THE LINK BETWEEN SALES FORCE AUTOMATION SYSTEM AND SALES PERFORMANCE IN THE CONSUMER GOODS INDUSTRY IN NAIROBI, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth and advances in computerized technologies in the last decade have significantly changed the everyday life of the modern sales representative. Sales Force Automation is marketing tool often a part of a company's Customer Relationship Management approach whose goal is to help develop a long-term, cost effective link with individual customers for the mutual benefit of the customer and the organization. The purpose of this study was to examine influence of adoption of sales force automation system on sales performance in Kenya taking a case of consumer goods firms in Nairobi. The research design of this study was a descriptive survey research. This study targeted consumer goods firms in Nairobi, Kenya and the respondents were project managers/IT managers and Sales force of these firms, making a sample size of 250 respondents. Stratified random sampling was employed to select managers and Sales force from each of these firms and obtain a sample of 50 of the 149 firms in Nairobi representing a 30% sample size. The study relied on primary data which was collected through administering structured questionnaire comprising of closed and open-ended questions developed in line with the objectives of the study. Quantitative data collected using questionnaires was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics. From the findings, knowledge in the SFA system enables sales force to do their work more efficiently, more effectively, or more satisfyingly had the highest mean score of 4.6016 and a standard deviation of 0.69328, C.V of 0.481. In addition SFA has led to faster access to timely information (Mean= 4.5697; S.D= 0.63728; C.V= 0.406). On benefits, improved sales force efficiency and Productivity had a mean of 4.5418; S.D= 0.62068; C.V= 0.385, while improved customer relationships as a benefit had a mean of 4.5100; S.D= 0.76086; C.V= 0.579). Based on the findings, this study recommended that for companies where ongoing customer relationships are essential, management should consider adoption of sales force automation as a key driver of their business. From the analysis, this study also found out that Kenyan firms have a positive peculiar strength in embracing technologies, contrary to what external literature depicts as a global challenge. In conclusion, essential objectives of SFA such as increased speed and efficiency in performing existing sales tasks are competitive necessity in today's markets, and therefore should stay as core requirements of an SFA-implementation project.

Key Words: *sales force, automation system, sales performance, consumer goods industry, Nairobi, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

The origin of modern-day salesmanship occurred in the decades around the turn of the 21st century (Friedman, 2004). Entrepreneurs at the advance guard of selling, established new techniques of operating sales and subsequently came up with fresh procedures of management that matched those of the contemporary mass production science. Friedman (2004) states that today's businesses produced more goods and services than existed at the turn of the century and

with that, the sales force sizes saw unprecedented growth in order to promote those products and services. The growth of industry spawned increased competition from companies that produced similar products and services.

Sales force is the division of a business that is responsible for selling of products or services in an organization. The individuals in this division are referred to salespeople (salesperson) and the art of selling is referred to as salesmanship. Sales force nowadays faces many challenges that originate from both outside and within their associations (Jones, Brown, Zoltners, and Weitz 2005). As the greatest outer performer, clients always raise their expectations. Through the Internet, they educate themselves about item choices before making a buy. Organizations are presenting sets of accepted rules which set strict models that must be maintained while encountering customers. Firms deal with market challenges by the use of various strategic, organizational and operational measures which bring additional burden on Sales force. They move the strategic direction of their sale forces away from a transaction line of view to an emphasis regarding relationships (Ingram 2006; Weitz and Bradford 2009). In this setting, Sales force are expected to shift their attention and time from taking orders and direct it to other specially-made solutions for customers and new business operations (Shoemaker 2011).

In Kenya, studies that are closely intertwined to this study have been carried out in the field of supply chain management practices. Effectiveness and efficiency of the supply chain in Wrigley East Africa (Ayugi, 2007). His findings on challenges based Wrigley East Africa staff perception were: Demand and customer needs challenges, Quality and market completion challenges, raw materials and operational challenges, staff training and capacity challenges. Njoroge studied the benefits of upstream and downstream integration of supply chain, a case of East Africa Breweries Limited (Njoroge, 2007). His findings were that the major challenges within EABL supply chain were the suppliers and EABL's organization structure. The suppliers were few and could not deliver in good time resulting in losses. Other challenges experienced were poor communication channels and lack of alignment of duties within the supply chain.

