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SALES PERFORMANCE, SALES AND CUSTOMER ORIENTATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The systematic literature review on sales performance, sales orientation, and customer orientation (SOCO) sheds light on sales success and the importance of measuring and evaluating sales performance using revenue, customer satisfaction, and retention rates. Individual sales ability, customer focus, and organizational factors affect sales results. Customer orientation and sales skills improve sales results. The assessment emphasizes the importance of organizational support, culture, leadership, market conditions, and competition in sales performance. These variables can help companies improve their sales strategy and succeed. Future study can examine "Salesperson Well-Being," how sales strategies, customer focus, and organizational context effect job satisfaction, work-life balance, and well-being. Organizations can improve sales performance and environment by focusing salespeople's well-being.

KEY WORDS

Sales performance, literature review, sales orientation, customer orientation.

Sales performance is crucial to every company's success, especially in competitive markets. Understanding and quantifying sales performance is crucial for assessing salespeople and identifying areas for development. Sales performance is defined with a broad scope and high level of abstraction, as established by Behrman et al., (1982). Exceeding sales quotas and objectives, locating and cultivating key accounts in one's territory, and gaining a sizable market share are all examples of the broad and long-term goals that make up the concept of sales performance.

The effectiveness and efficiency of sales teams can be better understood by measuring sales performance. It helps businesses single out their best achievers so they can give them the credit they deserve. It does double duty by revealing where sales staff could use some coaching to improve their performance and assist the company reach its objectives (Behrman et al., 1982).

The setting of achievable sales goals and standards is made possible by accurate measurement of sales performance. It helps sales managers keep tabs on results, identify patterns, and use that information to inform strategic decisions. In addition, it helps find salespeople with great potential who can be prepared for leadership roles down the road (Donassolo & Matos, 2014).

To measure sales performance accurately, organizations often employ a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics. These may include sales revenue, units sold, average transaction value, customer acquisition and retention rates, conversion rates, sales cycle length, and customer satisfaction scores. By analyzing these metrics, organizations can gain insights into the effectiveness of their sales strategies and identify areas for improvement (Behrman et al., 1982).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Few scholars agree on what factors most affect performance, what factors constitute a salesperson's history, or how sales performance itself should be measured. The early theoretical development in this field focused on the measurement of constructs, and Churchill Jr., Ford, and Walker Jr. (1974) made a significant contribution by developing and proposing



a scale to measure industrial salespeople's satisfaction with their jobs (the INDSALES scale)(Behrman et al., 1982).

Churchill et al., (1974) pointed out that salespeople's success is affected by things they can change. These factors include how they see their job, how motivated they are, and how skilled they are. First, the way salespeople see their responsibilities and the specific things they need to do to get the success results they want is called their "perception of their role." When sellers know what their job is, they can put tasks in order of importance and use their time well. It helps people focus on what matters most for their performance and the company's success.

Salespeople's levels of motivation significantly impact their performance. How dedicated they are to making sales is a function of their intrinsic motivation. Motivated salespeople are more likely to stick with it when things get tough, have a positive outlook, and go the additional mile to achieve their objectives. Different people are motivated by different things; for some, it's internal rewards like pride in a job well done, while for others it's external rewards like money or recognition from superiors. The success or failure of a sales team is heavily dependent on the proficiency of its members. Abilities encompass a wide spectrum, from product knowledge to communication to negotiation to issue solving to connection building. Salespeople who have more experience and training are better able to interact with consumers, overcome their objections, present solutions in a style that is easy to understand, and earn their trust. Salespeople can improve their performance and overall success through ongoing training and education (Helm et al., 2014).

Verbeke et al., (2010) did a meta-analysis in which they put the background factors of sales success in order of how important they were. Personal factors, like personality traits, attitudes, and self-confidence, have been found to have a big impact on sales success. After human factors, organizational factors and environmental factors were thought to be important. These factors include things like organizational support, culture, leadership, finances, market conditions, competition, and industry trends. Motivation, aptitude (including intelligence and problem-solving skills), skill levels, and how salespeople see their role in the company and the sales process were also found to affect sales performance.

