

SALES FORCE RESILIENCE AND SALES PERFORMANCE OF YAM TUBER MARKETERS IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of sales force resilience on sales performance of yam sellers in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey design while needed data was collected from primary sources through self administered questionnaire to 31 sales employees of yam tuber marketers were sampled for the study. Regression analysis was employed to test the study hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 24) at 5 % level of significance. Finding's from the study's analysis revealed that sales force resilience has significant effect on sales performance of yam tuber marketers studied ($P\text{-value } .000 < \alpha = 0.05$). Findings from this study have left no option than to conclude that sales force resilience have significant effect on sales performance of yam tuber marketers studied. Based on the outcome of the analysis, the study it recommended (among others that) that Marketers of yam tubers should encourage their sales force to employ high level of resilience strategy in all their selling practices to attract enhanced sales performance of their businesses.

Keywords: Sales force, resilience strategy, Sales performance, Yam tuber marketers, Makurdi Metropolis.

1.0 Introduction

Today's business environment is filled with diverse challenges including volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, targets, deadlines, rivalry, long working hours, heavy workloads, increased pressures to do more with less, increased competition and constant organizational change which appears to be the new normal. This is further compounded by increasing market shocks, governmental instability, pandemics, insecurity and increased knowledge status of today's customers. The development has made the achievement of success in the workplace to rely heavily on every employee's capacity to cope and even thrive when faced with stress.

As change and uncertainty has become the new normal in today's business world, resilience becomes a new skill for employee and business survival as it help employees and their companies to quickly recover from emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (Qing et. al. 2020). Businesses and their employees operating in today's world need to embrace resilience so as to cope with emergencies, and make full use of crisis events that may threaten the employee productivity and organizational performance (Franken, Plimmer & Malinen, 2020). Resilience has become essential to business continuity and recovery. When resilience is fully in place, employees and their organizations can recover from shocks to a balanced state, withstand and survive adversity, and may even develop new abilities and proceed to achieve breakthrough growth (Zhao, 2020). Thus, acquiring resilience has become important to the sustainable success of organizations operating in today's business world (Santoro, Messeni & Giudice, 2020).

For an organization's sales force, the ability to face, withstand, cope and successfully overcome challenges, stressful situations, crises, sales difficulties and challenging conditions and gain desired strength to successfully forge on has been confirmed to depend much on which is said to be an important strategy that is capable of ensuring success as it stimulates a sales person to bounce back and grow from adverse experiences (Philippe & Lecours, 2019). Resilience is the key that effectively manages crisis and abrupt crush (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2020) and has become a new skill for corporate survival and sustainable development that help employees and their companies to quickly recover from emergencies (Qing, et. al. 2020). It is a positive internal resource that stimulates a sales person and other employees to deal with turbulence, stress and unforeseen sales situation in the workplace. When creatively and effectively developed, properly managed and innovatively put to use, resilience has all it takes to satisfy customers by achieving positive personal and organizational outcomes (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2020). A highly resilient workforce is clearly desirable in today's unsteady and challenging business world (Philippe & Lecours, 2019).

Resilience supports adaptation to adverse conditions and reflects one's capacity to effectively recover after prevailing challenges and flexibly aligns to the changing demands of stressful experiences (Niitsu, et. al. 2017). Employees that are resilient oriented most often develop the capability to manage resources well, deal with excessive workloads, respond to and learning from mistakes and crises and utilize challenges as an opportunity to reinforce and bounce

back powerfully and positively (Kuntz, Connell & Naswall, 2017). Through resilience, employees develop thick skin and effectively respond and adapt to result oriented routes to achieve stated objectives (Franken, Plimmer & Malinen, 2020). Employees including sales force demonstrate resilient behavior when they utilize their personal and job-related resources in the selling process to respond swiftly to uncertainty and change. Studies have demonstrated the impact of resilience drastically reduces job-related stress and challenge especially when religiously embarked upon (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2020).