THEORIES OF SALES FORCE AUTOMATION SYSTEMS

Theory of Reasoned Actions (TRA) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Theory of Reasoned Actions (TRA) and 5Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) These are wont to take a look at SFA, though not terribly wide (Bush et. al., 2005; Jones et. al., 2002; Schillewaer et. al., 2005). TRA and tam-o'-shanter are often wont to predict and estimate person's intentions, however they are doing not adequately predict actual technology use or behaviour once victimization technology (Jones et. al., 2002). yet tam-o'-shanter is wide wont to take a look at technology acceptance, though it doesn't live the extent of usage. tam-o'-shanter defines that behavior is decided by intentions towards victimization the system and intention is decided by 2 connected values: perceived ease-of-use and perceived quality (Avlonitis and Panagopoulus, 2005). Perceived ease-of-use is for instance the degree of effort required for victimization the system. Perceived quality suggests that the extent that a user believes that the

system can enhance his performance. And each of them along directly verify the adoption of the system.

TRA is wide employed in psychology and thus provides a brand new perspective to the topic matter (Bush et. al., 2005). These 2 theories are employed in testing the adoption of technology and thru it researchers attempt to notice reasons why system implementations fail. The theories will provide a great way to clarify SFA system usage and acceptance. TAM and TRA are used wide with totally different reasonably technology adoption, not solely with SFA systems. varied theoretical models have been developed within the IT literature to clarify the adoption and use of technology within the men (Leong, 2003). A serious stream of this literature has centered on using intention-based models that use behavioral intention to predict usage (Lee et al. 2003).

These models focus on identifying the determinants of intention, such as attitudes, social influences, and facilitating conditions across a broad range of end-user computing technologies and settings. Most of this research is grounded in social psychology models for example, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and the Theory of Planned conduct (TPB) (Ajzen 1985, 1991). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has emerged from this literature as a powerful and parsimonious way to explain IT users' intention and behavior regarding IT usage (Davis, 1989). TAM identifies two central beliefs, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, as the primary predictors of user's attitude or overall affect toward IT usage (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness is the extent to which a person believes that using a system will enhance her performance, and perceived ease of use is the extent to which a person believes that using the system will be relatively free of effort.

The core idea of the TAM is that a person's attitude toward using a technology is jointly determined by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (see figure 1). User attitude influences behavioral intention to use IT, which in turn, influences actual usage behavior. In contrast with TRA, the mediating role of attitude played in TAM is often debated. Within professional settings, "people form intentions toward behaviors they believe will increase their job performance, over and above whatever positive or negative feelings may be evoked toward the behavior per se" (Davis et al., 1989). Utilitarian considerations may dominate users' decision to use IT, regardless of any negative attitude toward such usage. Empirical studies demonstrate a consistent and strong perceived usefulness – intention link whereas attitude tends to have a mixed effect, especially when perceived usefulness is included as a predictor of intention (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This has led many recent TAM studies to drop attitude entirely from their models (Venkatesh and Davis, 2010).

Empirical tests of TAM have shown that it explains much of the variance in intention to use and actual usage behavior. For instance, Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) apply TAM to examine students' usage of a word processing software at two points in time, following their initial exposure to the system and then again 14 weeks after initial acceptance, in order to demonstrate model's predictive ability for short-term and long-term (post adoptive) usage. More

recent longitudinal studies also employ TAM to examine post-adoption intention and/or behavior. Perceived usefulness has consistently been the predominant predictor of user intentions to use IT and actual usage behavior, though ease of use has had a somewhat inconsistent effect, especially during later stages of usage (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

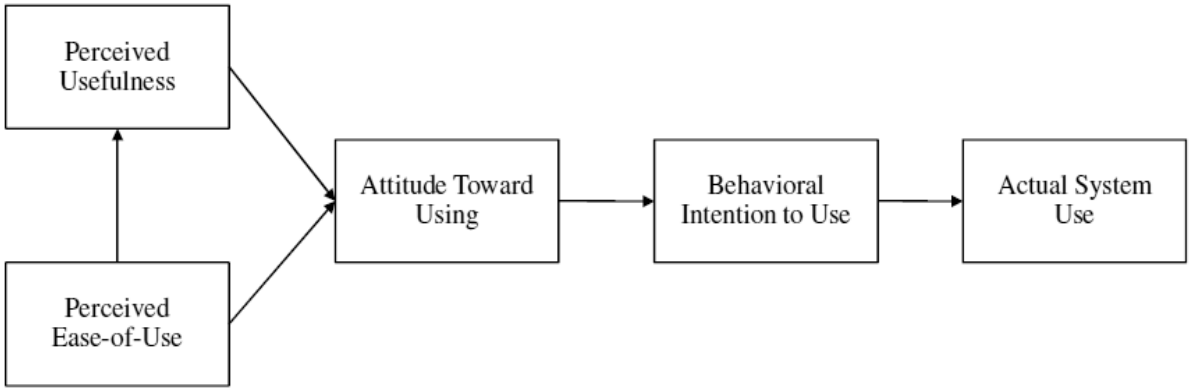

Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model
Source: (Davis, 1989)

