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Sales Force Competence Evaluation And Marketing Performance Of Industrial And Domestic Products Firms In Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study set out to determine the association between sales force competence evaluation and marketing performance of industrial and domestic product firms in Nigeria. Drawing from both resources-based and control theories, the paper argues that a firm can enhance its marketing performance through the way it evaluates its sales force competence. Primary data from 135 marketing executives and sales managers were analyzed using Pearson Correlation and regression statistics. The empirical evidence shows that sales force competence evaluation is a determinant of marketing performance of these firms. Sequel to this, the paper strongly recommends that firms whose objective is to boost their marketing performance should emphasize the key elements of sales force competence evaluation, namely, behavioral measures, summative evaluation, learning measures, formative evaluation, and reaction measures.

Keywords: Market Share, Marketing Performance, Profitability, Sales Force Competence, Sales force Competence Evaluation, Sales Volume.

Introduction :

The resource-based theory of competitive advantage focuses on the role internal resources like competent employees play in developing and maintaining a firm's competitive capabilities (Barney, 1991; Wright & McMahan, 1992). In fact, numerous researchers have noted that people may be the ultimate source of sustained competitive advantage since traditional sources related to markets, financial capital, and scale economies have been weakened by globalization and other environmental changes (e.g. Reich, 1991; Ulrich & Lake, 1990). In particular, Pfeffer (1994) argues that firms wishing to succeed in today's global business environment must make appropriate Human Resource investments to acquire and build employees who possess better skills and capabilities than their competitors.

Behavior perspective and control theory tend to focus attention on managing a firm's current employees' behaviors in an effort to maximize performance. Firms also focus on competence management through acquiring, developing and utilizing employees with particular knowledge, skills and abilities (Wright & Snell, 1991; Wright et al, 1995). More specifically, Wright and his colleagues (1995) found that organizations exhibited higher performance when they recruited and acquired employees possessing competences consistent with the organizations' current strategies. Also, some reviews have shown that competence and performance are closely related (While, 1994; Ramritu and Barnard, 2004).

Organizations increasingly seek to adopt rent-yielding strategies (Wright and Snell, 1991). However, owing to the dynamic, complex, and uncertain global business environment (Bearden et al., 1995), coupled with the fact that firms are not equally endowed with internal resources and capabilities, many firms achieve sub-optimal or even poor marketing performance. The resource based theory emphasizes that organizations can use their capabilities and core competences that are scarce, not easily traded, and difficult to imitate to achieve competitive advantage. Sales force which competences are evaluated and upgraded through training on a regular basis is a great resource in this regard, particularly in industrial and domestic products marketing. To ensure that a firm has a sales force which competences meet the challenges in sales job, there is need for continual appraisal of sales force competence training programs. As the

competitive business environment changes, it calls for more knowledge and skills, on the part of the sales force, to be able to adapt its behavior accordingly and contribute meaningfully to marketing performance. The changes in the dimensions and levels of knowledge, skills, and behavior required in responding to business opportunities and challenges will only be ascertained if a good competence training evaluation program is put in place.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS:

Sales Force Competence Evaluation

In this study, we define **sales force competence as those observable knowledge, skills, and behavior, which differentiate between superior and other performers in the context of sales job** (Asiegbu, 2009). Sales job competence is a demonstration to building and sustaining superior marketing exchange relationships with customers and the total commitment and willingness to exhibit appropriate behavior in a specific selling context. Sales training is supposed to equip sales people with requisite knowledge and skills to improve performance (Kaveti, 2012).

Competence evaluation is a process to determine the relevance, effectiveness, and impacts of development methods and programs in light of firm's objectives. Raab, et al., (1987) define training evaluation as "a systematic process of collecting information for and about a training activity, which can then be used for guiding decision-making and for assessing the relevance and effectiveness of various training components". Competence evaluation is an assessment of the efficacy of the competence development methods and materials. Once a company implements a sales force competence development program, it must evaluate the program's success. Competence evaluation therefore, involves a re-assessment of the salesperson competences after he or she received training, coaching, and mentoring to ascertain his or her current competence status. Competence evaluation, thus, assesses the extent the learning resources have enabled the salesperson eliminate or reduce his or her performance gap, earlier identified before the development program. This involves determining if trainees are acquiring the required knowledge, skills and behavior. If not, then sales managers involved in the development program must ascertain why not and they must figure out if the trainees are failing to acquire those skills because of their own inability or because of ineffective development programs.