It is widely accepted that in order for salespeople to effectively serve their clients and prospects, they must have a strong focus on their customers' needs. In reality, however, not all salesmen always put the customer first when conducting sales. Surprisingly, decades of sales study on the link between salespeople's client orientation and performance outcomes have produced mixed findings. Since this is the case, it is suggested that a lack of specialized selling abilities renders client orientation an unreliable predictor of sales performance.

From this vantage point, it's clear how crucial it is to have both a focus on the client and strong sales abilities. It's possible that focusing solely on the consumer isn't enough to boost sales results. Successful salespeople know how to navigate the sales process, cultivate connections, meet the demands of customers, and ultimately close agreements. These methods of persuasion serve as a catalyst for translating a focus on the buyer into concrete sales results.

Also, empirical research suggests that salespeople may do better to choose a sales orientation strategy rather than a customer orientation approach if they lack the necessary selling skills. Focusing on closing agreements and increasing revenue is at the forefront of a sales orientation strategy. It's possible that a sales orientation method might be more productive than a customer orientation approach in cases where salespeople lack the requisite selling skills.

The study also highlights the "missing link" between the sales orientation-customer orientation (SOCO) research paradigm. It demonstrates the importance of sales expertise and how it can mitigate the negative effects of both a sales orientation and a customer orientation on sales results. In other words, the efficiency of either stance can be impacted by the presence or absence of competent salespeople.

These results cast doubt on the idea that customer focus is the sole factor in sales success. While client focus is still crucial, success in sales is most often achieved when it is



combined with competent salesmanship. Better sales results can be achieved when companies and salespeople have a thorough understanding of the relationship between customer focus, selling abilities, and performance.

This study indicates that customer focus alone may not be sufficient to ensure successful sales outcomes. Instead, the availability of specialized selling abilities is essential for making the most of customer orientation. In addition to emphasizing the customer, successful salespeople know how to navigate the sales process and achieve their goals. More research is needed to better understand the intricate relationships between customer focus, sales ability, and performance outcomes in the sales industry.

A sales orientation is a mindset or way of thinking in which a salesperson prioritizes making a quick buck over building a loyal customer base. Successful salespeople put an emphasis on making sales, bringing in money quickly, and meeting quotas. Their primary goal is to increase sales, so they adopt strategies like aggressive selling, special offers, and compelling communication to accomplish this. Customers' individual preferences and needs are often overlooked in favor of closing sales.

On the other side, a customer-oriented approach prioritizes the wishes and requirements of the clientele. Relationship-focused salespeople put their customers first, offering tailored services and products. They want to help consumers settle on purchases that make them happy by identifying those consumers' unmet requirements and providing options that effectively address them. Salespeople that put the customer first prioritize building lasting bonds with their clientele, earning their confidence, and earning recognition for their superior service.

In conclusion, sales orientation is concerned with maximizing short-term sales gains by generating demand, whereas customer-oriented selling is concerned with identifying and meeting customer needs in order to establish and maintain positive, mutually beneficial relationships with those customers. In terms of sales methods and relationships with customers, these two perspectives couldn't be more different.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

The method of choice for this study is a comprehensive literature search. This strategy will aid in locating and reviewing previously published research by researchers. This systematic literature review was adapted from Denyer & Tranfield, (2003) to help researchers more easily choose what should be included in their study and what should be excluded if their work doesn't fit the study's guidelines. This strategy will facilitate researchers' ability to obtain all relevant publications. Planning, searching, screening, extraction, synthesis, and reporting are the five phases of (Tranfield et al., 2003) methodology that help in literature reviews.

The researcher strives to develop a strategy for the research in order to specify the questions. This article provides a review of the research issue "How is the application of the formation of sales performance?" Findings from this investigation will help shape and illuminate the development of both theory and practice. The next step is to find the information in the research database that answers the question at hand by using the keystring.

