

Analysis Of Learning And Communication Skills Orientation: The Effect On Adaptive Sales and Seller Performance

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study aims to analyze the effect of learning orientation and communication skills on adaptive sales and their impact on the performance of salespeople. The sample in this study was all food culinary SME salespeople in the city of Semarang. The sampling technique was purposive sampling with the criteria of salespeople who have a minimum of two years' experience. Data used primary data from the results of questionnaires, answers by respondents. While the analysis technique uses SEM, which is run through the AMOS 16.0 program. The results of the analysis provide empirical evidence that learning orientation and communication skills can increase adaptive sales which have an impact on improving the performance of salespeople.

Keywords: Learning orientation, communication skills, adaptive sales and salesperson performance.

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INTRODUCTION

The performance of salespeople contributes to a company [1]. explains that the company is remembered by consumers due to the performance of the sales force. Naturally, if the task of a sales manager is to improve the performance of his sales force [2] in their study found that the performance of salespeople had a positive influence on sales effectiveness. Specifically related to the effectiveness of sales results is the ability to receive and act on environmental responses. So that adaptive sales attitudes are important for the effectiveness of salespeople [3].

A salesperson must have adaptive selling capabilities with the environment and customers. This cannot be formed by itself in every salesperson. But rather from an intense and well-planned learning process [3]. Learning orientation forms a salesperson so that he can work smartly, that is, has good adaptability. Adaptive sales require good sales planning and mental readiness, meaning that adaptive sales must be based on the salesperson's ability to change customer behavior, so that sales activities are aligned with the situation at hand [3].

Adaptive sales are done personally, both direct sales by visiting customers or demonstrating products in front of customers. In this way, of course, salespeople are required to have good communication skills. This study is in accordance with the [4] explaining that good

communication with customers can create emotional contact. Emotional contact is needed, in creating loyal customers.

The study of [5] explains the results of sales performance largely from the ability of salespeople to create and modify messages through interactive communication with their customers. Furthermore [6] explain the ability to communicate well is something important in adjusting to sales.

Adam, Rapp, Raj *et al.* [7] research found adaptive sales must be able to have a positive impact on the outcomes received by salespeople and organizations. Adaptive sales are a measure of expected performance achievement. The better the implementation of adaptive sales, the better the sales performance. Adaptive sales for performance achievement is very important and strategic.

Adaptation by salespeople in understanding customers and providing unique services to each customer as needed. Therefore the adoption of adaptive sales is important for salespeople in improving the performance of salespeople. So we need a study that reviews about the factors that influence adaptive sales in improving the performance of salespeople.

Based on the background of the problem, the research problem that will be studied is how the process

of increasing adaptive sales to improve the performance of salespeople in UKM food culinary in the city of Semarang?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Orientation

Abdulai Mahmoud M & Yusif B [8] found learning orientation influential in increasing the ability of salespeople, there are a number of underlying things. First, salespeople who have a learning orientation will use strategies from learning outcomes to develop sales capabilities so as to bring increased quality. The second is the adaptation process that is adopted in sales activities intellectually that is able to direct creative thinking in order to benefit from the work done. So that learning is an important process provides many benefits for developing quality. Because they have the expertise to consider the proper use of knowledge.

A salesperson must be able to learn, because by learning a salesperson will get the knowledge needed to improve performance on an ongoing basis. A salesperson realizes that learning is an important asset to success. Who wants success must have to learn. By learning a salesperson is able to identify opportunities in each visit activity and try to satisfy customers by providing the best service [5].

Rapp A, Agnihotri R, Forbes LP *et al.* [7], there are 3 learning orientation indicators namely learning to improve the ability to sell, learn from previous selling experiences, the desire to learn new things from customers.

Communication Skill

Personal communication skill is a process of sharing and using information together and relating between participants in the information process. With the process of dividing means that communication is carried out by more than one person, where each - each party gives and receives information, ideas, attitudes, thoughts and opinions [4].

Communication is distinguished by two namely verbal communication is oral communication in a conversation to display the backflow either directly between two or more people, while non-verbal communication is communication using body language in conveying messages to customers. examples of expressions, gestures, body movements and positions [4].