To evaluate sales force competence evaluation programs effectively, sales managers gauge salespeople's reactions to the programs. This feedback from trainees provides companies with crucial information on how salespeople perceive their programs. Also, sales managers attempt to determine the results of their development programs by studying the quantifiable data (e.g., output) and job performance of salespeople who recently completed a competence development program (Encyclopedia of Business, 2000). According to Gillis and Beauchemin (2000), only constant evaluation and revision can make training programs and therefore, salespeople the best they can be. They argue that the most efficient way to ensure constant evaluation is to institute a training change control policy with a preset schedule. Evaluation thus, focuses on monitoring and assessing sales force competence level improvement or otherwise on the sales job (Johnston and Marshall, 2003).

The need to identify and respond to environmental changes, with their attendant threats or opportunities has been emphasized (Bearden et al, 1995; Asiegbu, 2009). A firm must assess its strengths and weaknesses with a view to sustaining or improving its competitive position in the face of an environmental pressure Lancaster and Massingham, 2001. Sales force competence evaluation is paramount in this regard. Thus, this paper argues that continual evaluation of a firm's sales force competence will yield vital information which the firm can use to effect changes in its current strategies in line with the vagaries and changes in its business environment.

Marketing Performance

Performance is behavior evaluated in terms of its contributions to the goals and objectives of the organization (Johnston and Marshall, 2003; Dalrymple et al, 2004; Churchill and Peter, 1998; Fenwick and Amine, 1979). Marketing performance is a measure of the contributions of an organization's marketing functions to its corporate goals and objectives (Jackson et al, 1995). Maskell (1994) emphasizes that for performance measures to be relevant, they must be expressed in terms that directly relate them to the corporate strategy. As a result, large organizations rely mostly on output performance measures, which include sales volume, sales growth, and profitability.

Financial measures such as sales volume and profit continue to be most important marketing performance metrics (Clark, 2000; Kokkinaki and Ambler, 1999). Wang et al, (2004), used indicators such as after-tax profit, return on investment, sales volume and market share. Kohli and Jaworski (1994) carried out a study on the “influence of coworker feedback on sales force performance.” In that study, they measured performance in terms of profit level (profitability), growth and sales volume. O’Sullivan and Abela (2007), used similar measurement in their study on “marketing performance measurement ability and firm performance”. Accordingly, this study views marketing performance measures as a respondent’s rating of his or her firm’s market share, sales volume, and profitability performance relative to other competitors and its previous years’.

Sales Competence Evaluation and Marketing Performance

There is ample evidence that evaluations of training programs are often inconsistent or missing (Carnevale and Schulz, 1990; Holcomb, 1993; McMahon and Carter, 1990; Rossi et al, 1979). Some firms experience inadequate training evaluation because of insufficient budget and time allocated to it, lack of expertise, lack of improper approaches and tools (McEvoy and Buller, 1990). A number of approaches have been suggested for evaluating training (Worthen and Sanders, 1987; Fitz-Enz, 1994; Bushnell, 1990). The most influential framework is one suggested by Kirkpatrick (Carnevale and Schulz, 1990; Dixon, 1996; Gordon, 1991; Philips, 1991, 1997). According to Eseryel (2002), Kirkpatrick’s work generated a good number of subsequent works such as those of Bramley (1996), Hamblin (1974), Warr et al. (1978).

In terms of goals, Kirkpatrick (1959, 1976) and Philips (1991, 1997) suggest four criteria to evaluate training programs: (i) reaction: (ii) learning: (iii) behavior, and (iv) results. Each criterion is used to measure the different aspects of a training program. Reaction measures are how the trainees liked the program in terms of content, methods, duration, trainers, facilities, and management. Learning measures the trainees’ knowledge and skills, which they were able to absorb at the time of training. Behavior is concerned with the extent to which the trainees were able to apply their knowledge to real field situations. It measures how appropriate the training was in changing the behavior of participants. Results are concerned with the tangible impact of the training program on

