

SALES FORCE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SALES PERFORMANCE OF TRANSPORT COMPANIES IN BENUE STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The effect of Sales force Emotional Intelligences and Sales Performance was critically examined in this study with a case taken from transport companies in Benue state. The study employed a survey design while needed data were collected from secondary sources. Using the methodology of review of relevant existing literature, the paper qualitatively examined the effect of these identified variables and found that a major missing link in achieving sales growth in organizations can be traced to many factors including the absence of emotional intelligence from the organizations sales force. The paper found that sales persons that are emotionally intelligent have all it takes to achieve enhanced performance and increased sales growth in Transport companies. Based on this finding, the study has no option than to conclude that Sales force Emotional Intelligence has significant and sustained effect on Sales Performance in transport companies in Nigeria. Based on the above conclusion, a good number of recommendations were made including a call on the Management of transport companies to subject their sales force and indeed all other employee to Emotional intelligent training to attract the benefits that go with its acquisition.

Keywords: Effect, Emotional Intelligence, Sales force, Sales Performance, Transport Companies, Benue State.

1.0 Introduction

Increasing challenges in today's rapidly-changing, global business world demands a unique and evolving set of insights and capabilities if organizations must effectively navigate to success. The development has left organizations and their employees with no option than to be better prepared, open, effective and flexible in handling their responsibilities especially as the market has become increasingly dynamic and competitive with customers becoming less loyal and more sophisticated (Hamdan, Oweidat, Faouri & Codier, 2017). For the organization's sales force, the need to acquire and properly apply relevant emotional intelligence in the discharge of their duties has long been deemed a key strategic differentiator and means of achieving high and sustained sales growth and leverage over competitors. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability of individuals to identify, use, understand and manage emotions and emotional information. Every business organization comprises of people with different strengths, personalities and emotions, which can greatly affect the way they work. Emotional intelligence is concerned with the potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, describe, identify, learn from, manage, understand and explain emotions. It has been confirmed to be a unique strategy that can accomplish high sales as its processes orientate and advance the skills, knowledge, understanding and experiences of sales force (Hamdan, Faouri and Codier, 2017).

Selling in any organization is too important to be carried out without emotional intelligence in today's dynamic and challenging business world. It has been established that a sales person who is emotionally intelligent would be more optimistic, happy and have the competency to change, adapt and manage the stressful situations of his organization without falling apart a bit by actively coping with stress (Ugoani, 2017).

Salesperson operating in today's business world is required to understand the feelings of others and the reasons behind them in order to persuade them into entering the sales-purchase contract. Beside, sales persons with high Emotional Intelligence skills have been confirmed to be generally well satisfied with their work since they are resilient and able to maintain self-control and deal with difficult selling situations (Hamdan, Oweidat, Faouri & Codier, 2017). Emotionally Intelligent sales persons are known to understanding themselves and others effectively, have a good relationship with other people and can easily adapt to and be able to cope with their environment and so, become more successful in dealing with customers and environmental demands (Inks & Avila, 2018).

Emotional intelligence provides positive consequences for sales personals at all levels. Among others, it determines the sales man's success in organizations including enhanced sales growth, the parameter which is used to measure the [performance](#) of the sales team to increase the revenue over a pre-determined period of time (Zareie & Navimipour, 2019). It has been confirmed that when properly acquired and effectively utilized, emotional intelligence inevitably improve the competitiveness of business firms and eventually their performances, the fundamental feature for survival and sustainability. It is based on the above background that this study is put in place to assess the effect of sales force emotional intelligence on sales performance of transport companies in Benue state of Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The effect of sales force emotional intelligence on sales performance has attracted a lot of investigations in recent time which have been helpful in contributing to the body of knowledge however, this present study builds upon the literature in a few ways. First, there are a little or no known empirical studies in sales literature focusing on the impact of Emotional Intelligence on sales growth performance in the study area. Attempt to empirically examine the role of Emotional Intelligence in individual success in workplace is limited. Since Emotional Intelligence is a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use them to guide one's thinking and action (Lopes, Salovey & Beers, 2021), it would be fair to argue that emotional intelligence provide skills required for building relationships between salespeople and customers which in turn could influence sales performance.