The communication process affects the success of the relationship between the company and its customers. Communication difficulties are the main causes of problems in relationships, therefore communication is considered to play an important role in realizing the benefits of shared distribution channels [9].

Canary HE, McPhee RD *et al.* [10, 4], mentions that there are 3 indicators of communication skills, namely the ability to explain products to customers, the ability to provide solutions to customer questions, the ability to create a pleasant sales atmosphere.

Adaptive Sales

Adaptive sales are a key concept in the sales literature [3, 11] define adaptive sales as an activity of changing sales behavior during or after an interaction with a customer, which is based on information received regarding the sales situation.

A salesperson has a high adaptive sales level if using a different sales approach right at the time of the transaction with the customer and when making a decision during the sale transaction takes place in different situations. Conversely, salespeople have a low level of adaptive sales if they only use the sales approach technique and the same sales decision making in sales transactions according to the sales situation [5].

Speier C, Venkatesh V [11] there are 3 adaptive sales indicators that are the ability to adjust sales techniques to customers that are being faced, the ability to modify presentations in sales, have a set of info about sales situations to help adaptation.

Salesperson Performance

Salesperson's performance is an evaluation of the contribution of salespeople in achieving organizational goals [2].

Baldauf A, Cravens DW *et al.* [2] found that salesperson's performance has a positive influence on the effectiveness of sales organizations, besides there are other factors that influence the overall effectiveness and other factors that are beyond the control of salespeople (competition, market potential and market changes). The ability of the salesperson to reach the target if making an important contribution in the effectiveness of the sales organization.

Jaramillo F, Mulki JP *et al.* [5] Finds sales adjustments require skilled salespeople and are trained in interpreting sales situations appropriately and are able to take appropriate sales tactics to meet specific customer needs. High-performance salespeople if they can be identified by managers to be adaptive.

Baldauf A, Cravens DW *et al.* [2, 5] describes 3 indicators of salesperson performance, namely the ability to achieve sales targets, the ability to obtain new customers, the ability to increase sales volume.

Inter-Variable Influence

Effect of Learning Orientation on Adaptive Sales

Adaptive sales are formed in intelligent activities and behavior. Smart work attitude cannot be

formed easily. Learning orientation is the right step in developing adaptive sales and at the same time achieving expected performance [7].

Learning orientation tends to continue to learn and improve abilities through a learning process to absorb new knowledge and skills. With skills and knowledge make it easy for someone to adapt. Salespeople with new knowledge and new capabilities can be applied in the work can encourage salespeople to work better and more effectively than before [1]. Therefore the hypothesis proposed in this study is as follows: H1: Learning orientation has a positive effect on adaptive sales.

Effect of Communication skill on Adaptive Sales

Someone who is afraid to communicate will have difficulty communicating effectively. Lack of communication skills causes communication patterns to be inflexible, which will affect communication skills as a whole [10]. An individual determines a sales career must be able to improve communication skills, one way is by repeated sales interactions.

Salespeople in carrying out their professions as distributors have different educational and professional backgrounds or have no experience at all in sales. But still emphasizing the importance of training in carrying out its business activities. Whether we realize it or not, communicating with customers causes learning to be improved, so that it can achieve the best performance in its business or interact with customers [10]. Based on the description above, the hypothesis proposed in this study are as follows: H2: Communication Ability has a positive effect on adaptive sales.

The Effect of Adaptive Sales on Sales Force Performance

Some studies on adaptive sales [2, 10, 5, 6, 11] show a positive relationship between adaptive selling and increased sales force performance [7] assumes that adaptive activities and behaviors are supported by a learning process and characteristics that will be more reliable in dealing with different situations and customers. The results obtained from implementing strong adaptive sales will give rise to high productivity and performance.

Adam, Rapp, Raj, Agnihotri *et al.* [7] in his study found that the key to achieving salesperson performance is adaptive sales, and the key to successful adoption of adaptive sales is the characteristics of salespeople. Characteristics in the form of Persistence, Reliability, Integrity (honesty and sincerity), Desire, Emphaty are believed to be determinants and can improve the performance of salespeople.

