



AMERICAN  
SCIENTIFIC  
PUBLISHERS

Copyright © 2018 American Scientific Publishers  
All rights reserved  
Printed in the United States of America

*Advanced Science Letters*  
Vol. 24 Number 12, December 2018, pp. 9717-9721(5)

# Preferences of Sales Force Criteria for Electronic Product

Nalal Muna <sup>1,2</sup>, Fajria Fatmasari <sup>1,2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Marketing Management for Electronic Industry, Politeknik APP Jakarta, South Jakarta 12630, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Marketing Management for Electronic Industry, Politeknik APP Jakarta, South Jakarta 12630, Indonesia

Sales force is the driver of company's survival. Sales force has important role in introducing and carrying out product to potential consumer, especially for electronic products. The products often changes dynamically with the rapid advanced technology. Electronic City is one of the biggest electronic retail companies in Indonesia. The aims of this research is to identify and rank sales force criteria at Electronic City. This is qualitative and quantitative study adopting case study, focus group discussion and questionnaire to explore performance criteria of sales personnel. Analytical hierarchy process is used to rank multiple criteria of sales force for electronic product. The participants of this research are store manager, sales supervisor and team leader of Electronic City Margo City as the decision maker for evaluating sales performance criteria. Based on the weighting criteria matrixes, communication, teamwork, attitude, negotiation and appearance are the most prioritized criteria for evaluating sales force performance. Meanwhile, based on pairwise comparison above all criteria and sub-criteria, the priority of sales force criteria for electronic product are the ability to present product information clearly, a team player, friendly, listen attentively, can handle complaint and good looking.

**Keywords:** sales force, electronic product, multiple criteria, analytical hierarchy process

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sales force has been the most prominent drivers for companies [1]. They play vital role in acquiring and retaining customers for company's longevity. Most of companies require sales and marketing professionals as the front liner to meet their needs and wants [2][3]. This primary job desk perpetrated sales executive as one of the most in-demand profession in the world [4]. Moreover, this job offers overwhelming incentives as well. However, the high income comes with responsibilities that sales people needs to encounter some challenges in their work for example high level of pressure, adversity, conflict, conflict of interest, and demand of their position [5]. In fact, the vacancy pool for sales job has been extremely competitive. In Indonesia, the requirement for sales job is

unbelievably free-for-all. Everyone comes from any background of studies are welcomed to apply, no specific qualification is needed as long as the candidate show their willingness and ambidexterity in achieving the target.

Whereas, sales force has become one of competitive advantage for company due to their ability to actually affect the behavior of the buyer through influence tactics. [6] Different product exhibit different approach for the customers. Especially for electronic products, the advancement of technology and communication has a tremendous impact on the product's specification, design, and function. Sales people are expected to adept in dynamic changing of new era and easily absorb knowledge in regards to the product they sell. [7]

Regardless of the different product type, sales capabilities are dominant factors that generate revenue for

the company. The core competencies of sales force is categorized into salesmanship skills and interpersonal skills, meanwhile, some scholars proposed different criteria for choosing sales personnel, i.g. communication skill, computer skill, negotiation skill, time management skill, leadership, teamwork, integrity, problem management, looks, self discipline etc. [8]

The current research explore sales capabilities in management or organization level in wider scope of organization [9][10]. There are still few research focusing one sector of industry. This research is trying to fill the gap in regard to the preferences of sales force criteria for electronic product.

## 2. SALES PERFORMANCES

Some researchers have highlighted different factors determining sales performance from individual, psychological, social and organizational aspects [11][12][13]. Babakus et al. [14] stated that the performance of salespeople contributes to the sales organization effectiveness. It can be seen as behavioral performance consists of an evaluation of the various activities and strategies that salespeople engage when executing their job responsibilities regarding some activities like for example making sales presentation, planning sales support etc.

Based on psychological perspective, sales Aldosiry et al. [15] explained sales performance as the ability to manage social and emotional problem arising due to negative feedback and failures [16]. In terms of business-to-business market, sales performance is seen as the needs to understand the ever increasing amount of customer-specific information and an effort to increase the relationship-building. Due to high level of pressure from the environment, Ingram et al. [17] identified factors contributing sales people failure: (1) poor listening skills (2) failure to focus on top priorities (3) a lack of sufficient effort (4) inability to determine customer needs (5) lack of planning for sales presentations and (6) inadequate product/service knowledge [18].