The need for this study is also grounded on the fact that Most writers on the effect of emotional intelligence have not given the effect of emotional intelligence practices of this classes of organizations the necessary focus as their writings as they have always centered on the principles that should be adopted at the expense of the practice in place (Chepng'eno, 2017).

Another gap discovered from previous similar research works is the fact that different *practices* were studied in isolation on their effect on performance in transport companies. This does not explain the effect of such practices on the sales performance of firms. Such studies used different models many of which may not have been tested in the study area. This implies that the effect of emotional intelligence on performance cannot reliably make use of those models to predict their business performance, hence the need for this study. Till date, researchers have remain divided on the true outcome of the effect of emotional intelligence on sales performance.

Based on the conflicting research findings, this study made attempts to fill the gap. The study sought to ascertain the actual effect of Emotional Intelligence of sales force practices on sales performance of transport companies in Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of sales force emotional intelligence on sales performance of Transport sector in Nigeria.

1.4 Methodology

This study employs the methodology of review of existing literature, to examine the effect of sales force emotional intelligence on sales performance of Transport sector in Nigeria. Thus, data needed for the study was gathered through secondary sources and analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative approach is considered in this study since the concepts in qualitative research methods are expressed in motives and generalizations. Beside, unlike the quantitative research approach, in qualitative studies, each research is approached individually and individual measures are developed to interpret the primary data taking into account the unique characteristics of the research. Beside, data in quantitative research appears in the forms of numbers and specific measurements and in qualitative research data can be in forms of words, images, transcripts, etc.

2.0 Literature Review

This section presents a review of literature that relates to *the effect of sales force emotional intelligence on sales performance of Transport sector in Benue state*. The section explores the theoretical, conceptual clarification and empirical literature on the research topic and gives details of other studies conducted in the same area.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A theory is a systematically related set of statements, including some law like generalizations, which relates to a defined study and are empirically testable. The importance of theory in research cannot be underestimated. In addition, research requires a sound theoretical basis and strong methodology. Christie, Jordan, Troth & Lawrence, (2017) provided three reasons why theory is important for research: (a) it provides a framework for analysis, (b) it provides an efficient method for field development, and (c) it provides a clear explanation for the pragmatic world.

Many theories fits into the relationship between sales force emotional intelligence and sales growth performance, this study is however grounded on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theories.

2.1.2 Resource Based View (RBV) Theory

The Resource-Based View theory was propounded by Barney (1991). The theory describes a firm as a unique bundle of tangible and intangible resources (assets, capabilities, competencies, organizational processes, firm attributes, information and knowledge and so forth) that are controlled by the firm. These resources enable a firm to implement strategies designed to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. The resource-based view suggests that valuable firm resources are usually scarce, imperfectly imitable and lacking in direct substitutes. A firm's resource must have four attributes: 1) it must be valuable; 2) it must be rare among a firm's current and prospective competition; 3) it must be imperfectly imitable; and 4) it cannot be substituted for strategically equivalent resource. The RBV theory submits that a firm's strategy should depend on its resources- if a firm is good at something, the firm should try to use. In the views of the RBV theory, a firm's performance is affected by firm-specific resources and capabilities. The implication here is that resources are allocated heterogeneously (unevenly) within an industry.

The RBV theory is relevant in this study because, organizations are expected to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses so as to develop strategies on how to be competitive and achieve performance in the market making effective use of their resources bundle and capabilities.

2. 2 Conceptual definitions

A conceptual framework is an analytical tool with several variations and contexts. It is used to make conceptual distinctions and to organize ideas. In this study, the following concepts are properly defined to ensure a clear understanding of the study.