The involvement of salespeople in interacting through communication has an influence on the

performance of the sales force. Salespeople use more structure in their approach to customers, when customer desires are the same, then the sales presentation provided is enough to influence their customers to make purchases [6]. Based on the description above, the hypothesis proposed in this study are as follows: H3: Adaptive sales have a positive effect on the performance of salespeople.

The description above can be made an empirical model as shown in the following figure 2.1:

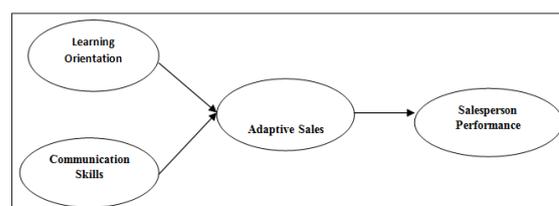


Fig-2.1: Empirical model

RESEARCH METHODS

Type and Source of Data

Qualitative data, namely data measured indirectly, not in the form of numbers, or numbers - but by using classifications, so in the form of information. Quantitative Data is data that can be calculated or measured, obtained in the form of numbers or a collection of numbers - the results of observations or measurements.

Population

The population of this study was all food culinary UKM in the city of Semarang, with a total sample of 110 respondents. The sampling technique was purposive sampling.

The sample is part of the population where the characteristics of the sample can represent the population. If n the number of sample elements and N is the number of population elements, then $n < N$ [12]. Purposive sampling technique, the determination of samples carried out based on the characteristics that have been determined [13]. The characteristics in the selection of samples in this study are [1] salespeople who have a minimum work experience of 1 year.

Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques are used to interpret and analyze data. In accordance with the multi-dimensional and tiered model that is being developed in this study, the data analysis tool used is the Structural Equation Model (SEM) of the AMOS statistical package. Analyzing research models with SEM can identify the dimensions of a construct and at the same time measure the influence or degree of relations between factors that have been identified dimensions [14].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of processing from Full Model SEM are presented in Table 4.1, as follows:

Table-4.1: Structural Equation Model Eligibility Testing Index

Goodness of Fit Index Model Evaluation	Cut-off Value	Results	Explanation
χ^2 – Chi-square Good	Estimated small (<134.839)	97.884	Good
Significance Probability	≥ 0.05	0.200	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.032	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.899	Marginal
AGFI Marginal	≥ 0.90	0.890	Marginal
TLI	≥ 0.95	0.998	Good
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.967	Good

Source: data processed 2019

The results of data processing analysis show that all constructs used to form a research model, in the process of full SEM model analysis meet the established criteria for goodness of fit. The measure of goodness of fit which indicates a fit condition is caused by the Chi-square number of 97.884 which is smaller than the cut-off value set (134.839) with a probability value of 0.200 or above 0.05, this value indicates no difference between the matrix sample covarians with estimated population covariance matrices. Another measure of goodness of fit also shows good conditions, namely TLI (0.998); CFI (0.967); RMSEA (0.032) meets the criteria of goodness of fit. While the value of

GFI (0.899) and AGFI (0.890) is still within the tolerance limit so that it can be accepted.

Reliability Test and Variance Extract

Reliability Test

Basically the reliability test shows the extent to which measuring instruments that can provide results that are relatively the same if measurements are taken again on the same subject. Reliability test in SEM can be obtained through the following formula [14]:

$$\text{Construct Reliability} = \frac{(\sum \text{Standard Loading})^2}{(\sum \text{Standard Loading})^2 + \sum E_j}$$

Table-4.2: Reliability calculation results

Variable	Standard loading data	Measurement error data	Data reliability
Learning Orientation	2.88	0.32	0.96
Communication Skills	2.73	0.46	0.87
Adaptive Sales	2.75	0.36	0.88
Salesperson Performance	2.70	0.25	0.97

Source: data processed 2019

From the measurement of the reliability of the data above, it can be concluded that the reliability value of all variables has met the requirements, which is greater than 0.70. This shows the consistency of dimensions in measuring constructs or in other words that the dimensions used are part of the research construct [13].

