivating others may be needed.

According to Ike (2019) Sales force training can significantly boost performance in tissue manufacturing firms by equipping sales teams with product knowledge, improved selling skills, and enhanced customer engagement capabilities, ultimately leading to increased sales, customer satisfaction, and market competitiveness. Training helps sales force adapt to market complexities and leverage tools like Sales force to automate processes, manage customer relationships, and analyze data, contributing to overall organizational growth objectives. Training provides salespeople with the knowledge to better understand customer needs, answer questions, and articulate product value, leading to a higher closing rate for deals(Ibezim, 2024).In a competitive and dynamic market, training helps the sales force develop the necessary skills and global mindset to navigate changes and maintain productivity.

Statement of the Problem

The contributions of sales force training on the performance of business organizations cannot be neglected. However, some organizations do not train and develop their employees – especially sales staff- as it ought to be. Most of the staff if not trained may not effectively contribute to the sales improvement in the business. In addition, most of the empirical studies accessed by the researcher on sales force training like studies by Ifediba (2019) and Zoha (2018) did not examine the relationship between sales force training, and customer patronage, and customer retention; and did not cover tissue firms. The studies did not also assess how each of the sales force training strategies (i.e., orientation and seminar, will enhance marketing performance.

All these show that an enormous research gap exists. Indeed, Ifediba (2019) did an empirical analysis of the roles of sales force empowerment in the marketing of Nigeria Bottling Company products. Here, training and its variables were neglected. The work did not also use tisuue firms. Zoha (2018) investigated the impact of sales force commitment on marketing performance in marketing firms in India. Here, only marketing performance as used in this study is in line with the work. More so, the work did not cover Nigerian environment. The study has indicated that many things are lacking as is concerns sales force training and marketing performance. It is based on the identified problems that this

study focused on sales force training and marketing performance of tissue manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between sales force training and performance of tissue manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage.
2. investigate the relationship between sales force orientation training and customer retention.
3. assess the relationship between seminar training and customer patronage.
4. evaluate the extent seminar training of sales force influences customer retention.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the researcher posed the following research questions to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage?
2. What is the relationship between orientation training and customer retention?
3. What is the relationship between seminar training and customer patronage?
4. To what extent does seminar training of sales force influence customer retention?

Research Hypotheses

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher developed the following hypotheses:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between orientation training and customer retention.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between seminar training and customer patronage.

H_{04}: Seminar training of sales force does not significantly influence customer retention.

Sales Force Training

Hall and Goodale (1986:330) defined training as "a planned fort by an organization to facilitate the learning of job-re1ated know1edggn skills by its employee to improve employee performance and further organizational goals". According to Peretomode and Peretomode (2001), training is planned organizational efforts or activities concerned with helping on employee acquire specific and immediately usable skills, knowledge, concepts, attitudes and behaviours to enable him or her perform more efficiently and effectively on his present job. It's related to improving upon the present job experience. It is concerned with technical/manual skills to non- managerial staff. Sales force training is no doubt a critical aspect of sales force management. According to Ayodele (2019), training the sales force of a company enables the sales force to do better in their present tasks. Gaughen (2014) writes on the benefits of sales force training. According to Gaughen, training is an important element of success at all organizations. Whether it's introducing someone to a new job or skill; rolling out a business process change; or, rolling out a sales incentive plan, employees must have a strong understanding of their responsibilities in order to reach goals and drive results.

The goal of sales force is to promote organizational effectiveness and growth through improved sales (Obikeze, 2012). The sales force is uniquely the life-wire of any organization that deals directly with the customers. For Achike (2021), sales force are the organizational human resources responsible for

sales function in the organization. If the sales force must achieve their goals and improve sales for the organization, they must be trained.

Performance

Performance is concerned with the overall sales increase in an organization in terms of stock turnover, customer base, sales turnover and market share (Uyi, 2021). Ike (2019) argued that the extent to which organizations that directly or indirectly involve in sales achieve their objectives as it concerns number of products sold, number of new customers attracted to the organizational fold and extent of revenue made from such sales determine the level of performance in an organization. The concept of performance is core to businesses because the major objective of businesses is to make profits. Marketing performance is a multi-dimensional construct the measurement of which varies depending on a variety of factors. For Norman (2018), high sales performance includes the way and manner the organization achieves its sales objectives.

