

# Personal Selling Skill in Building Interaction with Consumers

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**Abstract**—Efforts to develop businesses organized by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises have the full support of the government, private institutions, universities, and other institutions. The program implemented by the government is to improve the competitiveness of business actors. One of the business actors running the program is the Home Industry Group at the Sabilulungan Farmers Market Association, which is under the auspices of the Bandung District, West Java Agricultural Service. Various products are produced by members of the group in the form of vegetables, fruits, processed foods, etc. The research objective is to analyse group members' understanding of the application of personal selling including interpersonal communication in building relationships with consumers and presentations for marketing products. The research method is descriptive to measure research phenomena. Data collection was carried out by distributing research questionnaires to participants as many as 32 people. The sampling technique is census, because all members of the group become research respondents. The results showed group members had high knowledge about interpersonal communication in personal selling activities to build relationships with consumers, group member knowledge about presentations was also high, and group members could apply presentations to market products.

**Keywords:** *skill, personal selling, building, interaction, consumer*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs implement various strategies to develop business, including in marketing products to consumers. Home Industry Group in Soreang City, Bandung Regency, West Java is challenged to have competitiveness in order to enter the market. The group has a scale of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Members of the group are actively running businesses, including in empowering the community, reducing unemployment, and helping housewives generate additional income. Various products are produced by members of the group, such as plantation products, and processed foods.

Members of the group in running a business, experienced obstacles including marketing aspects to create opportunities and sales that generate profits. To overcome this, group members need to have the knowledge and skills to run their business, because having personal selling skills is expected to market and sell products well. Therefore, the Community

Service Team at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, Bandung Islamic University held a training to group members entitled 'Personal Selling Training in marketing Home Industry Products'. This article is the result of research to group members in training.

Based on interviews with members of the Home Industry group obtained information, in general they want to be skilled at informing products to potential customers, one obstacle that occurs is not being able to speak, especially to influence potential customers to buy products. Another problem when dealing directly with consumers, entrepreneurs cannot speak in a good order.

The events experienced by these entrepreneurs need to be given special attention so that solutions can be found. Because of that personal selling training for group members to be done in order to be one of the solutions to the problems they face. With this training, entrepreneurs can have knowledge about personal selling and be able to apply it to introduce, convince, and influence consumers to buy products. The training was conducted for members of the Home Industry group, because the entrepreneur needed personal selling knowledge and skills to increase product sales. Based on these explanations, the purpose of this study is to analyse respondents' understanding of personal selling skills including interpersonal communication in building relationships with consumers, and presentations to market products.

The first previous research comes from Deeter-Schmelz, Lauer and Rudd. The result found out that five key: building and sustaining cross-cultural relationships, cross-cultural communication effectiveness, acquisition and maintenance of trust across cultures, language, and decision-making [1]. From our findings, research propositions are offered and implications for researchers and practitioners are discussed. The next, research by Peesker, Ryals, Rich, & Boehnke discussed about A Qualitative Study of Leader Behaviours Perceived to Enable Salesperson Performance [2]. Results indicated that participants believed sales leadership played an important role in influencing sales performance. Leader behaviours that best enable salesperson performance, sales professionals – both sales leaders and salespeople – overwhelmingly referenced coaching, followed by collaborating, championing, and customer engaging.

Furthermore, Dax, Tyssen, Schmitz and Ganesan. The result talked about quality of the salesperson's relationship with the buyer influences the buyer's evaluation of the tender proposal, which, in turn, affects supplier selection [3]. The effect of a salesperson's relationship on buyer's proposal evaluation is contingent on the comprehensibility of suppliers' proposals and buyer's product knowledge. In line with Childs, Lee, Dewsnap and Cadogan research with title A within-person theoretical perspective in sales research: outlining recommendations for adoption and consideration of boundary conditions, commented the need to adopt a within-person theoretical perspective in sales research [4]. Also, the research found out criteria that help to identify when within-person analysis should be conducted, outlining analysis tools that are capable of correctly estimating within-person effects without bias.

Guenzi, Rangarajan, Chaker and Sajtos's research entitled 'It is all in good humor? Examining the impact of salesperson evaluations of leader humor on salesperson job satisfaction and job stress' found out affiliative humor usage by sales managers, as evaluated by salespeople, reduces social loneliness and stress for salespeople while also increasing followers' acceptance of cooperation [5]. Evaluations of aggressive humor, on the other hand, increase stress levels among salespeople. Both social loneliness and acceptance of cooperation, in turn, significantly affect job satisfaction. Next, Mulki, Caemmerer and Heggde entitled 'Leadership style, salesperson's work effort and job performance: the influence of power distance' discovered results suggest that for employees' instrumental leadership is more effective in promoting employee effort and increasing job performance [6]. In addition, the relationship between satisfaction with supervisor and turnover intentions is weaker or insignificant, while the relationship between satisfaction with supervisor and effort is stronger for employees in higher power distance organizations. The study highlights cultural sensitivities that need to be considered in formulating an effective leadership style in emerging market contexts.