For yam marketers, resilience skills are usually instrumental to coping with challenges in any selling situation and environment as it is vital in achieving sales objectives in today's challenging business world (Qing, et. al. 2020). The ability of a yam marketer to identify specific sales challenges and timely apply relevant and appropriate resilience skills and approaches is fundamental and strategic in achieving successful sales (Gobbi, 2020). Yam marketing refers to independent owner/managed business organizations of limited significance employing very few employees, where the owner/manager's omnipresence creates a highly personalized management style. This study investigates the effect of sales force resilience on sales performance of yam marketers in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to empirically investigate the effect of sales force resilience on sales performance of yam marketers in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

This hypothesis for this study presented in its null form states that:

H₀₁: sales force resilience has no effect on sales performance of yam tuber marketers in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria.

2.0 Literature Review

This section presents a review of literature that relates to the effect of sales force resilience on sales performance.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.2 Persuasive hierarchy theory

The theory assumed that in order to influence sales, sales person should generate a number of effects on the consumer. Such effects are generated in a particular order, the first being considered as preconditions and at the same time most important. It is believed that this effect could be cognitive, emotional or behavioral effects. Also occur, a number of factors with mediating role: the degree of involvement and attitude towards message. Involvement, has been object of intense study addressed in the literature. It can be seen as the personal degree of importance given to a product or situation, including the perceived risk in the purchase (Reed and Ewing 2004).

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Resilience

Resilience is conceived as the ability to face and withstand stressful conditions and gain desired strength from adversity (Fletcher, et.al. 2013). Gupta & Srivastava, (2020) define resilience as the ability to absorb turbulence and be reorganized while undergoing changes to maintain stability in the same function, structure, identity and feedback. Resilience encompasses the ability of an employee to increase his awareness of the risk environment and reduce its vulnerability, help to properly reposition a resilient employee to overcome prevailing sales situations and develop the ability to adapt to changes and to proactively react, recover from tragedy, trauma and other adversities before changes are needed (Ogbeibu, Jabbour, Gaskin & Senadjki, 2021). Resilience also aids recovery from setbacks as well as stimulate the ability to adjust, overcome and be persistent in the face of catastrophe or adversities which is what differentiates a successful employees from others. It can be deduced from the foregoing that resilience is a personal resource that supports adaptation to adverse conditions.

Some of the attributes of resilient employees as revealed by Chen and Fellenz, (2020) includes: enthusiasm, optimism and hope, a high degree of autonomy, self-awareness and emotional literacy, flexibility and adaptability, a sense of purpose, and the ability to develop a sense of meaning from difficult and challenging situations. When effectively developed and managed, resilience can lead to positive personal and organizational outcomes (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2020).

Resilient sales force have all it takes to acquire positive emotions, confidence and optimism to work efficiently within a sustained period of time, regardless of the surrounding conditions which could be psychologically stressful (Santoro, Messeni & Giudice, 2020). The ability of sales force to adapt and cope with any prevailing challenging situation is the core of his resilience. Employees must be rational and must not only respond and adapt to environmental turbulence, but also actively initiate, restore, update and redesign organizational structures and relationships so that they can thrive in adversity. Resilient sales force perceives the same condition as less stressful than less resilient people do.

The increasing challenging nature of today's workplace presents diverse challenges which resilience strategy can effectively handle. The exciting thing about [resilience is that it is a skill](#). and like any other skill, It can be learnt (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2020). A Resilient sales person will ordinarily overcome all challenging situations in selling and build strong connections and relationships with others (Branicki & Livschitz, 2018). The resilient worker is a team-player who aims for a win-win with their fellow employees and will do what they can to help others to [achieve success](#) in the workplace (Ogbeibu, Jabbour, Gaskin & Senadjki, 2021). Considering the benefits in being resilient, all organizations are expected to create an environment that encourages it (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2020 and Malik & Garg, 2017).

