
Selling Orientation – Customer Orientation (SOCO) Behaviour of the Medical Sales Person and its relationship with Customer’s Trust towards Salesperson

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Abstract

This study deals with Selling Orientation and Customer Orientation Behaviour of the sales person and how it creates changes in customer’s trust towards the salesperson. Here the salesperson is Medical Sales Representatives. In this study researchers found that Medical Sales Representatives who practice Customer Oriented sales Behaviour is inducing a positive trust towards the Medical Sales Representative. If a Medical Sales Representative is practicing Selling Orientation Behaviour, it leads to a negative relationship with customer’s trust towards the Medical Sales Representative. The research design used in this study is Descriptive research design and the sampling technique used is Judgemental sampling. This study will be a torch bearer for the Medical Sales representatives and the first line managers to promote and practice Customer Oriented Behaviour rather than selling oriented behaviour.

Key Words: Selling Orientation; Customer Orientation; Customer Trust; Customer Satisfaction; Customer Value

Introduction

Saxe and Weitz introduced the concept of Customer Orientation (CO) to overcome the problems created by Selling Orientation (SO) Behaviour of the Salesperson. In Selling Orientation, as part of selling tactics customers experience high pressure. A Salesperson who practice Customer Orientation has a “Concern for others”. The selling approach in Customer Oriented selling is “to understand the needs and wants of the customers or finding an adequate solution to the customer’s problem” (Saxe, Weitz, 1982). One of the research opines that a salesperson will fall between two contrasting salesperson behaviour i.e., Selling Orientation and Customer Orientation. A salesperson practicing Selling Orientation behaviour has a good impulsiveness in his behaviour and needs and wants of the customers are of less interest to him. His strategy will be to pressurize the customer to buy a product even if it is not according to the needs and wants of the customer. Whereas, salespersons practicing Customer Orientation will always try to understand the curiosity and need of the customer (Bagozzi et al., 2012). Recent trends in sales management are Consultative selling and relationship selling. If a salesperson

wants to adopt Consultative Selling or Relationship Selling, they have to practice Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (Guenzi, De Luca, Troilo, 2011).

The number of researches conducted on trust towards the salesperson is less by taking salesperson's behaviour as an antecedent. Medical sales representatives' behaviour is an important criterion in creating long lasting relationship with the customers i.e., Doctors. In a Customer centric organisation, it is essential to build a long term and profitable customer relationship (Arun G, Manojkrishnan C G, Madhu R, 2020). Every decision of a selling firm should start from the needs and wants of the customer, i.e., treating the customer as the focal point and employees should act as customer advocates. The employees in an organisation should be responsible enough to act as customer advocates and they should be customer centric or relationship centric (Shah et al., 2006).

Objectives of the study

1. To realize the relationship between Selling Orientation behaviour of a medical sales representative (Salesperson) and Customer trust towards the medical sales representative (Salesperson).
2. To realize the relationship between Customer Orientation behaviour of a medical sales representative (Salesperson) and Customer trust towards the medical sales representative (Salesperson).

Materials and Methods

Literature Review

Customer Orientation behaviour is an implementation of Marketing Concept among the salespersons (Saxe, Weitz, 1982). Saxe and Weitz are considered as great researchers who contributed to the Sales Literature in 20th Century (Leigh, Pullins, Comer 2001). If the salespersons of the company are practicing Customer Orientation, then the company is implementing Marketing Concept through the Salesperson.

For creating and sustaining a leading edge in this globalized business environment, customer trust and customer value has become an important factor. In majority of the industries, Customer – Salesperson interaction process plays a crucial role. Sales persons do play an important role in creating trust towards the selling firm. For developing a positive attitude in the customer towards the selling firm, Sales person's behaviour does play an important role (Madupalli, 2007).

Selling Orientation – Customer Orientation (SOCO)

In Sales Orientation, the sales person will give more importance in creating immediate sales without considering customer needs & wants and customer satisfaction. On the other-side of the coin the sales person who practices customer orientation will give more importance to customer benefit and customer satisfaction. In both selling orientation and Customer Orientation the main agenda and objective of the salesperson is selling the product. The Only difference is the two different approaches by the salesperson to the customer (Dunlap, Dotson, Chambers 1988; Brown et al., 2002).