One electronic database, Scopus, was used to search for papers relevant to this study issue. The article was chosen because it provided a clear and compelling description of sales success and empirical data. In this study, we choose to focus on "Sales Performance" as our keyword. Researchers employ these terms to gain a holistic perspective on sales success, allowing them to answer queries both broad and narrow.

The abstracts of 1631 publications were registered after a search of a single Scopus electronic database. Then, using the study question "How is the application of the formation of sales performance?" the researcher analyzed the search results. After narrowing down the search results, the researcher used the Inclusion and Exclusion method to whittle down the number of papers that needed to be reviewed. Researchers used the following criteria to determine who to include: select just items written in English; view only articles formatted like



research papers; exclude duplicates; read the abstract to find answers to your research inquiries.

Researchers also used the following exclusion criteria: articles that do not match the research questions; articles published in languages other than English; articles that are not research papers (such as magazines, novels, conference papers, proceeding papers, audio/video, theses / dissertations); multiple versions exist.

Researcher first obtained 43 articles from the inclusion results for the search key word "sales performance" as a general search technique, and then re-included them according to the research question that only looked for themes for "sales orientation" and "customer orientation". So, only 7 papers were found to fully address the study topic. It's stated here that studies of sales effectiveness are still uncommon. The researcher purposefully broadened their scope to examine the underlying methodology and theoretical framework of the research community at large. The researcher used these findings to plan an extensive review using Excel as the primary data repository. Accessing and analyzing the article may be done in a systematic fashion with the use of this Excel database, and reviews can be made utilizing the convenient columns provided by Excel (Tranfield et al., 2003). Researchers can organize the article's content into categories using Excel columns. Researchers compile their findings by categorizing publications according to their commonalities in terms of their titles, authors, publishers, and publication dates. After this, the researcher decided on the study's paper style, design, methodology, and locus clustering. The next and most crucial step in writing this piece is to examine the research's goals, definition, keywords, theory, perspectives, and units that will be analyzed. This study's primary objective is to examine the unit of analysis used in earlier studies on sales effectiveness.

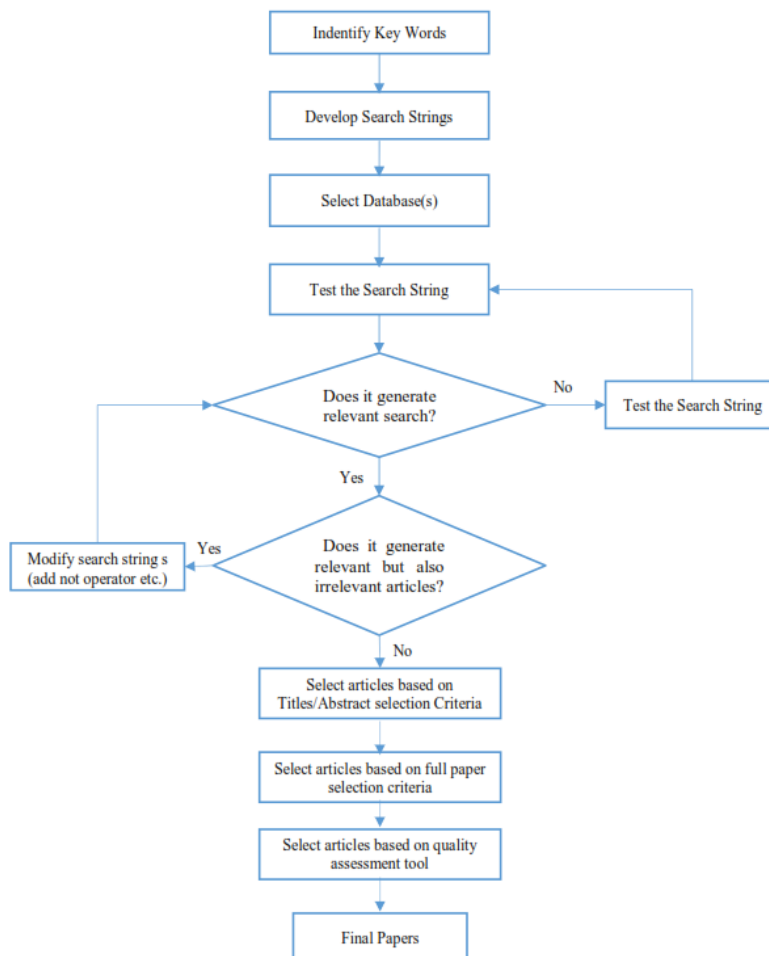


Figure 1 – Literature search process (Source: Chandorkar, 2013)