2.1.2 Sales force

Sales force are an organization's sales persons and ambassadors that link company's products with the outside world (consumers) to find prospective buyers of their commodities, convert

these prospective buyers to customers and ensure that they are continually satisfied to facilitate repeat performance (Hanmaikyur, Jinjiri, Zubair & Asue, 2020).

Competitive survival in the market depends both on an a well-trained and resilience sales force. Today's market place demands salespeople who are keenly resilience with their customers' needs and equipped with the technical to operate efficiently and effectively to the mutual advantage of both sellers and buyers (Mactony, 2014). The resilience action of sales force is responsive to market conditions and requirements in a way that generates maximum profits to the firm. Ensuring long term successes in any firm hinges in part on sales force resilience skills. Resilient sales force has all it takes to make their organizations to thrive and survive. They are better able to rebound and learn from adversity and uncertainty (Djourova, 2019).

2.2 Yam Tubers

Yam is a common name for some plant species in the genus *Dioscorea* (family Dioscoreaceae) that form edible tubers (Ekanayake & Asiedu, 2003). These are perennial herbaceous vines cultivated for the consumption of their starchy tubers. It is grown by planting pieces of tuber, or small whole tubers ('seed yams') saved from the previous season (Korieh, 2007). In the study area, yam is one of the most preferred staple food in Nigeria and a major source of income. It is an important dietary element for many people, it is rich in starch and can be prepared in many ways. It is available all year round, unlike other seasonal crops. It is produced both for household consumption and as a cash crop (Philippe & Lecours, 2019). These characteristics make yam a preferred food and a culturally important food security crop (Izekor & Olumese, 2010). Yam is an edible energy-rich underground plant structure. The crop makes a substantial contribution to protein in the diet. Yams are also used in traditional rituals such as marriage ceremonies and annual festivals, making the crop a measure of wealth. Yams therefore have significance over and above other crops in the study area (Hetzal, 2019).

Marketing of yam involves all activities aimed at producing, pricing, promoting and distributing yam products to the final consumers; (with personnel, people, physical environment and process to customer involvement, procedures in service delivery). These activities help to make yam products available to consumers in the form and quantity desired by the consumers at the time and at the price consumers and middlemen is willing and able to pay.

2.3 Sales Performance

Selling is an art and a socio-scientific process that involves individual and group-effort in the pursuit of a defined sales goals or objectives which are usually predetermined (Zhao, 2020). Selling is a highly distinctive type of promotion that involves persuading people to purchase a product and a system of authority where the emphasis is on harmony and aims at bringing the right products to the right customers (Santoro, Messeni & Giudice, (2020).

Sales performance refers to the amount a company derives from increased sales compared to a previous corresponding period of time in which the later sales exceed the former (Gupta & Srivastava, 2020). It is an act or process of gradual increase in size of something over a period of time and an important parameter which is used to measure the [performance](#) of the sales

team to increase revenue over a pre-determined period of time (Djourova, 2019). Sales Performance is considered positive for a company's survival, profitability and growth is considered positive for a company's survival, profitability and is usually given as a percentage (Gupta & Srivastava, 2020). Based on the forgoing, it is safe to conclude that sales performance is an essential parameter for [survival](#) and is usually given as a percentage.

Increasing competition in today's challenging business world has compelled sales persons and their organizations to seek ways to adjust to the prevailing changing and challenging business environments. This is pronounced in selling where salespeople are recognized as the boundary spanners (Kotler, 1984). For salespeople to produce high performance, salespeople must have technical knowledge and able to effectively demonstrate resilience in their selling practices.

2.4 Sales force Resilience and sales performance

Resilience is a positive internal resource that employees can use to deal with turbulence and stress in the workplace. When effectively developed and managed, resilience can lead to positive personal and organizational outcomes (Kaski & Kinnunen, 2020).

Research on resilience in the workplace and elsewhere points to a number of positive outcomes at the individual, team and organizational levels (Ogbeibu, Jabbour, Gaskin & Senadjki, 2021). It adds that resilient grounded sales force cooperate more effectively and are better at finding solutions when faced with challenges and adversity. Resilient employee demonstrated superior performance in both fulfilling the requirements of their own jobs and in going above and beyond by contributing with behaviors that benefit sales performance (Chen & Fellenz, 2020).