The variables used in measuring organizational performance include brand loyalty, brand awareness, patronage, customer acquisition, customer retention, stability, growth and development. Njoku (2017) asserts that for an organization to be successful it has to record high returns and identify performance drivers from the top to the bottom of the organization. Ifediba (2019) highlights sales performance in terms of four perspectives which are the financial, customer, internal processes and innovativeness. The financial perspective identifies the key financial drivers of enhancing performance which are profit margin, asset turnover, leverage, cash flow, and working capital. The customer focus describes performance in terms of brand image, customer satisfaction, customer retention and customer profitability.

Resources-Based Theory

This theory was developed by Barney (1991). Barney (1991) observed that superior performance (sales performance) can be achieved through the basic and strategically relevant internal resources of an organization which are physical capital resources, organizational/structural resources, human capital resources and so on. If business firms have the above resources, they will perform their functions well, and organizational objectives will be achieved. Barney (1991) argued that sustained competitive advantage can be derived from the resources a firm control. These resources include finance, qualified employees, improved technological equipment, and other tangible and intangible resources. In this case, any organization (like those in the beverage industry) that has comparative advantage in the above resources is likely to achieve sales force management. This is because it has the specialized management term and finance to train, motivate and evaluate its sales staff to improve performance.

Goal Setting Theory

The theory was formulated by Edwin Locke in 1960s. The theory indicates that the major sources of motivation at the work place are the intentions to work towards the goals. Goals play significant roles by informing employees their expectations at the work place. As a specific goal enhances performance within an organization, therefore goal setting theory supports the value of goals. Acceptance of difficult and challenging goals results into enhanced performance in an organization as opposed to easy goals. Moreover, availability of feedback at the work place brings about better performance than non-availability of feedback. According to Bernadine and Walter (1999), goals should be very specific, moderately difficult and employees should be committed to achieve these goals. Rewards should be

tied in together with the goals so as to enhance performance at the work place. Goals that is specific in nature yield high levels of outputs as opposed to goals that are general in nature.

This is because specific goals act as internal stimulus of the processes within organizations. Holding other factors for example acceptance of goals constant, it can be stated that the more difficult the goals, the greater the level of performance at the work place. Companies that want to further their mission, do so by setting realistic goals. Goal setting facilitates formalization of organizational statements, implementation of missions and vision statements. Therefore, goals are significant motivators at the work place by providing employees with realistic and tangible targets that can be achieved easily. Evaluation involves employee performance comparison with the objectives that has been described in the beginning of the appraisal period. Evaluation tells about the performance of employee by which employees have met their goals. Regular assessment makes employees focus their attention on what is expected of them, give feedback to employees and motivates the employees to perform effectively. Feedback tells employee that his work done well and also illustrates what is needed to improved. The good appraisal and supervisor must communicate to employee that how the performance of them can improved and motivates him.

Empirical Review

The researcher used the following empirical studies to beef the study:

Hussain, Ali, Ibrahim, Noreen and Ahmad (2025) worked on impact of sales representative on consumer perception and purchase intention in Pakistan. Survey was used through interview, and data were analyzed using mean. It was revealed that training of sales representative inspired consumer to have good perception and intention.

Ibezim (2024) investigated the effect of sales force motivation on cosmetics' performance in Starline, Abia State. Survey research design was used and interview system served as the instrument of data collection. The population of the study is made up of the entire 180 permanent staff of the firm, which also served as sample. The collected data were analyzed using simple percentage and the hypotheses tested using Pearson product coefficient correlation. The findings revealed that sales motivation makes sales staff to encourage firm performance.

Natuhwera (2023)investigate the relationship between sales force management and customer retention in the hotel industry a case study of Sheraton hotel. To achieve the above objectives, the researcher collected primary data and secondary data. The researcher used descriptive analysis and SPSS and used a sample of 100 respondents, 50 hotel customers and 50 Sheraton hotel employees who were selected using purposive sampling and simple random technique. The research findings showed that customer care services and customer retention are related.

Opera (2022) examined the effect of sales force training on marketing performance in UNICEM Calabar, Cross River State. The researcher adopted survey research design and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The population comprises the entire management and sales staff in sales/marketing department of United Cement Company (UNICEM) Calabar, Cross River State. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and mean statistics. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, with the help of SPSS 21.0 and Microsoft Excel software, were used to test the hypotheses. The findings indicated that there is significant relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage, sales force orientation training significantly affects customer retention, there is significant effect of seminar training on customer patronage and seminar training of sales force influences customer retention. The study recommends that there is need for orientation of sales staff to enhance their effectiveness in customer acquisition, patronage and retention. More so,

there is need to always organize seminars for sales staff to improve their performance. The study concludes that the achievement of marketing performance in firms depends on the nature and effectiveness of sales force training through seminar, on-the-job, and orientation among other factors.