2. 2. 1 Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a part of social intelligence that involves the ability to control emotions and feeling of own self and others, to distinguish between these emotions, and use that information to guide the thinking and actions of a person. It refers to a series of cognitive ability and more than the model of capabilities. It is an intelligence and awareness managing of personal emotions and the feelings of others. It is also about sensitivity and influencing others, motivating and balancing motivation and monitoring to achieve self-intuition, precision (conscientiousness) and ethical behavior (Smigla & Pastoria, 2019). In any organizational setting, Emotional intelligence proves to be an important element for creating a productive working condition. It is not only good for others, but can also help to deal with people with a fully constructive way when a problem arises (Swarnalatha., 2019).

Increasing challenges in today's business world has placed increasing demand for sales persons to handle their own emotions and the emotions of customers at work on a day-to-day basis. They need to develop their abilities to be able to understand emotion-related information and process it as a part of general problem-solving ability. The ability to recognize, facilitate, understand and manage emotions has become an indispensable requirement for sales persons to excel (Swarnalatha, 2019). Emotional intelligence appears to be one of the essential abilities in maintaining sustainable sales relationship with customers in the present business world. An emotional intelligence person is more confident and sociable, and having such a disposition is important in building good interpersonal relationships (Meisler & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020). Previous researches including those of Mahal, (2020) have shown that emotional intelligence has positive effect on performance.

2.2.2 Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can be understood in terms of a group of inter-related dimensions. Lopes, Salovey, Côté & Beers, (2021) categorized EI in terms of five dimensions in his Emotional Intelligence Model. These dimensions are related with both recognizing and regulating emotions in ourselves and others. Each dimension is based on several types of emotional intelligence competencies that can be used to measure EI. They are elaborated as follows:

i. Self-awareness: Self awareness refers to our ability of precisely recognizing emotions in ourselves. This includes identifying the intensity of the emotion, the tell-tale signs of body language and certain triggers and behaviors that induce emotions in us and others.

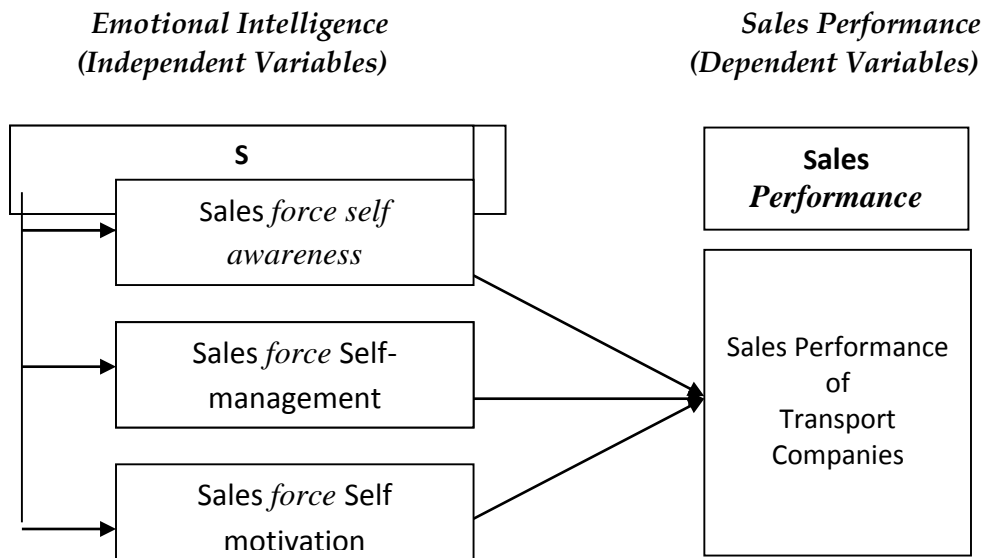
ii. Self-management: Self management refers to one's ability to control and mitigate one's emotional response to others. This includes the choice of appropriate emotional reaction and the intensity of that reaction. This is associated with the behavior and emotional cues of others.

iii. Self-motivation: Self-motivation refers to the skill of managing one's time properly. People who are motivated tend to be happier and feel more self-assured. In simple terms motivation is what propels people to achieve their goals.

iv. Empathy: This refers to a person's ability to understand the emotional state of others around them. Managers and sales persons who are empathetic tend to retain the best

employees, have great intercultural communication skills and are exceptional at handling customer complaints.