Beeler, Chaker, Gala and Zablah entitled 'The divergent effects of organizational identification on salesperson and customer outcomes in a friend-selling context' [7]. This research discovered that (1) organizational identification reduces friend-selling stress, (2) the organizational identification–friend-selling stress relationship is contingent on friend-selling frequency and network size, (3) friend-selling ambiguity decreases sales performance and customer trust, and (4) friend-selling conflict has divergent consequences, leading to positive customer responses but negative salesperson outcomes. Theoretical and managerial implications of these findings are discussed. Lastly, Peterson's research entitled 'Self-efficacy and personal selling: review and examination with an emphasis on sales performance' [8]. The research reviewed and examined how self-efficacy has been conceptualized, measured, and investigated in personal selling research. Following a canvass of scales that have been used to measure self-efficacy in personal selling research, quantitative analyses of the self-efficacy–sales performance relationship were conducted, and an empirical analysis of nine self-efficacy

scales and their underlying items was carried out to assess and compare the scales' reliability and validity.

#### *A. Personal Selling*

Personal selling is a form of marketing communication, where interactions occur between marketers and potential customers. The purpose of personal selling is to inform, convince or influence potential customers to buy products. Kotler suggests personal selling, which is an oral presentation in the form of a conversation in front of prospective buyers with the intention to sell [9].

Personal selling provides a detailed explanation demonstrating the product, and it is very effective at generating sales and fostering customer satisfaction [10]. Personal selling requires presentation skills, because personal selling is the most interactive marketing mix and is used to maintain long-term relationships [11]. Presentation delivers information containing a topic intended to provide information about a matter, persuade, or entertain [12]. Presentations are needed by entrepreneurs to convey ideas, introduce, other people's products [13]. Presentations become a business communication tool where products are launched based on the quality of presentations [14].

Training materials include interpersonal communication in building relationships with consumers, and presentations to market products. Marketers are required to have good interpersonal communication skills, because this ability is a provision in carrying out their duties to persuade potential customers [15]. Interpersonal communication is the process of sending messages from one person and being received by another person, or a group of people with direct effects and feedback [16]. Characteristics of interpersonal communication include, first openness, which is a marketer must be transparent about the products they sell. Second, marketers have the empathy of being able to understand what exactly a potential customer needs. These needs must be adjusted to the ability to buy potential customers. Third, the marketer's supportiveness can be realized if he has good product knowledge. Fourth, positivizes is the ability of marketers to create honesty, closer dialogue, and mutual trust between the two parties. Fifth, equality in which the marketer must be able to see and assess potential customers without distinguishing from their power and appearance.

Interpersonal communication that successfully builds relationships with consumers is the ability of entrepreneurs to compose messages positively. Entrepreneurs in compiling messages positively, when applied in building relationships with consumers, it not only makes consumers like products, but also buys products [17]. Consumers buy products because of pleasure, and entrepreneurs serve consumers through consultation, and providing solutions, to solve their problems [18,19].

Good personal selling skills are expected to help market the product and increase product sales [20,21]. Because through personal selling group members try to communicate with the market, and aim to provide information, influence, persuade, and remind consumers, but can be through maintaining

relationships between sellers and potential customers through online digital media.

In delivering a presentation, a speaker needs to choose words that are clear, precise, and interesting to the listener [22]. For example, clear words such as using specific terms, simple, using words shortly [23]. Aspects that are evaluated include the timeliness of the delivery of the material, the focus of the audience's eyes, the clarity of the volume, and body movements in accordance with its meaning [24]. The purpose of the presentation is reached if the audience can understand the message from the presentator at the time of the presentation. This can be achieved by practice, practice or simulation. Good speakers are those who constantly train themselves to be able to deliver presentations well [25]. During the training, the delivery of material to participants is adjusted to the target conditions. This is intended so that participants know how to present the material. As for practical material, simulations practiced by participants about compiling and delivering bid messages in personal selling.