Therefore, Virtanen *et al.* added that sales people are required to understand the complexity of the selling situation in order to deliver integrated solution to the customer. Korhonen and Kaarela [19] stressed on the complexity of communicating the value proposition of the product/service as customers might find it difficult to understand the offer. Sometimes, it is also difficult for sales people to understand the value of the product/service they offer.

Communication play pivotal role in managing anxieties from customer through customer education especially when more innovative products are concerned [20]. Regarding to electronic product, it highlights the important of sales people ability to persuade customer about the value of new products effectively. Wellman [21] identified various sets of attributes and posited communication, teamwork and self-management as main

employability attributes for marketing.

In regards to teamwork, Garrett and Gopalakrishna [22] viewed team approach as a way to develop greater strength and expertise that can increase overall performance. it means a lot to be applied in sales. It has been dominant strategy for increasing sales [23]. In this paper, teamwork can be defined as collaboration among sales executive involved salesperson, supervisor, manager and all unit in order to achieving more sales in the retail store. Without leaving self-competency, teamwork is believed more effective in reaching the goals.

Other criteria is negotiation. Negotiation is an important part of relationship development, but salespeople's negotiating styles are influenced by culture and the ability to adapt to cultures of specific markets and specific customers [24]. It takes most part in selling time to negotiate.

Attitudes and behavior of salespeople towards the customer affect customers' attitudes about the reliability of the products and services produced by the firm [25]. Beside having influence in effectiveness of communication [26], it can also drive customer satisfaction of the salesperson attitude. [27]

As a good salesperson, it may show best outfit and hairdo to the customer, moreover to loyal customer. Appearance drives first impression to customer for gaining image of product selling or the store. It is consistent with by Shao et al. [28] who found that a professional-looking appearance played an important role on consumers' emotions and store image [29].

## 3. METHODS

This research used mix methods research combining qualitative and quantitative approach including case study, focus group discussion, and questionnaire. McCutcheon & Meredith [30][31] stated that case study offers opportunity of adopting and matching different forms of data, enabling a more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. We focused our research on Electronic City store at Margo City Mall, located in Depok, Indonesia. The main reason is because the branch is the highest sales in Depok area, and it also hits 6<sup>th</sup> highest sales amongst all branches in Indonesia. The data collection implies several sources of information when the case study is adopted. At first, structured-interview is designed to identify multiple criteria of sales personnel performance for electronic product. The interview explores some information about the current situation of the company, number of sales force, promotion strategy and the importance of sales personnel in Electronic City. The objective of this interview is to obtain clear picture of the current situation of the company.

The participants are store manager, sales supervisor and team leader in Electronic City Margo City Mall. The criteria as participant of this research is because the three participants are the evaluator and decision maker for evaluating sales force performance at that branch. Based

on the interview, 9 effective criteria are identified but only 5 criteria were taken into account as criteria for sales people due to mathematical suggestion by Saaty [32]. In Electronic City Margo City, five best criteria for sales people performance are evaluated based on their communication, negotiation, attitude, appearance, and teamwork.

Focus Group Discussion then incorporated to discuss the goal, criteria and sub-criteria in evaluating sales people performance criteria. During the discussion, several sub-criteria for each criteria are identified. Communication is identified as the ability to present information regarding product knowledge clearly, be a good listener, have a pleasant voice, the ability to control body language, and the ability to make consumer feels comfortable. Meanwhile, negotiation criteria consists of some sub-criteria such as the ability to handle objection, handle complaint and responsiveness in dealing with objection and complaint. In regards to attitude, sub-criteria which are identified are friendly, polite and ability to control emotion. The appearance is also matters for sales people, sales people should good, clean and preppy. In Electronic City, the minimum height for woman is 160 cms and 170 cms for man.

After identifying five best criteria and several sub-criteria of sales personnel performance for electronic product, during the FGD, participants are asked to discuss a questionnaire consist of 30 questions by giving a scale of relative importance between 1-9 (1=equally; 3=moderately; 5=strongly; 7=very strongly; 9=extremely) to compare the relative importance with respect to goal and criteria in order to build consensus result. This step is used to determine the weighted value and prioritize criteria and sub-criteria. This research used Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). The model of this research is on the picture below.