RESULTS OF STUDY

This section will elaborate on the results of the review of the literature. These results were revealed by using the Excel database's grouping criteria. The researcher will refer to and describe the findings from as many as five articles that deal specifically with the topic of the study.

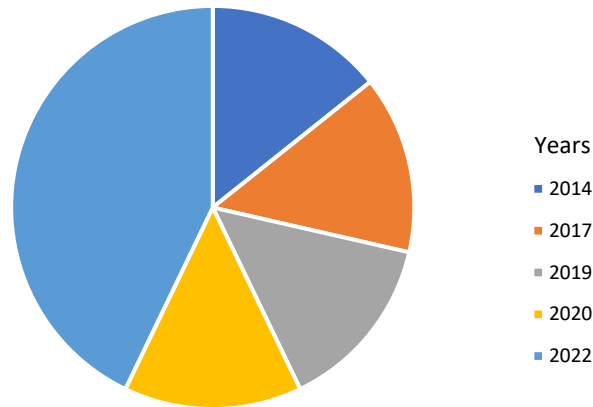


Figure 2 – Years of articles publication

Article publication dates can be used to infer when research on sales performance; sales orientation & customer orientation (SOCO) first began, and these dates corroborate the conclusions of the research. This demonstrates that this research is still in its infancy, and that further study into how to enhance Sales performance through sales orientation and customer orientation (SOCO) would be highly desirable. Three pieces on this topic were published in 2022, making it the most talked of the seven articles uncovered by the researcher; the majority of these articles came from Korea.

Groupings determined on the various paper types. The research was categorized according to (Nugroho et al., 2019; Petersen et al., 2008); six types of research paper aspects, based on the results of a systematic literature review:

- Validation Research: Though it's been explored, this method hasn't been put into effect before. Experiments are one type of technique employed; they are considered laboratory work;
- Evaluation Research: A practical application and evaluation of the method are presented. What this means is that the technique's real-world application (solution implementation) and its after-effects (implementation evaluation) are demonstrated. The process also includes looking for issues in business;
- Solution Proposal: A novel or substantial extension of an existing technique is presented as a solution to the problem. A compelling line of reasoning or illustrative case can demonstrate the solution's viability and possible benefits;
- Philosophical Papers: By outlining a taxonomy or conceptual framework for the field, papers provide a fresh perspective on established issues;
- Opinion Papers: These publications reflect the author's individual view on the merits of a given approach, as well as suggestions for improvement. They don't draw from any precedents or related studies;
- Experience Papers: Research papers based on actual practice shed light on what was accomplished and how it was accomplished. It must be drawn from the author's actual life.

Most of these articles used validation research, where this was experimental/investigative, this method is testing, the object is still in process/running, diagnostic; identify areas for development, according to the results of the aforementioned study, namely from (Chen et al., 2015; Coimbra & Proença, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022;



Varghese et al., 2017; Yi & Amenuvor, 2022; Yoon et al., 2020) the other article used evaluation research, where this was in the form of assessments, collecting relevant information to provide feedback; the latter article was cited as Yeo et al., (2019).