Effort-oriented constructs are expected to be more salient in the early stages of a new behavior, then learning-curve effects take place and effort expectancy becomes overshadowed by instrumentality concerns (Szajna, 2006; Venkatesh, 2009). TAM has also frequently been applied and validated in the sales domain. Innovation processes do not take place in vacuum (Burkhardt, 2004; Kraut et al., 2008). In fact, TAM suggests that organizational, social and individual variables that are not explicit in the TAM could have an impact on IT-usage (at least partially) mediated by the belief variables (i.e., perceived usefulness and ease-of-use). In this way, the model provides a source for tracing the impact of external factors on internal beliefs, attitudes, intentions and actual behavior (Davis et al., 1989). Several studies indicate that individual adoption of innovations not only depends upon beliefs but also on management policies and actions (Ives and Olson, 1984; Leonard-Barton and Deschamps, 1998). Organizational efforts to support technology (e.g., training, user support) and several social influences (e.g., originating from peers, supervisors or customers) may trigger learning mechanisms which influence technology adoption by end-users (Huber, 1991; Sinkula, 2004; Slater and Narver, 2005).

To sum up, TAM theorizes that Sales force intention-to-use and adoption of an SFA system is explained by SFA's perceived usefulness and ease of use. External factors such as the accuracy of expectations regarding the implementation, intrapersonal attributes such as innovativeness and organizational efforts such as availability of training and technical support may have an indirect impact on usage behavior, mediated by two central beliefs, perceived usefulness and ease-of-use of the focal system. In the following part this study puts forward its hypotheses in which a

number of well-studied underlying factors of technology adoption and use are proposed to explain our SFA-use dimensions.

Sales Force Automation and Sales Performance

Sales associations expect that business power ventures utilization of SFA advancements will prompt expanded viability and proficiency in overseeing different offering undertakings, which ought to consequently mean better deals execution (Jones et al., 2002; Widmier et al., 2002). Steady with organization desires, managers and sales agents trust that business innovation devices will be valuable in the execution of their jobs (Buehrer et al., 2005; Engle and Barnes, 2010).

Be that as it may, neither all duties are similarly vital in a Sales force's employment, nor do they similarly affect Sales force execution (Tripoli, 2008). Sales force need to convey their endeavors shrewdly with a specific end goal to accomplish performance. The effect of SFA on execution will rely on upon the achievement and greatness of the undertakings and procedures it bolsters (Barua et al., 2005). Therefore, the study proposes in the conceptual framework that SFA impacts Sales force projects performance through a two-dimensional mechanism. It is expected that the SFA-use dimensions will have distinctive effects on Sales performance.

SFA technologies enable sales activities directly facing the customer and can help Salesforce manage their customer relationships along the sales cycle, from customer acquisition to maintenance, efficiently and effectively. First, SFA can be a very helpful tool to understand customer needs and sales opportunities. Because of its stockpiling, recovery, and system limits, IT can possibly empower and encourage data procurement, spread, and use (Huber, 1991). Today, Sales force has broad access to information (e.g., past shipments to wholesalers, retail location deals, shopper purchasing propensities, and item execution qualities). By the help of SFA systems, Salesforce can convert such available data into high quality information about a a bigger number of clients, items and contenders (Tanner et al., 2005). Case in point, a business delegate can seek online databases or the Internet for client and business-related data, hence enhancing his or her comprehension of unmet client needs.

Second, SFA will help Salesforce approach the customer with correct timing. Calendaring and directing apparatuses empower deals delegates to viably deal with their time, set up arrangements precisely, and take part in week after week arranging. Better planning helps Salesforce allocate his time across clients optimally and ensure that every client receives the necessary Salesforce attention (Ahearne et al., 2005). Third, technology can play a significant role in performing a sales call. Salesforce are normally recommended to collect information about the customer to assist adaptation to a specific sales situation (Spiro and Weitz, 1990) and to plan for the interactions with the buyer (Sujan et al., 2004).

SFA databases and applications regularly have abilities that permit deals delegates to keep point by point records about customers and past deals calls. Using client buy history and inclinations,

Salesforce can tailor presentations to adjust to particular purchasing needs and make better customized sales calls (Ahearne et al., 2008). Reviewing the account history before the real up close and personal deals call improves a Salesforce's capacity to choose the proper deals technique and to figure out which items to underline amid the business call taking into account the client's beforehand expressed inclinations (Hunter and Perreault, 2006). The information can in return be used toward developing suggestions and propositions that balance deal targets with client goals (Hunter and Perreault, 2007). Sales report that business innovation makes sales calls more professional (Marshall et al., 2009).