Customer orientation selling is having a positive impact on Sales Performance; selling orientation is just opposite to it (Boles, Babin, Brashear, Brooks, 2001).

Selling Orientation Behaviour of a Sales person means

- ✓ Salespersons will not be sure about which type of a product is more suitable to the customers.
- ✓ He tries to sell more is the basic instinct than satisfying the needs and wants of the customer
- ✓ He will try to give all false justification about the product for meeting his targets.
- ✓ This people will exaggerate the truth and gives a rosy picture about the product offered to the customer (Periatt, LeMay, Chakrabarty, 2004).

Work pressure exerted by the company or immediate supervisors is one reason for practicing Selling Orientation among salespersons. The sales target should be realistic, if not it will lead to the practice of Selling Orientation behaviour among the salespersons (Sumrall, Sebastianelli, 1999). If supervisor is not supportive, it will lead to Selling Orientation as well (Babin & Boles, 1996). A research says that male salespersons are more selling oriented and female salespersons are more customer oriented (Ping, 2007).

Customer Orientation Behaviour of a sales person means

- ✓ Salesperson will create only adequate expectations about the product offered to the customers.

- ✓ Salespersons first priority will be discussing about the needs and wants of the customers. It's all about understanding the expectations of the customers.
- ✓ Salespersons will never give a wrong information about the product intentionally.
- ✓ Salespersons will have good Product Knowledge.
- ✓ Salespersons will give much importance to the Customers rather than their sales target.
- ✓ Salespersons believe in long lasting customer relationships, he also believes only by satisfying customer he can be successful as a salesperson (Periatt, LeMay, Chakrabarty, 2004).

A very good organisation climate and working environment is mandatory for the salespersons to practice Customer Orientation (Jaworski, Kohli, 1993). Customer Oriented Behaviour of salesperson will help the customers to make an adequate purchase decision according to their necessity, they will describe about the product with at most accuracy and they will never pressurize the customer to purchase an unwanted or less relevant product (Rasul, 2017).

A salesperson who practices Customer Oriented Selling should help the customers to make right purchase decisions, salespersons should help the Customers to refine their needs, the salesperson should take a special step to understand that the specific product offered by the salesperson is matching with the needs and wants of the customers or not and the salesperson should have adequate product knowledge for presenting the products to the customers (Raymond W. Thomas, Geoffrey N. Soutar and Maria M. Ryan, 2001).

Customer Trust

Gaining trust is significant to all salesperson, industrial and customer alike, as trust encourages a trade relationship while mistrust ruins it. Above all else, consumer trust is a vital element influencing direct selling activities (Poon, Albaum, Shiu-Fai Chan, 2012). Trust is the key element that decides the organisations' success. For creating long relationship with the customers, trusts do play a vital role (Moorman, Deshpande, Zaltman, 1993). As far as customer is concerned, the salespersons are liable to give adequate information about the product/services offered, which helps the customers to make proper purchase decision (Kenning, 2008).

Customer trust related to a salesperson is all about creating a level of confidence in the mind of the customers about their behavioural approach of creating a long-lasting customer - salesperson relationship (Crosby, Evans, Cowles, 1990). If the customer trust towards the salesperson had to be improved, the customer should feel that the salesperson is giving more importance to the customer's welfare in terms of selecting the product and it is all about creating the credibility about the salesperson in the minds of the customers (Doney, Cannon, 1997). Honesty, reliability, credibility, dependability and trust worthiness are the major antecedents of customer trust towards the salesperson (Swan, et al., 1988).

Customer Trust do play an important role in Customer – Sales person relationship. Generalizing customer trust with the selling firm is depended upon the positive relationship maintained between the customer and the salesperson (Dwyer, Schurr, Oh, 1987; Moorman, Deshpande, Zaltman, 1993; Morgan and Hunt 1994). Customer Trust is all about fulfilling the expectations of the customer by the salesperson and the selling firm by satisfying and delighting the customers' needs and wants (Plank, Reid, Pullins, 1999).