Figure 1: Model of Sales force emotional intelligence and sales performance



Source: Researchers compilation, 2021.

2.2.3 The Importance of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence has been confirmed to be of importance in many ways including to understand ourselves and others (Lopes, Salovey, Côté & Beers, 2021). The existence of emotional intelligence has provided an important signal about what happened and how people will interact. Then, it help one to analyzing the situation in certain areas based on their emotional information to help them make better decisions.

Emotional intelligence is important because it can contribute to the quality of the relationships in the workplace because emotions serve communicative and social functions, provides information about the thoughts and intentions, and helped to coordinate social gatherings (Petrides, Frederickson & Furnham, 2020).

Another importance that can be deduced from Emotional intelligence is in influencing customer positive emotions. Emotionally intelligent sales persons who interact directly with the customer is required to recognize and manage their own emotions and understand the emotions of customers. This is because emotional intelligence is an ability that is necessary for this purpose.

2.2.4 Emotional Intelligence in Nigeria

It is believed that the quality of sales from different organizations in Nigeria could improve, if the principles of emotional intelligence are introduced as selling strategy in the public and private sector of the Nigeria economy. This according to Moon & Hur (2017) can be witness in the areas of training.

2.3 Transportation

Transport is concern with movement of people or goods from one place to another. It forms the cornerstone upon which a country's development revolves and involves the planning, implementation, and control of transportation services to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Hanmaikyur, Jinjiri, Zubair & Asue, 2020). Companies that carry out Transport services are referred to as transport companies. The importance of transport to a nation cannot be overemphasized as efficient transport infrastructure facilitates and acts as catalyst for development. According to Makers (2021), availability of Transport facilities is a critical investment factor that stimulates economic growth through increased accessibility in early stages of the economic life of a country.

In Nigeria available modes of transportation includes road, railways, airways, inland waterways, coastal waters, the deep sea, and the pipeline. Of all the available modes of transportation, road transport is the most common. Not only does road transport infrastructure facilitates the direct provision of services to consumers, it also provides intermediate inputs that enter into the production of other sectors and raise factor productivity in Nigeria.

In a typical Nigerian transport company, different routes exist to satisfy the travel satisfaction of consumers (passengers). The routes are manned by salespersons who serve in a boundary-spanning role seeking to create value by fulfilling the sometimes conflicting objectives and interests of their own organization as well as those of their buyers through the development and maintenance of long-term relationships with customers (Makers, 2021).

Modern salespeople in the transport industry are faced with an array of new demands stemming from increasing marketplace complexity and customer demands. Indeed, modern salespeople must have the intelligence to develop and manage customer relationships in a marketplace characterized by ever-changing buyer demands, an increasing number of competitive services and an increasing emphasis on customized solutions (Uzma & Tajammal, 2019). To meet these demands and excel in the market, salespeople are required to acquire emotional intelligence to enhance their productivity, increase their sales volume and improve the performance of their organizations. Emotional intelligence has all it takes to aid salespeople in increasing their productivity meeting such sales demands, while also offering psychosocial support.

2.3.1 Sales force / Sales persons

Sales Growth is the parameter which is used to measure the [performance](#) of the sales team to increase the revenue over a pre-determined period of time. It is an important and essential performance variable and an important parameter for [survival](#) of any company.

Sales force refers to the sum total of all sales people (men and women) employed by a firm or a company to find prospective buyers of their commodities, convert these prospective buyers to customers and ensure that they are continually satisfied to facilitate repeat performance. Sales force gathers market intelligence information so that the company can react quickly on new developments in the market environment. These classes of persons are also responsible for targeting customers and are often responsible for prospecting new clients (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). In order to fulfill these tasks properly sales force need, among other skills,

good communication skills as they have to answer all product-related questions and establish a good customer relationship (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). By performing all these sales activities successfully, the company will create a valuable relationship with customers via their sales force and also improve the company's business performance by enhancing market share and profits (Lopes, Salovey, Cote & Beers, 2021).