In addition to supporting the customer relationship lifecycle, SFA systems can also increase the efficiency of repetitive administrative tasks and improve communication within the organization. It is expected that using SFA to perform such internal oriented tasks will have an impact on Salesforce performance, yet in an indirect character.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design was a correlational design utilizing cross-sectional survey methodology and included a number of survey instruments. Cross-sectional surveys are studies aimed at determining the frequency (or level) of a particular attribute, such as a specific exposure, disease or any other health-related event, in a defined population at a particular point in time. This design also corresponds to what Bryman describes as Cross-sectional research design that aims at getting data from multiple cases at a given point in time so as to analyse relationships across a number of variables of interest (Bryman, 2004). This study was based on such a design because; its quantification characteristic helps in consistent benchmarking (Bryman, 2004). However, cross-sectional studies usually lack internal validity (Bryman, 2004) and this study tried to respond to this concern through the qualitative component of this study. In this study therefore, the qualitative data was used to enrich the descriptions generated by, and or from the quantitative data and thus build the picture of solid waste management in the study area, better. In doing so, aspects of a phenomenological study design to research were employed to guide qualitative data collection and analysis.

Target Population

The target population was the Consumer Goods Firms in Nairobi that are using SFA systems from the 149 in the Kenya Association of Manufacturers directory. The target population was considered appropriate for the type of objectives of this study, the homogeneity of the population, as it enabled the researcher to describe the state of affairs as they exist without manipulation of variables which was the aim of the study (Cynthia, 2014).

Sampling Design

After identifying the target population, stratified random sampling was used to select the sample size of the study. According to Dessel (2013), a sample size of 20% is considered as a good response rate, while a 30% sample size is considered to be very good.

In his work, Shi (2014) concludes that stratified sampling ensures samples which are more representative than that of simple random sampling thereby improving the accuracy of parameter estimmation. Dividing a population into homogenous strata may reduce the variance of an estimator of a population mean or total. Barnett (1974). The advantages of stratified sampling can be summarized as follows:

Improved overall precision – creation of strata that are more homogeneous internally than the population as a whole reduces the variance of the population estimates.

Easier Administration – Stratification may make a survey much easier to administer

Greater information yield – parameters can be estimated for the strata themselves, which may be very important.

There were two types of strata:

1. The population of 149 companies will be divided into eight sub sectors and a number of representative companies will be picked depending on the number of companies in that sub sector:
    a. Alcohol & Spirits – 6 companies
    b. Bakers and Millers – 6 companies
    c. Cocoa, Sugar & Chocolate – 6 companies
    d. Dairy products – 6 companies
    e. Juices, waters & carbonated drinks – 8 companies
    f. Slaughtering and preservation of meat – 6 companies
    g. Tobacco – 6 Companies
    h. Vegetable oils – 6 Companies

The eight sub sectors produced a sample size of 50 companies which is 30% of the population.

2. The sample size of 50 companies was stratified further into three groups of respondents. These were Project Managers or IT Managers, Sales Managers and Salesforce of these firms. The researcher collected data from 1 IT Manager, 1 Sales Manager and 3 sales force personnel from each of the 50 companies making a total of 250 respondents.

Table 1: Breakdown of Respondents

SUB SECTOR	NO OF COMPANIES	IT MANAGERS	SALES MANAGERS	SALES FORCE	TOTAL
Alcohol & Spirits	6	1	1	3	30
Bakers and Millers	6	1	1	3	30
Cocoa, Sugar & Chocolate	6	1	1	3	30
Dairy products	6	1	1	3	30
Juices, waters & carbonated drinks	8	1	1	3	40
Slaughtering and preservation of meat	6	1	1	3	30
Tobacco	6	1	1	3	30
Vegetable oils	6	1	1	3	30
TOTAL					250