Variance Extract

The variance extract measurement shows the number of variances of the indicators extracted by the latent constructs / variables developed. The acceptable variance extract value is ≥ 0.50 . The formula used is as follows [14]:

$$\text{Variance Extract} = \frac{\sum \text{Standard Loading}^2}{\sum \text{Standard Loading}^2 + \sum E_j}$$

Table-4.3: Variance Extract calculation results

Variable	Square standardized loading data	Measurement error data	Variance Extract data
Learning Orientation	2.57	0.32	0.93
Communication Skills	2.41	0.36	0.92
Adaptive Sales	2.81	0.25	0.93
Salesperson Performance	2.52	0.30	0.95

Source: data processed 2019

The measurement of variance extract data above, it can be concluded that the variance extract value of all variables has met the requirements, which is greater than 0.50. Thus it can be concluded that

dimensions have the ability to express something that will be measured by these dimensions [13].

DISCUSSION

There are 3 hypotheses proposed. The table of hypothesis testing in AMOS analysis is as follows:

Tabel-4.4: Estimasi Parameter Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
AS	LO	<---	0.492	.0807	8.219	0.000
AS	CS	<---	0.301	.0737	5.803	0.000
SP	AS	<---	0.791	.079	11.281	0.000

Source: data processed 2019

H1: Learning orientation has a positive effect on adaptive sales. The estimated parameters of the relationship between the two variables are 0.492. The test shows significant results with CR = 8.219 that meets the requirements > 1.96 with a probability = 0,000 that meets the requirements for the probability of testing below 0.05. Thus H1 in this study is acceptable.

The activities and behavior of effective salespeople have an impact on adaptive sales and [7] further explains that the adoption of adaptive sales will succeed for improving performance if supported by the strategic role of learning orientation. The process of improving learning orientation gives birth to adaptive activities and sales. This is in line with [3] with the learning orientation of a salesperson who will more easily adapt and respond to the sales conditions faced.

Test of Hypothesis 2, H2: Communication skill has a positive effect on adaptive sales. The estimated parameter of the relationship between the two variables is 0.301. The test shows a significant result with a CR value of 5,803 that meets the requirements > 1.96 with a probability = 0,000 that meets the requirements for the probability of testing below 0.05. Thus H2 in this study is acceptable.

The adaptive selling process is influenced by communication from salespeople with customers who are required to always interact. Good communication with customers can create emotional contact from customers. Emotional contact is needed, to be able to create loyal customers.

Test Hypothesis 3, H3: Adaptive sales have a positive effect on the performance of salespeople. The estimated parameter of the relationship between the two variables is 0.791. Tests show significant results with CR = 11,281 that meets the requirements > 1.96 with a probability = 0,000 that meets the requirements of the probability of testing below 0.05. Thus H3 in this study is acceptable.

Boorum ML, Goolsbyand JR, Ramsey RP *et al.* [3] explain that sales productivity can basically be increased if salespeople put more emphasis on working smarter as an example of self-adjusting practices in sales. From the empirical studies he has done [3] find one aspect of working smart, namely the practice of self-adjustment in sales can improve the performance of

salespeople. Furthermore, previous research [5] found that self-adjustment ability was positively related to successful performance.

Future conclusions and research

CONCLUSION

The following are some conclusions given based on an analysis of research data:

First, the learning orientation has a positive and significant effect on adaptive sales. This is indicated by a CR of 8.219 > + 1.96 and the probability = 0,000 that meets the requirements for the probability of testing below 0.05. Thus hypothesis 1 in the study Learning orientation has a positive effect on adaptive sales received.

Second, Communication skills have a positive and significant influence on adaptive sales. This is indicated by a CR of 5.803 > + 1.96 and the probability = 0,000 that meets the requirements for testing probabilities below 0.05. Thus hypothesis 2 in the study, communication ability has a positive effect on adaptive sales received.

Third, Adaptive sales have a positive and significant influence on adaptive sales. This is indicated by a CR of 11,281 > + 1.96 and the probability = 0,000 that meets the requirements for the probability of testing below 0.05. Thus hypothesis 3 in this study, adaptive sales has a positive effect on the performance of salespeople accepted.

Future research agenda

First, further research is recommended to use a larger number of samples considering this study uses a minimum number of samples according to SEM assumptions.

Second, the results of this study cannot be generalized to food culinary. Therefore, to generalize it, research needs to be done using other research objects.

Third, In future research, it can be done to add latent variables and dimensions to existing models and to models that are undergoing development.

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