2.4 Sales Performance

The level of goal accomplishment generally defines a firm's performance. It is the outcome achieved in meeting internal and external goals of a firm. It is also referred to as the behaviour evaluated in terms of its contributions to the goals and objectives of the organization. Thus performance is a measure of an organization to its corporate goals and objectives.

Sales performance refers to a measure of contributions of an organization's selling functions to its corporate goals and objectives (Zareie & Navimipour, 2019). It is the sales behavior and outcomes that are under the control of the organization's sales force and an evaluation of the sales contribution towards achieving the organizational goals. Sales literature has recognized the significance of salesperson efforts in different theoretical frameworks of performance and proposed a significant positive relationship between selling behaviors and salesperson's productivity (Hanmaikyur, Jinjiri, Zubair & Asue, 2020).

2.4.1 Relationship between Sales Force Emotional Intelligence and Sales Performance

In virtually every case, emotional intelligence must play an important role in satisfying the need of sales persons. For instance, coping with massive change involves, among other things, the ability to perceive and understand the emotional impact of change on ourselves and others. To be effective in helping their organizations achieve performance, an organization's sales force first need to be aware of and to manage their own feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. Then they need to be aware of the emotional reactions of other organizational members and act to help people cope with those reactions

2.5 Empirical Review

This section presents a review of previous studies on the effect of sales force emotional intelligence on sales performance of transport companies in Benue state of Nigeria as below:

2.5.1 Effect of sales force self awareness on sales performance of Transport sector in Nigeria; Schneider, Lyons & Williams, (2020) investigated the effect of sales force self awareness on sales performance of Transport sector in Australia. The study made use of survey research design while primary data was collected from all the 32 management staff of the companies studied. The collected data was analyzed with the aid of regression analysis. The results indicated that self awareness Emotional Intelligence support positive work attitudes, altruistic behavior, and work performance outcomes in the workplace. The study also revealed that Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in the success of sales force in the workplace as it help to develop positive work attitudes, behavior, and outcomes including better performance at the workplace.

Shahhosseini, Silong, Ismaill & Uli, (2020) empirically examined the effect of self awareness Emotional Intelligence in business Organizations: An Empirical Study Based on Banking

Sector in Nigeria. A survey design was adopted for the study and questionnaires were distributed among forty (40) banks managers randomly selected. Regression analysis was employed in the study. The results of the study showed that there was a positive correlation between sales *forces self awareness and sales performance* in Nigeria through their various actions. Findings of the study also revealed that Emotional Intelligence of employees (including sales force) leads to enhance the financial position of the organization. The study argued that sales persons with higher levels of empathy, self-regard, reality testing, and problem solving were more likely to yield high profit-earning companies.

2. 5. 2 Effect of sales force Self-management on sales performance of Transport sector in Nigeria

Uzma and Tajammal (2019), studied 300 sales persons selected from different organizations in the Telecommunication Industry in order to establish a link between Self-management emotional intelligence and sales performance. A simple random technique was used in selecting the firms and data was collected using questionnaire. Analysis was carried out with simple regression analysis and correlation analysis. Their findings revealed that Self-management emotional intelligence alone is not sufficient for the success of employees. Emotional Intelligence is found to have significant relationship with employees' productivity and organization's sales performance signifying that emotional intelligence is more important than Intelligence quotient at workplace.

Lopes, Salovey, Cote & Beers, (2021) assessed 44 sales staff from the Sales department of petroleum companies in Southern Nigeria. In a bid to acquire evidence that Self-management Emotional intelligence has a relationship with the performance of sales employees. Data was collected using questionnaire and the analysis was carried out using Pearson's moment correlation. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and examined primary data collected from 150 enterprises in the study area. Inferential statistics were used to interrogate relationships between independent variables and sales performance while descriptive statistics were used to determine distribution, central tendency and dispersion and hence establish conformity to linear regression requirements. The results showed that the variables studied had a positive and significant influence on sales performance of the enterprises. The study concluded that sales force self management has effect on sales performance in the study area. This study therefore recommends that companies should adopt strategies that enhance procurement and improve infrastructure facilities to experience better performance.