It has been demonstrated that resilient employee relates with work performance especially macro level performance (Huh, Reigeluth & Lee, 2010). Festing and Schafer (2014) indicated that resilient employees are inclined to exhibiting psychological feeling over their task to the extent that display ingenious commitment that radically ensure goal attainment.

Reviewed studies have revealed that resilient workers across the work spectrum seem to manifest a capacity to cope with high work demands far more successfully than others (Chen & Fellenz, 2020). This class of employees are said to possess high resilience which easily transforms to enhanced performance including sales (Santoro, Messeni & Giudice, 2020). In the face of adverse situations, resilient sales persons are not prone to passivity and depression, instead, they can actively develop and mobilize resources, and constantly adapt to turbulence and environmental changes to achieve stated objectives (Zhao, 2020). Achieving success in today's business world is a function of a good number of factors including availability of competent resilient sales force. A resilient sales force can guarantee success for their businesses. Sales force resilience plays a central role in not only sales force survival, but also in the survival and enhanced performance of their organizations (Djourova, 2019).

Today's fast-paced and increasingly changing business environment demand sales persons in all organizations to be resilient so as to develop the confidence they need to confidently face

challenges, embrace change and recover from disappointments and defeats, become increasingly productive and enhance sales performance for their organizations.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a survey design approach to obtain the needed information on the study variables. Quantitative field survey research method was employed to investigate the study variables while the population of the study consisted of 31 sales employees of selected small businesses in the study area. 31 yam sellers who were sampled through accidental sampling technique during the 2 weeks study period. Data for the study were collected through primary source with the aid of questionnaire. Reliability test was carried out to ensure internal consistency of instrument using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha is the most common measure of internal consistency (reliability).

Table 1: Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Sales force Resilience	0.714
Sales Performance	0.893
Average Reliability	0.853

Source: Researcher's Data, 2022.

3.1 Variable Specification

The study considered two variables which are the independent variable (sales force resilience) and the dependent variable (sales performance).

3.2 Model Specification

In this study the implicit form of the regression model is expressed as follows:

$$SP = f(SFR) \quad (1)$$

where;

SP = Sales Performance (dependent variable)

SFR = Sales force Resilience (independent variable)

The explicit form of the model can be stated thus:

$$SP = B_0 + B_1(SFR) + e \quad (2)$$

Where:

B_0 = constant of the model.

B_1 = coefficients of the model.

e = disturbance terms or error term.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Inferential statistics (regression analysis) was used for test of hypotheses. This was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 24). using t-test and pvalues from the regression.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents data analysis, test of hypotheses and discussion of findings on effect of sales force resilience on sales performance of the establishments studied.

4.1. Responses on effect of sales force resilience on sales performance

Table 1: Respondents' Views on effect of sales force resilience on sales performance (n=31)

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	STD
Resilience has the capacity to help sales staff to bounce back from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased productivity and performance	1	4	4.56	0.49
The ability to display resilience skills in selling enables sales force to cope better with stress and become more satisfied and productive	1	4	4.62	0.56
Creating a resilient organization that can firmly bounce back and grow from adverse experiences is increasingly critical in selling	1	4	4.51	0.53
Resilience help sales persons to be competitive and help to improve their ability to resist and adapt to environmental changes.	1	4	4.86	0.69

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The responses collected from the study's respondents on items 1, 2, 3 and 4 were presented using mean scores and standard deviation. The result as presented in Table 1 indicates that the respondents agreed with all the statements which showed that all the factors have positive effect small business sales performance in Makurdi metropolis. The mean scores ranged from 4.51 to 4.86 and they were all above the 2.50 cut-off point. This result implies that sales force resilience has significant effects the performance of small businesses in the study area.