Yi & Amenuvor (2022), focused on investigating the impact of salespeople's individual sales capabilities on selling behaviors (sales-oriented and customer-oriented) and sales performance in door-to-door personal selling channels in South Korea. The research employed structural equation modeling to examine the information gathered from 219 salesmen. Customer-focused selling behavior was found to be more influenced by an individual's sales abilities than sales-focused selling conduct was. There was a considerable uptick in sales performance for both sales- and customer-focused selling practices. The study also found that the level of rivalry in the market moderates the link between customer-centric selling behavior and sales performance. Customer-focused approaches have less of an impact on revenue growth in a highly competitive market. However, there was no statistically significant interaction between the degree of competition and the link between sales-oriented behavior and revenue. The study concludes that salespeople's individual abilities have a significant impact on sales practices and outcomes. It indicates that sales performance benefits from both sales-oriented and customer-oriented actions, but that the former is more significantly influenced by salespeople's particular sales ability. The research also highlights the moderating influence of competitive intensity, suggesting that a hybrid sales- and customer-focused strategy may be optimal for reaching performance goals in highly competitive settings. Furthermore, the study recommends that businesses prioritize developing a culture that boosts salespeople's skills in order to boost sales performance.

Coimbra & Proença (2022), the research questions driving this study aim to answer how managerial coaching influences sales force performance, with a focus on customer focus and business outcomes. This study also explores how organizational expectations, such as centralized decision-making and pressure for results, may influence the relationship between coaching and performance. Specifically, this aspect of the relationship is examined via the lens of centralization. According to the findings of the research, managerial coaching has a favorable influence not only on customer orientation but also on results orientation, which in turn has a positive impact on sales performance. On the other hand, the impact of coaching on performance is significantly increased when the focus is on the customer rather than on results. In addition, the findings of the study indicate that the relationship between performance and results orientation is mediated by the centralization of decision-making and the pressure to produce results. The findings illustrate the significance of implementing managerial coaching strategies that place an emphasis on approaching sales with a customer-centric mindset inside sales teams. According to the findings of the study, coaching techniques such as promoting open communication, encouraging teamwork, and demonstrating appreciation for employees can help improve sales force effectiveness. When it comes to the implementation of coaching programs, the research highlights the need of companies taking into consideration contextual elements including high levels of centralization and performance pressure. The use of self-reported data for performance assessment is one of the limitations of the study. Another disadvantage of the study is the relatively small sample size. In subsequent investigations, larger samples and several other approaches to performance evaluation might be taken into consideration. In addition, investigating other factors that could operate as mediators or moderators of the effect of coaching on performance and well-being, such as cultural factors or employee traits, could provide more insights into the relationship between the two.

Nguyen et al., (2022), The purpose of the research that will be presented in this article is to conduct an investigation into the elements that influence sales success in the information service industry, more specifically in a business-to-business context. Three variables—customer focus, sales adaptability, and guanxi—were analyzed. There was evidence for five of the nine hypotheses tested, but not for the other four. The study's findings corroborated those of earlier studies showing that adaptable selling behavior positively affects salespeople's success. In addition, it showed that customer orientation has a beneficial impact on sales performance, proving that it encourages adaptable selling



behaviors and helps to boost sales success. beneficial customer relations (ganqing) were found to have a beneficial effect on sales performance, underscoring the relevance of these efforts. Only ganqing, a subset of the guanxi concept that encompasses interpersonal and social interactions, was found to positively affect salespeople's success. Favor-exchanging renqing, or guanxi, was found to have a beneficial influence on adaptive selling behaviors but a poor direct link with sales performance. This implies that favor-exchanges can help salespeople when combined with adaptive selling, but using them alone could lead to a false sense of rapport with clients and less possibilities to close deals. Despite its centrality to interpersonal exchanges, trust (xinren) was found to have little bearing on either adaptive selling or sales performance. Because of this, the conventional wisdom about trust in business transactions may need to be revised, and the scope of the notion broadened. Managers might use this data as justification for investing in salespeople's education and training in customer-centric and flexible sales tactics. Sales results can be improved by stressing the importance of adaptable selling and how customer focus supports it. Increasing client satisfaction is another effective strategy for securing lucrative contracts. Favor exchange can be useful, but it must be used with care. The study recognizes its limitations, such as its narrow sector focus and its reliance on self-reported metrics of sales success. Future research should replicate these findings across industries, use more nuanced measures of sales success, examine the impact of moderators including gender, selling experience, and cultural environment, and adopt longitudinal research designs. In sum, the research adds to our knowledge of what motivates salespeople to succeed in the information service sector. It highlights customer-centric selling habits, the relationship between client orientation and adaptive selling, and the necessity of establishing and maintaining a network of influential contacts, or guanxi. Managers should take into account the impact of interpersonal interactions on sales performance while educating salespeople in effective selling methods.