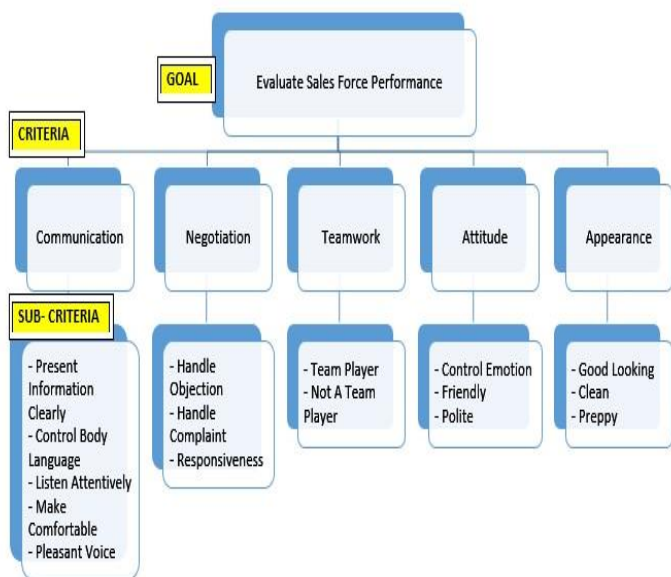


Figure 1. Hierarchy Model for Sales Criteria

AHP is a method developed by Thomas L. Saaty (1977) for multiple-criteria decision making. The

technique converted subjective assessment of relative importance to a set of overall scores or weight. The AHP process started by decomposing a decision into a hierarchy by listing the overall goal, criteria and alternatives.

The data from the questionnaire then analyzed using Expert Choice software to compute relative weights, consistency ratio and prioritize the sales personnel criteria for electronic product.

#### 4. RESULT

Based on the survey questionnaire result regarding the identification of sales performance criteria for electronic product, the figure 2 and 3 below represent the main criteria that been used to evaluate sales force performance. It appears that the participants agree that communication and teamwork are the most important criteria when evaluating sales people performance. The overall inconsistency rate of the matrixes is 0.03, it indicates high stability and compatibility of the result.

Compare the relative importance with respect to: Evaluate Sales People Performance Criteria					
	Communic	Negotiator	Attitude	Appearanc	Teamwork
Communication		4.21716	2.46621	2.75892	1.44225
Negotiation			2.08008	1.70998	2.26803
Attitude				1.44225	2.46621
Appearance					2.46621
Teamwork					
Incon: 0.03					

Figure 2. The geometric mean of the paired comparison matrix of the criteria



Figure 3. Weight Criteria for sales people performance

Communication has the highest weight which is 0.365, followed by teamwork (0.273), attitude (0.153), negotiation (0.109), appearance (0.1). Communication is pivotal for sales person for sharing information about the product, once the product knowledge cannot be shared well it will impact to losing potential consumer. For this reason, sales person is the one who is available to greet and convince potential consumer to buy the products. Through ways of communication, it is believed that it can impact to the selling of the product.



Figure 4. Prioritization of sales people performance criteria (inconsistency rate = 0.04)

Meanwhile, the weighting and the matrix of paired comparisons of sub-criteria related to each criteria are shown in Figure 4 above. The overall inconsistency rate of the matrixes is 0.04 which shows stable and compatible result. Since the FGD is designed to build consensus amongst participants, a vector from the analysis is obtained. As seen in Figure 4, from 16 sub-criteria presented in the questionnaire, the highest priority criteria is present information clearly (0.257), followed by teamwork (0.192). The least preferred criteria is control emotion (0.009), clean (0.009) and preppy (0.008).

**Present Information Clearly**

Breaking down the sub criteria, it is known that present information clearly is the highest criteria to be considered. Advertising omits essential information that will lead to the wrong choice which may impact to dissatisfaction. By giving clear information of the electronic products, it will bring consumers jump into a best conclusion in choosing the product.

In retail store of Electronic City, there are many choices of electronics products. It comes from different brands and has its own specification. Moreover, electronics product has rapid change from time to time which brings more innovation in the latest product revealed by the manufacturer. By this matter, it does make sense that consumer will be overwhelming by misleading written information. With the help of salesperson in presenting information clearly, it will be helpful to decide which products to choose.

**Teamwork**

Working for retail store of electronics products means that there will be a lot of sales person to be coordinated. Although the sales persons are coming from different manufacturer, there is no doubt to have cooperation amongst all. Salesperson cannot choose which consumer to handle. In Electronic City, all sales

persons are managed to cooperate each other to achieve more sales.