individuals, their job environment, or the organization as a whole. On the basis of time dimension, Halim and Ali (2000) classify evaluation as: (i) formative evaluation and (ii) summative evaluation. According to them, formative evaluation involves the collection of relevant and useful data while the training program is being conducted. This information can identify the drawbacks and unintended outcomes and is helpful in revising the plan and structure of training programs to suit the needs of the situation. Through this process the key elements of the training activities are systematically monitored, problems are identified, and attempts are made to rectify the mistakes before they become serious. Summative evaluation is done at the end of the program and makes an overall assessment of its effectiveness in relation to achieving the objectives and goals. The objectives of summative or terminal evaluation are to determine the degree to which desired benefits and goals have been achieved, along with the causes of failure, if any.

Thus, both formative evaluation and summative evaluation of skills development programs affect performance. This is because both evaluations generate information, which can help marketing function effectively and impact positively on a firm's marketing strategies and hence marketing performance. This gives rise to our research question: To what extent does the way the industrial and domestic products firms in Nigeria evaluate sales force competence affect their marketing performance? Our argument here is that competence evaluation provides feedback that is critical for making better decisions for greater sales force commitment to sales jobs, which in turn results in improved market share, sales volume, and profit margin.

In this study therefore, we are inclined to believe that sales force competence evaluation influences marketing performance, which we operationalize as: market share, sales volume and profitability. In this regard, this study expects sales force competence evaluation to positively influence marketing performance. Sequel to this speculation, we developed the theoretical framework for this study, thus: **Marketing performance is a function of sales force competence evaluation.**

$$\begin{array}{lcl} \text{MP} & = & f(\text{SFCE}), \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad 1 \\ \text{MP} & = & (\text{Ms, Sv, P}) \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad - \quad 2 \end{array}$$

Where:

SFCE = Sales force competence evaluation, MP = Marketing Performance, Ms = market share, Sv = Sales volume, and P = Profitability. From the theoretical framework, we develop three hypotheses, which are stated as follows:

H_{a1}: Sales force competence evaluation is associated with market share.

H_{a2}: Sales force competence evaluation is associated with sales volume.

H_{a3}: Sales force competence evaluation is associated with profitability.

Methodology :

To conduct this study, we chose sociological position, objectivism, and of society of order and regulation. Consequently, the research approach and meaning-making process found to be appropriate in this study are the quantitative approach and scientific formulations. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire, from firms registered with Port Harcourt branch of Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN). A survey of most senior sales managers, marketing executives, and marketing managers in these firms produced the primary data for our research. Our choice of individuals in charge of marketing or sales is because by virtue of their senior position, they represent primary users of the organization's sales force competence evaluation tasks information, has a birds eye view of their efficiency and effectiveness. From a sampling frame of 40 firms in MAN's register as at April 2011, we determined the sample size to be 36 firms using Yaro Yamen's formula (Baridam, 2001). Four marketing executives in each of these 36 firms were each given a copy of our questionnaire. Thus, we hand-delivered 144 copies of the questionnaire to the participating firms. We used simple random sampling techniques to select these 36 firms from the 40 registered firms.

Data on sales force competence evaluation task and marketing performance indicators (market share, sale volume, and profitability) were collected with a five-point Likert-type scoring system applied to scales anchored on 1 = "very low" through 5 = "very great", and 1 = "much lower" through 5 = "much higher" respectively. The questionnaire is divided into three sections, A-C. Section 'A' contains six questions relating to identity of the respondents and the participating firms. Section 'B' focuses on six questions relating to sales force competence evaluation. Section 'C' consists of twenty questions relating to

marketing performance, based on similar studies conducted by O'Sullivan & Abela (2007); Kohli et al, 1998; Fornell et al, 1992; Reichheld and Sasser; 1990; Crosby, 1979; Garvin, 1988; TARP, 1979; Deshpande et al, 1993; Deshpande and Farley, 1998).

To pre-test for comprehension, relevance, and completeness, a pilot study was carried out involving ten sales managers from industrial and domestic products firms, which are members of Manufacturer's Association of Nigeria (MAN), Port Harcourt branch, as well as three scholars in the field of sales management. These pilot survey participants were asked to identify any problems they encountered with the content of the questionnaire. Additional changes were made in accordance with the feedback from these participants. Copies of the final survey questionnaire were hand-delivered along with cover letters to the respondents.