2. 5. 3 Effect of sales force Self-motivation on sales performance of Transport sector in Nigeria:

Moon and Hur, (2017), investigated the effect of sales *force Self-motivation on sales performance of Medium scale companies in south east Ghana*. The research was carried out in Ghana. The study employed qualitative approach and the survey method of collecting data was used. The questionnaire was used to collect primary data from the sampled respondents. A sample of 20 transport firms that employ not more than 50 workers in the country was selected. This study has revealed that when self management is implemented and practiced will improve the sales performance of these businesses and helping in their growth. The study also found support for the argument that self management practices improve organizations sales performance in both large and small transport businesses in any part of the world. The study

has demonstrated that owner managers believe that quality management is a key contributing factor to firm's profit, sales growth and expansion.

Ugoani, (2017) studied the effect of Emotional Intelligence on sales performance in the Nigerian transport companies. The study was carried out in Anambra State of Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. Needed data for the study was generated from 219 sampled respondents while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed a positive relationship between sales force self motivation and sales performance. The study concluded that, transport companies should encourage their sales force to be self motivated to attract optimal sales performance.

3. 0 Results and Discussion

Analysis from the reviewed literature has revealed that emotionally intelligent sales persons are adaptable and flexible in handling sales effectively. In addition, emotionally intelligent individuals have the ability to monitor others' feelings and emotions, discriminate among them, and use this evaluation to guide their thinking and actions (Smigla and Pastoria, 2020). Emotionally intelligent individuals are also high in self-motivation. Given the concept of emotional intelligence, in the case of emotionally intelligent salespeople, they have the ability to monitor others' feelings and needs and act accordingly to meet those needs. Moreover, they are highly motivated in making sales. Arguably, these are also some of the skills required to practice improvisation. This phenomenon clarifies the rationale behind the current study's findings. To conclude, it is clear from the findings of this study that achieving sales performance in organizations is a function of sales force emotional intelligence.

4.0 Summary and Conclusion

This paper qualitatively investigated the effect of sales force emotional intelligence on sales performance in transport companies in Nigeria with the aid of a review of relevant literature. The reviewed studies revealed that personal selling plays a critical role in ensuring the firm's ability to understand customers' needs, which in turn increase the volume of profitable sales in today's highly competitive marketplace. Several studies have found that salespeople play a key role in customer relationship management in terms of understanding, communicating, and delivering value to customers; thus, today's relationship marketing focuses on interpersonal communication building and maintenance of relationships with the customers as opposed to short-term sales. In today's complex market, salespeople not only need to have good interpersonal communication skills to communicate with both internal and external customers, but also must be able to adapt, empathize and recognize others' emotions. A salesperson is also required to understand the feelings of others and the reasons behind them in order to persuade them into entering the sales-purchase contract. This study's findings show that emotionally intelligent individuals are adaptable and flexible in handling change and have the ability to monitor others' feelings and emotions, discriminate among them, and use this evaluation to guide their thinking and behaviour.

The findings of this study lay emphasis on the significance of emotional intelligence and its effects of sales performance since it appears that it have direct positive impact on job performance of sales persons. From a good number of relevant literature revealed, It is safe to concluded that emotional intelligence leads to increased performance in work settings.

Since emotional intelligence gains enormous advantages to individual and group sales persons, finally it is suggested that the EI competencies can be enriched through appropriate training and interventions that leads to betterment of job performance.

The findings discussed above are however not supported by all studies reviewed. For instance, a study by Bastian, Burns & Nettelbeck, (2020) found no support for hypothesized relationship between EI and organizational outcomes or between EI and transformational leadership.

4.1 Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, a good number of recommendations (including the following) become inevitable.

1. It is proposed that organizations must make efforts to understand the emotional intelligence level of employees as it helps to achieve the desired individual and organizational outcomes.

ii. There is need for organizations to periodically organize training programs to promote motivational, social skills and empathic dimensions of emotional intelligence among their sales staff.

iii. Organizations must understand and accept that Emotional Intelligence is a key contributing factor to successful performance and strategies on inculcating Emotional Intelligence among their employees to create effective and efficient workplace.

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