**Friendly**

By showing friendliness, consumers are feeling respected, family/friend likely, and being accustomed. That atmosphere will lead the consumer to bring more joy and delightful feeling to buy. In retail store such as Electronic City, friendly is a must. Moreover, in high context country such as Indonesia, salesperson needs to emerge smiling face, greeting, and respective attitude toward the customer. It is no doubt that friendly salesperson can bring a satisfying-service feeling which may cause loyal customer.

**Listen attentively**

Listening is essential part in promoting product. As stated by Brownell [33] that poor listening behaviors by sales personnel contribute significantly to performance failure. Listening as part of communication brings sense of empathy and such concern to customers' need and want. The implication to the salesperson at Electronic City is giving more attention to the needs of electronics products suitable for their circumstance.

**Handle Complaint**

As part of negotiation skills, handle complaint is essential for salespersons. It is beyond expectation the customer that they are served well. Handling complaint is being a key to consumer recommendation to others about the brands [34]. Winning consumer recommendation will be beneficiary to raise sales number in retail store. As word of mouth are still matters in promoting stuff and influencing others to buy the same products, or to take the same service provided by the same retail store.

**Three closely similar value criteria**

Control emotion (0.009), clean (0.009), and preppy (0.008) are three criteria which have closely similar value. They have lowest value which means that it becomes low priority in salesperson performance. Every salesperson has its responsibility to be clean and preppy no matter how. The cleanliness covers top to toe appearance. It means that it is being their consideration to show their good appearance to give good impression to customer as it is mandated to every salesperson in Electronic City, a modern retail store of electronics products. However, it does not become prior criteria to performance.

**5. CONCLUSIONS**

Communication and teamwork have become priority criteria to evaluate sales force performance. As an ambidextrous sales people for electronic product, they are required to master sets of skill i.g. presenting information clearly, be a team player, friendly personality, listening attentively, handling complaints and good looking. This research has some limitation in terms of sample size, and methods. The case study adopted in this study cannot generalize the result towards all electronic retail store in Indonesia. Thus, further research in terms of the sample size, participant's criteria expertise in the field and more