The validity of the variable measures was already confirmed in previous studies relating to marketing performance (Kohli and Jaworski, 1994; O' Sullivan, and Abela, 2007; Rogers, 2003; Srivastava and Reibstein, 2005; Miller and Cioffi, 2004; Wang et al, 2005; Vision Edge, 2007) and competence evaluation tasks (Baladi, 1999, Lindgreen and Hendrisson, 2002; Johnsson and Hurria, 2003; Hiermann and Hofferer, 2005, Zeb-Obipi, 2007). However, we still required to reconfirm the applicability of the measures in the industrial and domestic products firms in Nigeria, hence the pilot study. We applied Cronbach's Alpha test to measure the reliability of the concepts of the study variables. Coefficient Alpha is one of the most widely used measures of internal consistency reliability in social sciences (Hatcher, 1994). Table 1 shows the reliability assessment of our indicator variables using Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's coefficients recorded are sales force competence evaluation (SFCE) – 0.906, sales growth (SG) = 0.914, sales volume (SV) = 0.919 and profitability (P) = 0.921. These values are well above the rule of the thumb cut-off mark of 0.70 (Hatcher, 1994). We are therefore, permitted to regard the items in the instrument as being internally related to the factors they are expected to measure.

S/No	Dimensions/Measures of the study Variables	Number of Items	Number of Cases	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Sales force Competence Evaluation	6	135	0.906
2.	Sales Growth	7	135	0.914
3.	Sales Volume	6	135	0.919
4.	Profitability	7	135	0.921
5.	Marketing Performance	3	135	0.964

Table:1 Reliability Coefficients of Variable Measures

Source: SPSS Output on Data collected between April – May, 2011

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) release 15.0 was used in the computation of data in this study. To test the hypothesis, we employed inferential statistics consisting of Multiple Regression Analysis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test.

Data Presentation, Analysis, And Interpretation:

The distribution of 144 copies of the questionnaire to each of the participating firms and the subsequent completion of same, including repeated visits and telephone calls took two months. We recorded a total of 93.75% response rate representing 135 usable copies of questionnaire.

Pearson Correlation was used to assess correlation coefficient estimates in this study and the result in as shown in Table 2. The results indicate a high correlation between marketing performance measures (market share, sales volume, and profitability) and sales force competence evaluation.

Variables	Statistics	Market Share (MS)	Sales Volume (SV)	Profitability (P)
Sales Force Competence Evaluation (SFCE)	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.828** .000 135	.810** .000 135	.834** .000 135

Correlation is Significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table :2 Correlation between Marketing Performance and Sales force Competence Evaluation.

In most surveys, where regression analysis is employed, it is required that the usefulness or utility of the overall regression model be established before testing the level of significance of the hypothesis (Asiegbu, 2009). To achieve this, we used F-test to find out the significance of the regression relationship between marketing performance and sales force competence evaluation. The result of the overall F-statistic – as produced by the SPSS, based on 135 valid copies of questionnaire, is shown in Table 3 for market share – SFCE, sales volume – SFCE, and profitability SFCE relationships respectively.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.828 ^a	.685	.683	3.491	.685	289.570	1	133	.000	1.356
2.	.810 ^a	.658	.653	3.772	.856	253.511	1	133	.000	1.582
3.	.834 ^a	.696	.694	3.393	.696	304.206	1	133	.000	1.605

Table : 3 Regression Analyses of Sales Force Competence Evaluation and Market Share, Sales Volume, and Profitability.

Predictors: (Constant), SALES FORCE COMPETENCE EVALUATION

Dependent Variables: market share in Model 1, Sales Volume in Model 2, Profitability in Model 3.

The R squares represent the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the regression models. It indicates the predictive value of SFCE in each model. In market share-SFCE model $R^2 = 0.69$ (Model 1 in Table 3). This means that

sales force competence evaluation can account for 69 percent of the variations in market share. In sales volume – SFCE model, $R^2 = 0.66$ (Model 2 in Table 3). This indicates that sales force competence evaluation can explain 67 percent of the variances in sales volume. In profitability – SFCD model, $R^2 = 0.70$ (Model 3 in Table 3). This shows that sale force competence evaluation can account for 70 percent of the variations in profitability. The results show, that the overall F-statistic is significant at p-values of 0.05 and 0.01, and thus, our regression models 1,2 and 3 are useful, indicating that sales force competence evaluation has substantial relationship with market share, sales volume, and profitability and thus, with marketing performance.