Madukachi (2021) focused on effect of sales force motivation and performance in Guinness Nigeria, Lagos. Survey research design was used and interview system served as the instrument of data collection. The population of the study is made up of the entire 180 permanent staff of the firm, which also served as sample. The collected data were analyzed using simple percentage and the hypotheses tested using Pearson product coefficient correlation. The findings revealed that motivation enhances product quality, and good price.

Nene (2021) focused on sales force management and consumer patronage using PZ Cussons products Aba, Abia State as the focal point. The study was carried out to identify the usefulness of billboard advertising on sales performance. Three research objectives, three research questions and three research hypotheses guided the study. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The population of this study was 56 management staff of P-Z Cussons, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. From where the sample size of 49 was obtained. Out of 49 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 44 copies were returned and used. The data collected were analyzed and tested using simple percentage and chi-square respectively. The study found that sales force management enhances consumer patronage.

Uyi (2021) analyzed the impact of sales representatives on profitability of banks in Benin City, Edo State (2010-2018). The work used ex-post facto method and data were collected using secondary data and analyzed using multiple regression statistics. It was discovered that sales representatives have long run positive relationship with profit after tax, return on asset, and return on investment in the banks.

Rolph, Rajiv and James (2020) investigate sales management training programs for sales managers in Mali. Survey research design was used and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentage and chi-square. Findings from these studies reveal that most sales managers receive little or no formal training for their sales management roles, and that the training provided often has glaring weaknesses. This study is the first to investigate the availability and characteristics of sales management training programs from the perspectives of sales managers.

Namusonge, Willy & Olawoye (2016) determined the impact of sales force training on performance of firms in Lagos. The work used commercial research centers. It used survey and collected data through telephone interview. Methods of statistical analyses include mean, standard deviation, and Pooled, Random and Fixed regression models. The results of analysis indicated that sales force training enhances performance of research firms. It recommends for improved training of staff.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. Survey research design was used because of its advantages in collecting primary data.

The population of this work is 107 respondents. It covered the employees in the sales and marketing units of tissue paper companies in South-East Nigeria. The caliber of sales staff used are those who have stayed up to three years in the organization; hence they have the requisite experience. The tissue paper companies are Ellbrown Impex Nigeria Ltd, Hanombizu Ind. Co. Ltd, and Favour Ben Nig. Ltd in Abia State; Sylflora Industry Ltd, Lienco Production Co. and Macdon Industries Ltd in Anambra State; Ezigwe Agro and Allied Enterprise, Integrated Homeland Business and Greenvile Bay Enterprises in Ebonyi State; Coomadae Industries Ltd, Vanrollz Company Ltd and Kefag Ventures in

Enugu State; and Afrimeric Investment Ltd, Vichaez Integrated Enterprise, Amistovis Nig. Ltd in Imo State. It includes all categories of sales staff in the above organizations.

Through the use of census, the researcher used the entire 107 sales staff in the tissue paper firms as sample. Questionnaire was used as primary source of data. Anyanwu (2016) states that questionnaire is a printed list of questions to be answered by a number of people especially as part of a survey research. Each research question was used to develop some number of questionnaire questions for easy data analysis. The researcher used Likert scale format of the questionnaire which includes strongly agree = 4 points, agree = 3 points, strongly disagree = 2 points, disagree = 1 point.

The data collected in this study were presented using Simple Percentage, Mean Statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSISAND INTERPRETATION

In this section, the study focused on analysis of data. It covers analysis of demographic information and the subject matter. Not only that, out of 107 copies of questionnaire distributed, only, 100 copies were returned and used.

Section B: The Subject Matter

Research question one: What is the relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage?

Table 1: Sales force orientation training and customer patronage.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	n	åX	X	Dec
1	Orientation training increases sales performance	50	47	2	1	100	346	3.5	A
2	Orientation training for sales staff add value to sale improvement	40	41	10	9	100	312	3.1	A
3	There is significant impact of training of new sales staff on customer patronage	51	46	1	2	100	346	3.5	A
4	Staff training adds value to sales	48	49	1	2	100	343	3.4	A
	Grand Mean							**3.4**	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

It is seen in table 1 that all the items were accepted. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.5, item 2 has a mean of 3.1, and item 3 has a mean of 3.5 and item 4 has a mean of 3.4; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above.

Research question two: To what extent does sales force orientation training significantly relate with customer retention?