Salesperson and the selling firm are the main elements that help in creating customer trust. The way they interact with the sales person and the selling firm is different. Customer Trust is the outcome of the evaluation by the customer from the various Customers – Salesperson interaction process and Customer's interaction with the selling firm. Now days there are multiple targets for customer trust (Crosby, Stephens, 1987; Doney, Cannon, 1997).

Research Methodology

The type of research design used in this study is descriptive research design. For doing analysis, researcher used SEM with the help of data analytical software SPSS AMOS. Here in this study population is known, i.e., 632 allopathic doctors treating diabetes. In a pharmaceutical industry salesperson meets the doctors to promote their brands. As far as a Pharmaceutical Industry is concerned, the doctors are the customers and the consumers are their patients. This study is focussing on the Customer Trust, so the population taken for the research is doctors treating Diabetes in south Kerala. Since the population is known which is less than 650, we can take a sample of 250 according to Krejci and Morgan Table. Researcher distributed 300 questionnaires out of that we got completely filled 252 questionnaires. So, we can say that the sample size is 252. Researcher used Judgemental sampling technique for this study.

Hypothesis

H1: Selling Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a negative relationship on Trust with the medical sales person.

H2: Customer Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a positive relationship on Trust with the medical sales person.

Results & Discussion

The results from this study are summarised as given herewith.

According to the Table I researcher can infer that the total fit of the structural model for testing the two hypothesis is upright. The maximum recommended value of CMIN/DF is 5 and our calculated value of CMIN/DF is 0.838. The minimum recommended value of χ^2 0.05 and our calculated value is 71.46 which is greater than the minimum threshold limit. The maximum threshold limit of RMSEA is 0.8 and our calculated value is 0.2 which is less than the recommended threshold limit.

Structural Model Validation of Hypothesis H1 & H2

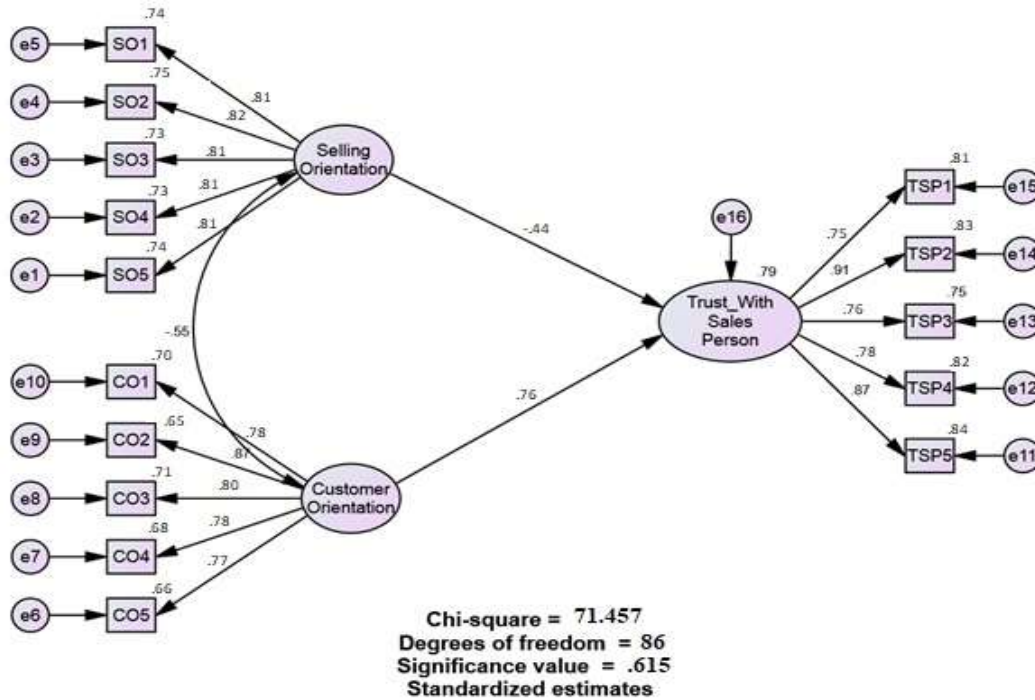
Table I Structural Model Validation

CMIN/DF	χ^2	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
0.838	71.457	0.94	0.95	0.2	0.96	0.94	0.98	0.95

(Source: Primary Data)

The minimum threshold limit of GFI, AGFI, NFI, IFI, TLI and CFI is 0.9, Calculated Value of GFI, AGFI, NFI, IFI, TLI and CFI is 0.94, 0.95, 0.96, 0.94, 0.98 and 0.95 which is greater than the maximum threshold of 0.9. From these results researcher can conclude that there is a good overall fit of structural model is there.