In the quest to obtain an empirical information on whether sales force competence evaluation (SFCE), significantly affect market share, sales volume, and profitability, and hence marketing performance, we used the t-test to test the relevance and significance of each of the β parameters of SFCE to each of the following – market share, sales volume, and profitability.

- H_{a1}:** Sales force competence evaluation (SFCE) is significantly associated with market share.
- H_{a2}:** Sales force competence evaluation (SFCE) is significantly associated with sales volume.
- H_{a3}:** Sales force competence evaluation (SFCE) is significantly associated with sales profitability.

The test statistic is given by the following formula, $t = \frac{e\beta_k}{s\beta_k}$, where $e\beta_k$ = the sample estimate of the parameter β_k , $s\beta_k$ = the estimated standard deviation of the sampling distribution $e\beta_k$. Therefore, to tests the significance of sales force competence evaluation (SFCE), we would test the null hypothesis: $H_0: \beta_k = 0$, against the alternative hypothesis: $H_a: \beta \neq 0$. Thus, the rejection condition under 0.05 level of significance would be that the absolute t, $|t|$, of sales force competence evaluation (SFCE), is greater than $\alpha/2$; since it is a two-tailed test. And the P-value will be twice the area under the t curve to the right of absolute t, based on $n - (k + 1)$ degrees of freedom.

Table 3 summarizes the SPSS computations of the t-statistics and related P- values for testing the significance of SFCE in the following regression models.

Market Share (MS) = $\beta_{01} + \beta_{ce1}SFCE + E$ ----- Model 1

Sales Volume (SV) = $\beta_{02} + \beta_{ce2}SFCE + E$ ----- Model 2

Profitability (P) = $\beta_{03} + \beta_{ce3}SFCE + E$ ----- Model 3

$\beta_{01}, \beta_{02}, \beta_{03}$ = The intercept, the value of the linear function when it crosses the y-axis. It is a constant and depicts the value of market share, sales volume, and profitability when SFCE value is zero.

SFCE = Sales force competence evaluation

$\beta_{ce1}, \beta_{ce2}, \beta_{ce3}$ = The slope of the regression models. The β represents the regression coefficient associated with SFCE.

E = An error term, normally distributed about a mean of zero. For purposes of computation, the E is assumed to be zero.

We are testing the hypotheses that $\beta_{ce} = 0$ in each model. It is either greater or less than zero. That is, two-tailed test. As shown in Table 4; $\beta_{01} = 2.66$; interception $t=2.17$ with a p-value of 0.000; $\beta_{ce1} = 1.07$, which is far greater than zero. SFCE $t=17.0$ with p-value =0.000, which is less than $t = 0.025$.

Coefficient 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF	
1	(Constant)	2.66	1.227		2.17	.032	.234	5.086						
	SALES FORCE COMPETENCE EVALUATION	1.07	.063	.828	17.0	.000	.945	1.194	.828	.828	.828	1.000	1.0	

a. Dependent Variable: SALES GROWTH

a. Dependent Variable: Market share

Table 4: Market share – SFCE Regression Model

Thus, the resulting regression equation when the computed values of β_{01} and β_{ce1} as substituted in model 1 would be:

Market share (Ms) = 2.66 + 1.07 SFCE + E ----- Model 1

Application of Decision Rule: Reject H_{01} . Based on the test result, as it is empirically established, we have strong evidence that the intercept $\beta_{01} = (2.66)$ is significant, and SFCE in the regression equation significantly affects and is positively related to market share.

