Improving Customer’s Willingness to Buy: Choosing the Right Salesperson Activities

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Abstract. This study investigated the effect of choices made by salesperson in delivering information to the customer candidate. The delivered information may affect the decision made by the customer candidate. To deliver the information and the new knowledge, communication must be done along with interaction, which can be measured how interactive it is, interactivity. So, the salesperson is critical in the making of and in increasing the Willingness-To-Buy. In the other hand, some people just do not want to be disturbed. It may happen due to their personality, business, or annoying feeling. Right here, salesperson should try to increase the Willingness-To-Buy. It will create dilemma because those customer candidates who do not want to be disturbed, will not get any additional knowledge about the product. Moreover, this study also suggests that there is a chance for a salesperson does not need to explain but the product speak for itself to improve Willingness-To-Buy.

1. Introduction

One may say that the duty of a salesman is not only to sell product or services, but also to attract people to buy. That is why, in a condition when economic get hard, and people just want to buy less, companies needed direct sales strategy to pursue and attract people to buy more, which is done by salespeople. Global statistics on direct selling are published annually by the World Federation of Direct Selling Associations (WFDSA) can prove that until now direct sales affect the company's revenue. According to WFDSA (2016), sales, which is generated through direct selling, increased up to 1,9% globally and up to 9,8% in Africa, compared to the previous year. WFDSA (2016) also tells that the global sales total amount is $182,6 billion, with the 3 strongest sectors in direct selling are wellness (35%), cosmetics and personal care (30%), household items (12%). The insurance industry is the other one of the industries that used direct sales strategy. Research conducted by Maroofi, Ardalan, & Tabarzadi (2017) found that direct sales strategies affect the return on total assets of insurance companies.

Previous studies that analyzed salesperson performance had been largely focused on factors related to individual salesperson's personal characteristics and attributes (Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011). Other studies, merely focuses on the product and its attributes without analyzing how it is being sold to the customers (Situmeang & Situmeang, 2017). Salesperson may simplify and streamline information seeking behavior of the consumers, which is crucial in customer purchasing process (Punj and Staelin,
1983; Simajuntak, Napitupulu, & Situmeang, 2016). The clearer the flow of the information is, the better the communication process is, which in turn would influence customer willingness to buy the product.

This study adds knowledge to the literature by providing insights on the effect of interaction between salespeople with potential buyers on the actual sales of the item promoted by the salesperson. Understanding this phenomenon is also particularly important for the current economic situation because salesperson is often viewed sinisterly. Some people argued that instead of making people buy more, and conducting the right persuasion, sales might ruin their potential customer’s mood (Aydin and Kaya, 2016). According to (Aydin and Kaya, 2016), many people have concerns that salespeople push them to close the sales without providing accurate information or being honest about the product. So, there is a possibility for a salesman to not saying to much words and let the brand, interface, the ingredient, and the packaging attract the customer, which has not been studied yet. However, result by study in different interaction processes and social judgments implies that salesman performed important functions such as augmenting and clarifying verbal meanings, providing relational and affective messages, and regulating the flow and pace of conversation (Liu & Shrum, 2002). Through our research, we will provide some empirical evidence to show how sales person may influence brand awareness, and ultimately, sales.

2. Methodology
The data gathering in this study is conducted by giving 3 kinds of salesperson’s treatment in offering product and attracting people to buy:

1) Salesperson who brings the product and explain it directly to customer
2) Salesperson who brings the product together with the brochure filled with product explanation
3) Salesperson who brings the product without giving explanation and relies on the product appearance and brand

This study uses quantitative method. The data will be gathered by interviewing customer after being offered by the 3 kinds of salespeople’s which has been explained before. The setting is in Medan, the capital city of North Sumatera Province of Indonesia.

The practice in the field will be conducted as regarded in Figure 1. Here are the hypotheses which we suggest before conducting this research:

1) H1a: Interactivity can boost Brand Knowledge
2) H1b: Interactivity can not boost Brand Knowledge
3) H2a: Brand Knowledge has significance on Willingness-To-Buy (WTB)
4) H2b: Brand Knowledge has no significance on (Willingness-To-Buy) WTB

![Figure 1. Relationship of Salesperson and Brand Knowledge](image-url)
From the Figure 1, Interactivity means something that the Sales Person create. Otherwise, Interactivity will be measured or felt by the customer. From the Figure 1, Determinants of WTB affect the WTB and also. However, we limit this research to WTB instead of Willingness to Pay (WTP).

3. Analysis and Results

After collecting data through following professional salesperson, distributing questioners, and doing direct selling door-to-door, author collects 209 data. 81 of the total data male and 128 of them are female. It makes author get 38.8% male and 61.2% female in the data used in this research. The data, by age, ranges from 16 to 60 years old, where 27.8% is 20 years old, 23.4% is 21 years old, and 11.0% is 19 years old. This happens due to the activities of people with occupation. From people more than 21 years old with job, it is almost impossible to meet direct seller or door-to-door salesperson at home while they spend only their night totally at home. However, it does not mean that younger-than-21 years old people can not purchase the products. The teenager get affected by the direct selling activities in the places around their school.