Yoon et al., (2020), talks about door-to-door sales and female salespeople. It stresses the necessity of customer-oriented selling and adaptive selling. The text also examines how adaptive selling behavior affects sales success and how key self-evaluation elements like self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism affect it. The study approach examines how core self-evaluation and adaptive selling behavior affect wellness sector female door-to-door salespeople's sales performance. Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and neuroticism positively increased sales performance through adaptive selling behavior, according to the study. Sales performance and adaptive selling behavior were unaffected by locus of control. Based on the findings, many ways found to improve female door-to-door salespeople's performance. It emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in sales and problem-solving. It underlines the necessity for training and management methods that increase employees' self-esteem and confidence. The literature also advocates boosting customer-focused sales activities through adaptive selling behavior and training programs to develop sales skills and customer judgment. The study's focus on wellness items and female salespeople. In order to have a comprehensive understanding of door-to-door sales, it is recommended that future studies engage salespeople from a variety of fields and genders.

Yeo et al., (2019), Within the framework of both organizational culture and individual behaviour, this study investigated the connection between a focus on the customer and adaptable selling strategies. According to the data, there is a correlation between customer orientation and adaptive selling. This suggests that salespeople who place a higher priority on the requirements of their customers are more likely to modify their sales methods to meet those requirements. In addition, it was discovered that adaptive selling had a good impact on both organizational identity and sales success. This finding highlights the significance of salespeople being able to adjust their strategies in response to changes in client preferences. On the other hand, there was little evidence that organizational identification had a substantial impact on sales success. The research highlights how important it is for businesses to foster an environment that is focused on the satisfaction of their customers and to equip their sales staff with the authority and resources necessary to effectively modify their strategy. In addition, the study stresses the relevance of adaptive selling in boosting



sales performance and proposes that businesses should invest in salesperson training and development programs in order to improve adaptive selling skills. This is suggested as a recommendation by the study. It is possible that the findings cannot be generalized to industries other than the service sector. Future research should investigate the disparities between the business-to-business and business-to-consumer markets. In addition, taking into consideration the intricate nature of sales behaviours, additional aspects that may play a role in client orientation and adaptive selling could be the subject of research in subsequent studies. In order to strengthen the validity of the data, one may also take into consideration the use of longitudinal measurements as well as other approaches to the evaluation of sales performance. In conclusion, the results of this study significantly advance our knowledge of the link between customer-centricity, adaptive selling, organizational identification, and sales success. The results highlight the significance of customer-centric approaches, as well as the importance of organizational support, in generating profitable sales results. In order to improve sales and build lasting relationships with consumers, businesses need to foster a culture focused on meeting customer demands and equip their sales teams with flexible selling skills.

Varghese et al. (2017), the purpose of this research is to learn how customer focus affects sales effectiveness in the banking and insurance industries. It proposed a conceptual framework incorporating organizational, job-related, and personality-related factors as antecedents of customer orientation. The empirical study collected data from salespeople in the insurance and banking industries in Kerala, India, and analyzed the relationships between variables. Several significant discoveries were made as a consequence of the findings of the investigation. It was discovered that customer orientation acted as a mediator in the interactions that existed between a supportive work environment, organizational identity, experienced meaningfulness, personal agreeableness, personal instability, and sales performance. The centralization of authority had a direct and detrimental impact on client orientation, while having an indirect and beneficial impact on sales success. In contrast to what was found in the body of prior research, organizational customer orientation did not have either a direct or indirect impact on sales performance. Organizational competitive orientation had a positive and direct effect on sales performance, but no intermediate effect. The study found that variables like as a positive work environment, a sense of belonging to the company, having a meaningful job, being amiable, and being conscientious all had a significant impact on sales success through their effect on customer orientation. Personal instability was found to negatively impact customer orientation, but was also found to have a positive link with sales performance. The survey concluded that putting the consumer first is crucial in the financial services industry, especially when it comes to making and keeping customers. Managers should prioritize developing a customer-centric culture among sales staff if they want to see improved results. The study's adoption of a multi-path approach allowed for a thorough understanding of the factors that affect consumer orientation to be provided. However, there were issues with the study, including the likelihood of cultural differences in the interpretation of measurement scales and the use of a randomly selected sample. Overall, the study makes a contribution to the knowledge of consumer orientation and provides ideas for future research in this subject, particularly on the exploration of the influence that personality factors have on customer orientation.