In Table 4.4, $\beta_{02} = 2.13$; interception $t = 1.607$ with a p-value of 0.000; $\beta_{ce2} = 1.08$. This is far greater than zero. SFCE $t = 15.92$ with a p-value of 0.00, which is less than $t = 0.025$. Thus, the resulting regression equation when the computed values of β_{02} and β_{ce2} are substituted in model 2 would be:

Sales volume (SV) = 2.12 + 1.08 SFCE + E ----- Model 2

Coefficients 2

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
	1 (Constant)	2.13	1.325				1.607	.110	-.492	4.750		
SALES FORCE COMPETENCE EVALUATION	1.08	.068	.810	15.92	.000	.947	1.215	.810	.810	.810	1.000	1.0

a. Dependent Variable: SALES VOLUME

Table 5: Sales Volume – SFCE Regression Model:

Application of decision rule: Rejection H_{02} : Based on test result, we have strong evidence that $\beta_{02} = 2.13$ is significant, and SFCE in the regression equation significantly affects and is positively related to sales volume.

In Table 6, $\beta_{03} = 2.13$; interception $t=15.92$ with a p-value of 0.11; $\beta_{ce3} = 1.08$. This is greater than zero. SFCE $t/ = 18.25$ with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than $t = 0.025$. Thus, our resulting regression equation when the computed values of β_{03} and β_{ce3} are substituted in model 3 would be:

Profitability (P) = 2.13 + 1.08 SFCE + E ----- Model 3

Application of decision rule: Reject H_{03} . Based on test result, as is empirically established, we have strong evidence that $\beta_{03} = (2.13)$ significantly affects and is related to profitability in the regression equation. Thus, the results of the tests permit us to accept the three hypotheses in this study.

Coefficients 3

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
		1	(Constant)	2.13			1.325		1.607	.110	-.492	4.750	
	SALES FORCE COMPETENCE EVALUATION	1.08	.068	.810	15.92	.000	.947	1.215	.810	.810	.810	1.000	1.0

a. Dependent Variable: Profitability

Table 6: Profitability – SFCE Regression Model:

Discussion:

The results of our quantitative analysis reveal that sales force competence evaluation positively and significantly affects marketing performance evidence in Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. We can see in Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 that the sales force competence

evaluation adopted by the industrial and domestic products firms in Nigeria highly significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. Therefore, the influence of sales force competence evaluation adopted by the industrial and domestic products firms on marketing performance was empirically proved. The individual activities that constitute sales force competence evaluation adopted by the industrial and domestic products firms were subjected to further test to determine which of them correlates better with marketing performance. The SPSS outputs on the activities are presented in Table 7.

S/No	Sales force Competence Evaluation Items	Pearson R	P-value	Mean	Std Dev.
P ₁	Sales force competence evaluation general question	0.762**	0.000	3.24	0.940
P ₂	Formative evaluation	0.667**	0.000	3.13	0.918
P ₃	Summative evaluation	0.706**	0.000	3.11	0.920
P ₄	Reaction measures	0.635**	0.000	3.15	1.026
P ₅	Learning measures	0.685**	0.000	3.09	1.018
P ₆	Behavior measures	0.776**	0.000	3.21	0.988

Table 7: Correlation of Sales force Competence Evaluation Elements Against Marketing Performance

Source: Research Data April – May, 2011,

The variables that operationally define the concept – sales force competence evaluation adopted by industrial and domestic products firms, had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.906 (Table 1). Also Table 7 shows that sales force competence evaluation general question had a correlation of 0.762 with marketing performance at a p-value of 0.000. Specifically, "behavioral measures" correlated most highly with marketing performance having a Pearson's r of 0.776, a p-value 0.000, and a mean value of 3.21.

The next element that correlated highly with marketing performance is summative evaluation which had a Pearson's r of 0.706, p-value of 0.000 and mean value of 3.11. The third most correlated item with marketing performance is "learning measures", which has a Pearson's r of 0.685, a p-value of 0.000. The fourth item of sales force

competence, with high correlation evaluation is “formative evaluation” which has a Pearson’s r of 0.667, a p -value of 0.000, and a mean value of 3.13. This is followed by “reaction measures” which has a Pearson’s r of 0.635, a p -value of 0.000 and a mean value of 3.15.

The items that constitute sales force competence evaluation were correlated against the three marketing performance measures. The aim was to determine if some of the items of sales force competence evaluation correlated with all or some of the measures of marketing performance. The SPSS outputs on the correlation of sales force competence evaluation items on marketing performance measures are shown in Table 8.