robust methods are needed.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Guenzi, P., Sajtó, L., and Troilo, G. (2016). The Dual Mechanism of Sales Capabilities in Influencing Organizational Performance. *Journal of Business Research* Volume 69(9) page 3703-3713
- [2] Nijssen, E.J., Guenzi, P., and Van der Borgh, M. (2017). Beyond the retention-acquisition trade-off: Capabilities of ambidextrous sales organizations. *Industrial Marketing Management* Vol. 64, page 1-13
- [3] Global Indonesia Voices. (2014). 10 Highest Paid Jobs in Indonesia. Accessed on <http://www.globalindonesianvoices.com/12679/10-highest-paid-jobs-in-indonesia/>
- [4] Page, M. (2017). The World's Most In Demand Professions. Accessed on <https://www.michaelpage.co.uk/minisite/most-in-demand-professions/>
- [5] Lussier, B., and Hartman, N.N. (2016). How Psychological Resourcefulness increases salesperson's sales performance and the satisfaction of their customer: Exploring the mediating role of customer-oriented behaviors. *Industrial Marketing Management* (2017) Vol. 62 page 160-170
- [6] Fine, L.M. (2007). Selling and Sales Management. *Business Horizons* (2007) 50, 185-191
- [7] Jang, S., and Nemeš, A. (2017). Salespeople knowledge search behavior and sales performance: A investigation of printing equipment industry. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* Volume 120, page 323-333
- [8] Cvetkoska, V., and Iliev, F. (2017). How to Choose Your Next Top Salesperson: Multiple-Criteria Approach. *Business System Research* Bo. 8(1) page 92-112
- [9] Gu, F.F., Jianfeng, J., and Wang, D.T. (2016). The role of sales representatives in cross-cultural business relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*
- [10] Krush, M.T., Agnihotri, R., Trainor, K.J., and Nowlin, E.L. (2013). Enhancing organizational sensemaking: An Examination of the interactive effects of sales capabilities and marketing dashboard. *Industrial Marketing Management* Volume 42 (5) page 824-835
- [11] Wihler, A., Meurs, J.A., Momm, T.D., John, J., and Blicke, G. (2017). Conscientiousness, extraversion, and field sales performance: Combining narrow personality, social skill, emotional stability and nonlinearity. *Personality and Individual Differences* volume 104 page 291-296
- [12] Wang, G., and Miao, C.F. (2015). Effect of sales force market orientation on creativity, innovation implementation, and sales performance. *Journal of Business Research* Volume 68 (11) page 2374-2382
- [13] Groza, M.D., Locander, D.A., and Howlett, C. (2016). Linking thinking Styles to sales performance: The importance of creativity and subjective knowledge. *Journal of Business Research* Volume 69(10) page 4185-4193
- [14] Babakus, E., Cravens, D.W., Grant, K., Ingram, T.N., and LaForge, R.W. (1996). Investigating the relationships among sales, management control, sales territory design, salesperson performance, and sales organization effectiveness. *International Journal of Research in Marketing* Volume 13 page 345-363
- [15] Brown, S.P., Cron, W.L., & Slocum, J.W., Jr. (1997). Effects of goal-directed emotions on salesperson volitions, behavior and performance: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Marketing*. Volume 61 page 39-50
- [16] Aldosiry, K.S., Alkhadher, O.H., AlAqraa, E.M., and Anderson, N. (2016). Relationships between emotional intelligence and sales performance in Kuwait. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*. Volume 32. Page 39-45
- [17] Ingram, T., Schepker, C., and Huston, D. (1992). Why salespeople fail. *Industrial Marketing Management*. Volume 21(3) page 225-230
- [18] Virtanen, T., Parvinen, P., and Rollins, M. (2015). Complexity of sales situation and sales lead performance: An empirical study in business-to-business company. *Industrial Marketing Management* Volume 45 page 49-58
- [19] Korhonen, H.M.E., and Kaarela, I. (2011). Corporate customers' resistance to industrial service innovations. *International Journal of Innovation Management*. Volume 15(3). Page 479-503
- [20] Kuester, S., Homburg, C., and Hildesheim, A. (2014). The catbird seat of sales force: How sales force integration leads to new product success. *International Journal of Research in Marketing* Volume 34(2) page 462-479
- [21] Wellman, N. (2010). The employability attributes required of new marketing graduates. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* Vol. 28 (7) page 908-930
- [22] Garrett, J., and Gopalakrishna, S. (2017). Sales team formation: The right team member helps performance. *Industrial Marketing Management*
- [23] Adel L. El-Ansari, Noël B. Zabriskie, John M. Browning, (1993) "Sales Teamwork: A Dominant Strategy For Improving Salesforce Effectiveness", *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 8 Issue: 3, pp.65-72
- [24] Sunanta Chairsakeo, Mark Speece, (2004) "Culture, intercultural communication competence, and sales negotiation: a qualitative research approach", *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 19 Issue: 4, pp.267-282
- [25] Guenzi, P. (2002), "Sales Force Activities And Customer Trust", *Journal of Marketing Management* Vol. 18, No:7-8, September, pp. 749-778
- [26] Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G (2001), *Principles of Marketing*, Prentice Hall, USA, 9 th ed.
- [27] Dolen, W.V., Lemmink, J., Ruyter, K. & Jong, A. (2002), "Customer-Sales Employee Encounters Dyadic Perspective", Vol.78, No.4, pp.265-279
- [28] Shao, C.Y., Baker, J., Wagner, J., 2004. The effects of appropriateness of service contact personnel dress on customer expectations of service quality and purchase intention: the moderating influences of involvement and gender. *Journal of Business Research* 57 (10), 1164-1176
- [29] Jae-Eun Kim, Hae Won Ju, Kim K.P. Johnson. (2009). Sales associate's appearance: Links to consumers' emotions, store image, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 16 (2009) 407-413
- [30] McCutcheon, D., & Meredith, J. (1993). Conducting case study research in operations management. *Journal of Operations Management*, 16(4), 441-454
- [31] Runfola, A., Perna, A., Baraldi, E., and Gregori, G.L. (2017). The Use of Qualitative Case Studies in Top Business and Management Journals: A Quantitative analysis of recent patterns. *European Management Journal* vo. 35(1), 116-127
- [32] Saaty, T.L., and Ozdemir, M.S. (2003). Why the magic number seven plus or minus two. *Mathematical and Computer Modelling* Volume 38(3-4) page 233-244
- [33] Brownell, Judi. (1990). Perceptions of Effective Listener: A Management Study. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 27 (fall), 401-15
- [34] Rothenberger, Sandra, Dhruv Grewal, and Gopalkrishnan R. Iyer. (2008). Understanding the Role of Complaint Handling on Consumer Loyalty in Service Relationship. *Journal of Relationship Marketing* vol 7, Iss, 4, 2008

Received: Juni 2017. Accepted: Agustus 2017