Table 2: Sales force orientation training and customer retention.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	n	åX	X	Dec
1	Learning on the job make sales staff to acquire more customers	47	43	6	4	100	380	3.8	A
2	Training through orientation makes sales employees to be effective and learn ways of wooing new customers	41	47	7	5	100	324	3.2	A

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	n	åX	X	Dec
3	Customer acquisition can be achieved through sale force orientation training	55	39	4	2	100	347	3.5	A
4	Training of sales force through superior experienced sales supervisor learns to customer attraction	40	41	10	9	100	312	3.1	A
	Grand mean							3.4	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The above table shows that all the items were accepted. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.8, item 2 has a mean of 3.2, item 3 has a mean of 3.5 and item 4 has a mean of 3.1; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above.

Research question three: What is the relationship between seminar training and customer patronage?
Table 3: Seminar training and customer patronage.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	n	åX	X	Dec
1	Regular seminar training enhances the knowledge and skills of the sales force	43	51	2	4	100	333	3.3	A
2	Seminar training of sales staff enhances their selling skills	41	47	7	5	100	324	3.2	A
3	There is significant impact of seminar training of new sales staff on customer patronage	51	46	1	2	100	346	3.5	A
4	Seminar training equips sales force with effective negotiation skills.	48	49	1	2	100	343	3.4	A
	Grand mean							**3.4**	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

It is seen in table 3 that all the items were accepted. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.3, item 2 has a mean of 3.2, and item 3 has a mean of 3.5 and item 4 has a mean of 3.4; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above.

Research question four: To what extent does seminar training of sales force influence customer retention?
Table 4: Seminar training of sales force and customer retention.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA	A	D	SD	n	åX	X	Dec
1	Seminar improves communication skills of sales force when interacting with customers.	42	51	4	3	100	332	3.3	A
2	Organizing regular seminar for sales staff leads to customer happiness with the firm	48	49	1	2	100	343	3.4	A
3	Customer retention can be achieved through effective sales force training	43	51	2	4	100	333	3.3	A
4	Through seminar training sales force develop better customer relationship management skills.	41	47	7	5	100	324	3.2	A
	Grand mean							**3.3**	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in the above table indicated that all the items were accepted. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.3, item 2 has a mean of 3.4, item 3 has a mean of 3.3 and item 4 has a mean of 3.2; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

S/N	Hypotheses	Statistical Tools Applied (Software R studio)	Result
H1	There is significant the relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage	Pearson Correlation= 0.88 Sig = 0.05 n=100 Grand mean = 3.4	**VALID**
H2	Sales force orientation training significantly relate with customer retention	Pearson Correlation= 0.88 Sig = 0.05 n= 100 Grand mean = 3.4	**VALID**
H3	There is significant relationship between seminar training and customer patronage	Pearson Correlation= 0.88 Sig = 0.05 n= 100 Grand mean = 3.4	**VALID**
H4	Seminar training of sales force influences customer retention	Pearson Correlation= 0.85 Sig = 0.05 n= 100 Grand mean = 3.3	**VALID**

Discussion of Findings

The major findings of this study are discussed thus:

In line with the hypothesis one, this study discovered that there is significant relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage. This is in line with the view of Ike (2019) who stated that the sales force capacity building leads to improved performance of organizations.

The result of the hypothesis two revealed that sales force orientation training significantly relates with customer retention. In this case, Gituma (2017) states that orientation training makes sales staff to be effective very and leads to organizational viability and sales increase.

The result of the hypothesis three revealed that there is significant relationship between seminar training and customer patronage. For that, Ike (2019) was of the view that seminar training makes workers to learn new technique and leads to improve performance.

The result of data analysis as it concerns hypothesis four reveals that seminar training of sales force influences customer retention. Here, Onuorah et al (2019) said that nearness of customer retention and acquisition is the function of effective sales force which could be enhanced through training and development.

Conclusion

The goal of every organization is to improve its performance. To achieve this, sales representatives in firms must be well trained and developed. This is because they are the first contact staff with customer and their effectiveness will add value to marketing performance of organizations. Since this study

discovered that there is significant relationship between sales force orientation training and customer patronage, sales force orientation significantly enhances customer retention, there is significant relationship between seminar training and customer patronage and seminar training of sales force influences customer retention. There is need for organizations to effectively train their sales representative so as to achieve improved sales performance. This study concludes that the achievement of marketing performance in firms depends on the nature and effectiveness of sales force training through seminar, and orientation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is need for orientation of sales staff to enhance the effectiveness in customer acquisition, patronage and retention.
2. There is need to always organize seminar for sales staff to improve their performance.
3. Orientation and Seminar training for sales representatives should be highly promoted in Nigeria tissue firms.
4. There is need for regular training of sales force so as to achieve efficiency in the marketing performance of business.

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