Figure: 1 SOCO – Trust Model



(Source: Primary Data)

Hypothesis Testing

H1: Selling Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a negative relationship on Trust with the medical sales person.

Table II Structural Model Testing of Hypothesis 1 (H1)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Unstandardized Regression Weight	SE	Standardized Regression Weight	CR
H1	TSP ← SO	-0.311	0.031	-0.388	-8.221

(Source: Primary Data)

From Table II, the unstandardized regression weight is -0.311 with 0.001 level of significance. Hence researcher can infer that, Selling Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a negative relationship on Trust with the medical sales person. So, the researcher can say that H1 is accepted.

H2: Customer Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a positive relationship on Trust with the medical sales person.

Table III Structural Model Testing of Hypothesis 2 (H2)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Unstandardized Regression Weight	SE	Standardized Regression Weight	CR
H2	TSP ← CO	0.726	0.056	0.736	14.325

(Source: Primary Data)

From the Table III, the unstandardized regression weight is 0.726 with 0.001 level of significance. Hence researcher can infer that, Customer Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a positive relationship on Trust with the medical sales person. So, the researcher can say that H2 is accepted.

Discussion and Implications

If an allopathic pharmaceutical company wants to create a long-lasting relationship with the customer by proving proper customer value, from the insight of SOCO – Trust model, it is mandatory to give training to salespersons or medical sales representatives on the topic “How to create a Customer Orientation” in their sales behaviour. Selling Orientation behaviour of a salesperson leads only to a short-term success and relationship with the customer. For creating trust towards the sales person from the side of the customer you are supposed to practice customer orientation sales behaviour. If you practice Selling Orientation, you will pressurize the customer to buy products which might not be suitable to their needs and wants.

The salesperson who practices Customer Oriented sales behaviour, they will first understand the needs and expectation of the customers. The salespersons who practice Customer Oriented behaviour in their sales, they should first understand the problem of the customer and giving proper guidance and solutions to solve their problem is important. In this highly competitive pharmaceutical industry, the company should give maximum emphasis on training the medical salespersons/ representatives to implement customer-oriented sales behaviour.

Conclusions

This descriptive study titled “Selling Orientation – Customer Orientation (SOCO) behaviour of the medical sales person and its relationship with Customer’s Trust towards Salesperson” has been conducted with the intention to understand the relationship between Selling Orientation behaviour of a medical sales representative (Salesperson) and Customer trust towards the medical sales representative (Salesperson) and also to learn the relationship between Customer Orientation behaviour of a medical sales representative (Salesperson) and Customer trust towards the medical sales representative (Salesperson). This study was conducted among a sample of 252 allopathic doctors treating diabetes. The sample was arrived on the basis of Krejci and Morgan Table, Judgemental sampling technique has been used for this study. From the study it is inferred that Selling Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a negative impact on Trust with the medical sales person. It is also understood that Customer Orientation Behaviour of a medical sales person is having a positive impact on Trust with the medical sales person

For any pharmaceutical company, to bring in sustained success, they have to treat their customers like a king. In these pandemics’ times, with the evolution of different work practices and business settings coupled with technological advancement, ‘customer is king’ means more than just good customer service. For treating customer like a King, the company should meet or go beyond the expectations of the customers and should create customer delight rather than Customer Satisfaction. For that the pharmaceutical companies should make sure that the medical salespersons / representatives are supposed to practice Customer Oriented sales behaviour in front of the customers. It’s all about understanding the needs, wants and expectations and delivering right products to the customers. If the medical salespersons / representatives practice Selling Orientation, it will surely create a negative relationship towards trust. If any salesperson wants to be successful, they should create a positive relationship with the customer, for creating positive relationship with the customer; practicing Customer Oriented sales behaviour is really important.

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