Research Instruments

Data for this study was collected using questionnaires which were structured based on the research objectives. The questionnaires contained closed and open ended questions. Secondary data was obtained to reinforce collected data from internet, text books, brochures and journals covering the organization under study. According to Harper, Laws, and Marcus (2003), a questionnaire is a written list of questions, either given or posted to respondents, who fill it by themselves. Information is gathered directly from people through a series of questions, many which are likely to offer the respondent some possible replies to tick. Each item in the questionnaire was developed to address a specific objective, or research question of the study. The researcher primarily selected data which was collected using the questionnaires.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher sought permission from the management of the fast moving consumer goods firms in Kenya. The researcher's next step was to get a letter from University of Nairobi as a confirmation of the purpose of the research. Two qualified field assistants were recruited and trained for 3 days to ensure accurate data collection. They were trained on introductory techniques to respondents, questionnaire interpretation, data collection techniques, data recording, basic field ethics and introduction to instrument reliability and validity concept. The collected data was processed and organized for statistical analysis. The process of data analysis involved several stages; the completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency, checked for errors and omissions and then coded. Descriptive analysis was employed. Inferential statistics involving percentages, mean scores and standard deviations were used to to examine the influence of SFA on the performance of the sales force in consumer goods firms in Kenya. Coding was done in computerized form, analyzed and the output interpreted in frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviation and rankings.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results were computed to produce percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation for efficiency in interpretation. Qualitative analysis was conducted to supplement the quantitative analysis.

Goals of Sales Force Automation in Respondents Organization

The respondents were required to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements pertaining to the goals of Sales Force Automation in their organization on a scale of 1 to 5 where; 1- Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- Neither agree nor disagree, and 4- Agree and 5-Strongly agree. The overall aggregate mean score for this section stands at 4.4758, the standard deviation at 0.6300 and the coefficient of variation at 0.3987. This discloses that on average the respondents agreed with goals of Sales Force Automation in their company. The statement that knowledge in the SFA system enables sales force to do their work more efficiently, more effectively, or more satisfyingly had the highest mean score of 4.6016 and a standard deviation of 0.69328, C.V of 0.481. This was followed by, SFA has led to faster access to timely information (Mean= 4.5697; S.D= 0.63728; C.V= 0.406). SFA has led to improved ability to deliver better value to the customers through information sharing across sales, marketing, and customer service employees (Mean= 4.861; S.D= 0.62833; C.V= 0.395). SFA has led to automated sales tasks, the preparation for sales activities such as proposals or order forms takes less time (Mean= 4.4542; S.D= 0.58042; C.V= 0.337). SFA has led to improved contact management capabilities (Mean= 4.4343; S.D= 0.64394; C.V= 0.415). SFA has led to increased productive and quality selling time (Mean= 4.183; S.D= 0.56241; C.V= 0.316). SFA has led to increased sales (Mean= 4.43665; S.D= 0.66417; C.V= 0.441).

These findings concur with Ahearne et al., (2005) who observes that eventually, by reducing the amount of downtime in a salesperson's workday and optimizing call schedules, the amount of time devoted to activities more closely associated with selling can be maximized. Furthermore, SFA facilitates and improves information processing and communication, which in return can increase the quantity of work performed in a given time period (Good and Stone, 1995).

Benefits of Using SFAs in Respondents Organization

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were in agreement with statements relating to the benefits of using SFAs in their organization using a five point likert scale where 1-Strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- Neither agree nor disagree, and 4- Agree and 5-Strongly agree. The overall aggregate mean score for this section stands at 4.44901, the standard deviation at 0.7059 and the coefficient of variation at 0.5065. This demonstrates that on average the respondents were of the view that there were benefits of using SFAs in their organization in their company. This was exampled by the statement that there was; improved sales force efficiency and Productivity (Mean= 4.5418; S.D= 0.62068; C.V= 0.385). Improved Customer Relationships (Mean= 4.5100; S.D= 0.76086; C.V= 0.579). Better within-team collaboration having the highest

mean score of 4.4980 and a standard deviation of 0.61563, C.V of 0.379. Additionally, it can be noted that this statement had the lowest level of dispersion. This was followed by, improved operational efficiency (Mean= 4.4104; S.D= 0.82640; C.V= 0.683). This statement exhibited the highest level of dispersion.

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of the most recent two decades the reception and utilization of SFA innovation have fabricated an impressive accentuation in the IT writing. One of the significant reasons remaining behind this expanding accentuation is the acknowledgment of SFA advantages in the field which is regarded a conspicuous issue in today deals firms that grasp this innovation. Considering the extent of offers innovation speculations worldwide and their substantial disappointment rates on one hand, and the late selection of SFA innovation in the Kenya market by shopper merchandise firms alongside expanding merchants of this innovation then again, it is especially critical for the neighborhood business sector to better comprehend the results of this innovation appropriation pretty much as alternate markets do.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on previous results and conclusions, the following recommendations might help to enhance performance of SFA:

1. For companies where ongoing customer relationships are essential, management should set supporting customer relationships as the major objective to be sought by the SFA deployment.
2. To make sure that salespeople use SFA-technology for the effective management of their customer relationships, supervisors need to rely on voluntary usage which can be triggered through salesperson's perception of usefulness, supervisory support and perception of ease-of-use.

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