	Sales force Competence		Market share	Sales Volume	Profitability
P ₁	Sales force competence evaluation items	Pearson r Sig. 2-tailed	0.721** 0.000	0.740** 0.000	0.747** 0.000
P ₂	Formative evaluation	Pearson r Sig. 2-tailed	0.623** 0.000	0.636** 0.000	0.674** 0.000
P ₃	Summative evaluation	Pearson r Sig. 2-tailed	0.706** 0.000	0.651** 0.000	0.689** 0.000
P ₄	Reaction measures	Pearson r Sig. 2-tailed	0.634** 0.000	0.600** 0.000	0.607** 0.000
P ₅	Learning measures	Pearson r Sig. 2-tailed	0.667** 0.000	0.656** 0.000	0.663** 0.000
P ₆	Behaviour measure	Pearson r Sig. 2-tailed	0.754** 0.000	0.735** 0.000	0.760** 0.000

Table 8: Correlation of Sales force competence Evaluation Elements and Marketing Performance measures

Source: Research Data April – May, 2011,

Sales force competence evaluation general question correlated highly with all the marketing performance variables, having a Pearson's r of 0.747 with profitability, a Pearson's r of 0.740 with sales volume, and a Pearson's r of 0.691 with market share. All have a p -value of 0.000. Specifically, in terms of market share, "behavioral measures" had the highest Pearson's r of 0.754. The next is "summative evaluation" with a Pearson's r of 0.706, followed by "learning measure with a Pearson's r of 0.667. The fourth is "reaction measures with a Pearson's r of 0.634, while the fifth is formative evaluation, which has a Pearson's r of 0.623. All the correlations have a p -value of 0.000. These results are strong empirical evidence that sales force competence evaluation positively affect marketing performance of the industrial and domestics firms in Nigeria.

The results of the quantitative analyses discussed thus far, provide sample empirical evidence that sales force competence evaluation has strong positive association with marketing performance. In recognition of the relevance of competence evaluation, Johansson and Hurria (2003) argue that competence management activities entail competence analysis, competence planning, realization of plan, and evaluation, Ley et al (2007) developed a competence model encompassing among other activities assessing competence, evaluating competences and using competences.

Sales force competence evaluation affects marketing performance through behavioral measures, summative evaluation, learning measures, formative evaluation and reaction measures. Behavioral measures are emphasized by the industrial and domestic products firms in Nigeria as very vital element that must be given prime consideration in sales force competence evaluation. In support of the importance of behavioral measures, Raab et al (1987) maintain that behavioral measures help in estimating how appropriate the sales force competence development was in changing the behavioral of participants in real-life situations. In recognition of the importance of summative evaluation, Raab et al (1987) stress that summative evaluation is done at the end of competence development program in assessment of its effectiveness in relation of achieving the objectives and goals of the firms.

In supporting of the importance of formative evaluation, Raab et al (1987) observe that through formative evaluation, the key elements of the training activities are

systematically monitored, problems are identified, and attempts are made to rectify the mistakes before they become serious. In other word, profit margins are preserved through formative evaluation. Halim and Ali (2000), argue that formative evaluation and summative evaluation of sales force competence development programs affect marketing performance. In general terms, evaluation is viewed as an integral part of most instructional Design (ID) models which is vital in determining the effectiveness of instructional interventions (Eseryel, 2002). From the discussion thus far, it is apparent that the elements of sale force competence evaluation, namely behavior measures, learning measures, reaction measures, formative evaluation and summative evaluation are strong contributors to marketing performance.

Conclusions, And Implications And Recommendation:

From the discussion of the results of analyses, we can conclude that the sales force competence evaluation of the industrial and domestic products firms in Nigeria affects their marketing performance. The hypotheses provide empirical evidence that sales force competence evaluation can be used to predict marketing performance of these firms. Sales force competence evaluation is thus, a direct determinant of marketing performance.

Sales force competence evaluation activities – namely: formative evaluation, summative evaluation, reaction measures, learning measures, and behavioral measures, enhance, marketing performance measures such as market share, sales volume, and profitability. Emphasis on these sales force competence evaluation activities, all things being equal, would most likely lead a firm to achieving optimal marketing performance. This paper therefore, recommends that the industrial and domestic products firms in Nigeria whose objective is to enhance their marketing performance should emphasize sales force these competence evaluation activities.

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