Chen et al., (2015), the focus of this research is on how goal orientation, self-efficacy, and sales success are related in the setting of selling novel products. Findings suggest that goal orientations that emphasize learning and performance-prove have positive effects on confidence in one's ability to sell a new product, while goal orientations that emphasize performance-avoid have negative effects. Sales results, especially those related to meeting targets for selling new products; also improve as one's sense of self-efficacy grows. Organizational psychological environment's moderating role in the association between self-efficacy and sales performance is also investigated. In this context, "self-efficacy" refers to a person's confidence in their own abilities to do a certain activity. It shows that a customer-focused culture and sales supportiveness strengthen the impact of self-efficacy on sales performance, whereas sales inventiveness does not significantly moderate the connection.



Important managerial implications stem from the study's finding that, when it comes to the performance of salespeople when selling new products, it is possible to boost sales performance by choosing salespeople with learning and performance-prove goal orientations, cultivating a supportive climate, and prioritizing customer orientation. Researchers concluded that sales performance in the setting of new product sales can be influenced by goal orientation, self-efficacy, and organizational atmosphere. The results provide useful information for managers who want to improve the effectiveness of their sales teams during the rollout of new items.

Classification based on Research Methods. Most of these studies employ quantitative approaches or are limited to theoretical frameworks. Surveys are used as a quantitative tool to gather massive volumes of information on factors influencing sales performance; sales orientation and customer orientation (SOCO).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the elements that affect sales performance and the interplay between sales tactics and customer focus are better understood thanks to the comprehensive literature analysis on sales performance, sales orientation, and customer orientation (SOCO).

The need of monitoring and analyzing sales performance is emphasized, as is the need to do so in order to recognize high achievers, reward consistent performers, and optimize sales strategy in light of empirical evidence. Sales performance is typically evaluated using key performance indicators (KPIs) and measures including sales revenue, units sold, customer acquisition rates, customer retention rates, and customer satisfaction scores.

Individual sales attributes, such as job perspective, motivation, and talents, are also highlighted as crucial in the examination. Those salespeople who know their roles well, are highly motivated, and have solid skills are more likely to hit their numbers and boost the company's bottom line is supported by research.

In addition, the article analyzes the connection between sales focus and customer focus. However, the research also shows that it's important to have solid sales skills in addition to a customer-centric approach if you want to develop enduring relationships and fulfill customers' requirements. This finding supports the idea that sales success is more likely to occur when a salesperson had both a focus on the client and solid sales abilities.

The review's findings also highlight the importance of market conditions and competition alongside environmental elements including organizational characteristics like support, culture, and leadership in determining sales effectiveness. These outside forces might have an effect on sales methods, necessitating adjustments from salespeople.

The systematic literature study elucidates the many aspects that contribute to sales success, from an individual's sales skills and client focus to those of the company as a whole and the external environment. With this information at hand, businesses will be better able to assess and enhance their sales performance plans, pinpoint problem areas, and foster the growth of their sales staff in order to achieve greater sales success in increasingly competitive markets.

Researching the factors (such as sales strategies, client priorities, and company culture) that contribute to salespeople's happiness is an interesting avenue for further investigation. Raising consciousness about the factors that influence sales staff morale, work-life balance, and health is one way to improve workplace conditions for everyone involved.

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