Table 2 : Respondents Views on Small business sales Performance (n=31)

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	ST.D
The adoption of resilience by the company's sales force has resulted in increase in competitiveness and sales in the company	1	4	3.03	1.128
The ability of sales force to employ resilience has led to increased market share of the company.	1	4	3.13	1.021

Sales force resilience has led to increase in customer

patronage in the company	1	4	3.13	.908
There is increase in the volume of sales in the company as a result of resilience approach employed by the company's sales force	1	4	2.90	1.233
With sales force resilience in place in the company, there is increased sales in all the sales outlets.	1	4	3.08	1.113
Sales force resilience has made the staff more productive which has translated into enhanced sales performance in the company.	1	4	3.08	1.118

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

As can be seen from table 2 above, responses collected on performance as presented on items 1, 2, 3, 4,5 and 6 were presented using mean scores and standard deviation. The respondents agreed with all the questions since the mean scores were high above 2.50 which is the cut-off point score. The mean scores ranged from 4.51 to 4.86 and this implies that there is positive effect in sales performance of yams in the study area. .

4.2 Regression analysis result

The result of the regression analysis carried out was presented using model summary, ANOVA and coefficient tables.

i. Model Summary

The result as presented in Table 3 revealed that the regression coefficient, $R = .805^a$ indicates a positive relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .648 and this implies that 64.8 % of sales performance of yam tubers marketed is explained by sales force resilience.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.805 ^a	.648	.643	.445	1.064

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sales force Resilience

b. Dependent Variable: sales Performance.

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

ii. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The result of the analysis of variance as presented in Table 4 showed that the value of F (125.854) is significant and the significance level (.000) which is less than 0.05 (P-value = 0.000 < 0.05). This implies that over all regression model is statistically significant, valid and fit. The

valid regression model implies that the independent variable (sales force resilience) is capable of explaining the sales performance of yams studied in the study area.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	24.957	1	24.957	125.854	.000 ^b
Residual	40.651	29	.198		
Total	65.552	30			

a. Dependent Variable: Sales Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sales Force Resilience

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

4.2 Test of study Hypothesis

This study tested the following hypothesis presented in its null form:

H0i: Sales force resilience has no significant effect on sales performance of yams tubers in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State

To test the above hypothesis, the strength of the effect from sales force resilience and sales performance of small businesses in the study area was measured by the calculated p-value = .000 at a significance level (α) of 0.05. Since the computed p-value is less than the significance level (α) of 0.05 (*p-value* .000 < α 0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected. The study therefore conclude that Sales force resilience has significant effect on sales performance of yams in the study area.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings was based on the objectives of the study as follows:

4.3.1 Sales force resilience has no effect on sales growth of yams in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State

The data for this study collected from respondents and analyzed revealed that sales force resilience has significant effect on sales performance of yams studied in the study area was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (.000) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value .000 < α = 0.05. Finding of this study agrees with similar findings by Branicki and Livschitz, (2018) whose study revealed that Sales force resilience has significant effect on sales performance.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This section presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study examined the effect of sales force resilience on sales performance of yams in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. The study revealed that sales force resilience has significant effect on sales performance of the small businesses studied (P-value .000 < α = 0.05).

5.2 Conclusion

Findings from this study have left no option than to conclude that sales force resilience have significant effect on sales performance of small businesses studied. This implies that the ability of sales force to cope with and recover from mistakes and other challenges are all critical to the success of resilience. Recognizing the value of learning from mistakes and other challenges is an essential to achieving enhanced sales performance. Resilience is associated with significant benefits to the individual, team and organization as resilient employees bounce back from adversity by being able to cope, recover and learn from these experiences. They adapt even perform better and more in the face of new conditions and challenges and are ready to contribute with innovative and creative ways to drive value to stakeholders.

5.3 Recommendation

Based purely on the outcome of this study, it recommended that Marketers of yam tubers should emphasize and encourage their sales force to employ resilience strategy in all their selling practices to attract enhanced sales performance of their businesses.

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