## II. METHOD

Personal selling training was held in collaboration with the Home Industry group management with a community service team from Research Institutions and Community Service (LPPM) of Bandung Islamic University. There are 32 entrepreneurs who are members of the Home Industry Group as personal selling training participants. Participants are generally entrepreneurs who have a business in plantation products, processed food. Based on interviews with group leaders, training participants cannot market the products they produce, because personal selling training is needed.

Descriptive method is used in research to measure research phenomena carefully, and to collect facts [26]. This research is directed to describe and express a problem, situation, event systematically to reveal the facts in more depth [27].

The population of this study was all 32 personal selling training participants. The sampling technique used is the census, where all members of the population are respondents of this study.

The instrument used in the research was a research questionnaire filled out by all respondents. Data collected in the study were in the form of respondents' opinions regarding personal selling material. The data is analysed by means of grouping, tabulating, and presenting data based on variables and types of respondents to answer the problem formulation [28].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analysed the opinions of respondents regarding personal selling training materials regarding interpersonal communication in building relationships with consumers and presentations to market the products described in table 1.

Participants had knowledge about interpersonal communication in building relationships with consumers. Participants were able to understand the material of interpersonal communication in building relationships with

consumers so that they have insight into interpersonal communication that supports personal selling activities.

TABLE I. COMPARISON OF BUSINESS PRESENTATION PRETEST AND POSTTEST VALUE

No	Material	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Variance (%)
1	Interpersonal Communication in building relationships with consumers	13,75	21,75	58,18
2	Presentation in marketing products	12,87	21,50	67,05

Source: Business Presentation Questionnaire, 2019

The knowledge of the participants before attending the training on interpersonal communication materials to build relationships with consumers was low (13.75). After the participants attend the training material, participants become aware and understand about interpersonal communication in personal selling activities to build relationships with consumers. This is shown high (21,75) from the post-test results. For example, participants understand in interpersonal communication that is preceded by explaining the composition of the nutritional content in a processed food product. Products are made to meet health requirements, and prices are affordable for consumers. Participants also explained about it by means of dialogue, so that it was hoped that a closer relationship with consumers could be created.

The knowledge of the participants before attending the training (pretest) regarding the presentation material for marketing products was low (12.87). After attending the training material, participants become aware of and understand the presentation to market the product. This is shown from the post-test results is high (21.50). These findings show that this training provides benefits to the cognitive aspects of the participants. This enhancement was because the participants tried to listen well to the presentation material in the form of presentations, and types of presentation presentations to market products. For example, participants can understand in explaining the product in detail, trying to convince potential customers that the product is worthy of being selected, and expressing their thoughts and feelings with pleasure.

The results of the practice in the simulation of personal selling material showed that participants were able to apply the training material well (an average value of 77), and in the practice of personal selling the participants were able to solve one of the mental obstacles in themselves, namely growing the courage to present, and offer products with well. Based on the results of interviews with several participants, they said that they had the spirit to study the material more deeply.

The findings of the study, in accordance with Shimp's opinion that creating dialogue between marketers and potential customers allows a brand to persuade potential customers [29]. Persuasion is not just a promotion, but how a brand has benefits as a reason to buy products. Marketers are required to have good interpersonal communication skills, because this ability is a provision in carrying out their job of persuading

potential customers. Interpersonal communication is the process of sending messages from one person and being received by another person, or a group of people with direct effects and feedback [30]. Waringin presents a presentation that gives a detailed explanation, effective in generating sales [31]. A good speaker when there is excitement, can show the excitement in the presentation [32]. Kasali [33] and Rachmat [34], explaining another thing that someone must pay attention to in presenting a presentation is that choosing certain words will arouse the listener to want to know more. As for Urban adding someone in the presentation must use words that have positive meaning [35].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, first the group members' knowledge of interpersonal communication in building relationships with consumers before training (pretest) is in a low condition, while measured after training (posttest) generally has high knowledge. The situation shows that participants can understand interpersonal communication materials in building relationships with consumers who are expected to be insightful in understanding interpersonal communication that supports personal selling.

Second, the knowledge of group members before attending training on presentations to market products is low. This is because they do not yet know the presentation to market products theoretically well. After they take part in the training, they become aware of and understand the types and techniques of preparing presentations to market products to potential customers. This is shown from the results of the pretest and posttest changing from low to high.

As for the suggestions proposed, among others, first, group members need to open themselves up with lots of contact with various parties, so that the ability to communicate interpersonal to build relationships becomes more honed. Second, group members need to learn more about the types of presentations, so they have the ability to present material to market products. In addition, group members need to train themselves, so that the presentations discussed become interesting.

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