Table 1. P-Value Result from The Relationship of Brand Knowledge and The Gathered Data (Source of Information, Attendance of Salesperson, and Attendance of Brochure.

| Model          | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig.  |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------|
| 1. Regression  | 34.237         | 3  | 11.424      | 39.627| .000  |
| Residual       | 59.101         | 205| 288         |       |       |
| Total          | 93.374         | 208|             |       |       |

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Knowledge
b. Predictors : (Constant), Source of Information, Attendance of Sales people and Attendance of Brochure

As the core of this research, regarding to the hypotheses, author computes the gathered data with IBM SPSS software, on of the result is Table 1.

Table 1 shows significance level while the P value is less than significance level which is 0.05 so it is accepted that source of information, attendance of sales people and attendance of brochure has significant with Brand Knowledge. This study then going further to find out whether the more the given interaction is, the more the brand knowledge increases and multiplies.

This study finds that Interaction is important for salesperson to close the deal. Dyson (1993) states that interaction between salesperson and customer is the important to make a deal whether to buy or not to buy the product that salesperson offered. An interaction with humans is involved with giving and getting attention and feedback from salespersons, friends and colleagues [Dyson 1993]. In service organizations, salespersons are most visible representatives (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990) and their face to face interactions with customers have been traditionally considered as one of the most important determinants of customer loyalty (Grönroos, 1990). As services are essentially interpersonal interactions it follows that non-verbal communication will play a major part in service evaluation (Gabbott & Hogg, 2000).

It has been reckoned that the most effective way to promote products and services to the prospective customers is the use of salespersons (Zoltners, Sinha, & Lorimer, 2008). Salespeople are involved in business critical to achieving sales goals and customer satisfaction, providing the basis for individual sales and organizational existence (Good & Schwepker, 2001). The sales force to help in recruiting new customers, and well to create the conditions that reduce or prevent customer defection to competitive products or services (Johnson et al., 2001). A sales person must be able to attract the attention of a prospective customer. Showing the goods that help enabling customers to meet their needs, and explaining the facts about unknown yet important items to customers, are some of the things that sales people do to attract the attention of consumers. Similarly, Agnihotri et al. (2009) argue that during the
sales process, “information communication can provide not only a ground for a winning proposition but also customer satisfaction”. A good personality of a person that promotes product can also lead to a higher willingness to buy (Simanjuntak, Nguyen, & Situmeang, 2016).

The reality that consumer who is facing decision making including unknown product will try a sample and seek for some advices from people (Roselius, 1971), give minor points for the treatment in which spreading brochures is the only thing to do.

Customer candidates does not aware about the presence of the salesperson and the product for sale if they are not given some treatment. Meanwhile, customer candidates who feel disturbed by salesperson’s activities, do not need salesperson to attract them. When they need a product, they will search for it, even if the salesperson only stands still.

### Table 2. P-Value from The Relationship of Willingness To Buy (WTB) and Brand Knowledge

![ANOVA Table](image)

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F       | Sig.   |
|-------|----------------|----|-------------|---------|--------|
| 1. Regression | 37.805 | 1 | 37.805 | 84.885 | .000b |
| Residual | 92.192 | 207 | 445 |        |        |
| Total | 129.999 | 208 |    |        |        |

a. Dependent Variable: WTB  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Knowledge

Table 2 shows significance level while the P value is less than significance level which is 0.05 so it is accepted that Brand Knowledge has significant with Willingness to Buy (WTB). The more the good information about the product is delivered, the higher the WTB will be. According to Macdonald and Sharp (2000) despite consumers are the familiar and willing to buy the product, brand awareness can influence the purchase decision too. Brand awareness is a factor by which the purchasing attitude of consumer changes and being affected about any good or service (Shabbir et al., 2010). Willingness to buy, as well as Purchase intentions, can be enhanced with the enhancement in the Brand Awareness (Malik, et al., 2013).

### Table 3. Regression of Brand Knowledge and Willingness To Buy (WTB).

![Regression Table](image)

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | R Square Change | F Change | Sig. F Change |
|-------|---|----------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------|--------------|
| 1     | .539a | .291 | .287 | 66736 | .291 | 84.885 | 1 | 207 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: WTB  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Knowledge

### Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics |
|-------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|------|-------------------------|
|       | B | Std.Error | Beta |       | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1.(Constant) | .957 | .243 | .539 | 3.936 | .000 | 1.000 | 1.000 |
| Brand Knowledge | .636 | .069 |    | 9.213 | .000 |        |     |


In the table 3, $R^2 = 0.291$, it means that 29.1% of the variation can be explained a linear relationship with the predictor. Beta coefficient is 0.539 and statistically significant, the regression beta coefficient is positive. The interpretation is that every unit increase in the predictor variable.

**Table 4.** P-Value of The Relationship Willingness To Buy and The Presence of Salesperson.

| Model        | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F    | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|------|
| Regression   | 16.573         | 1  | 16.573      | 30.246 | .000 |
| Residual     | 113.425        | 207| 548         | 30.246 | .000 |
| Total        | 129.998        | 208|             |      |      |

a. Dependent Variable: WTB  
b. Predictors : (Constant), The presence of Salesperson

**Table 5.** Regression of The Presence of Salesperson and Willingness To Buy

| Model       | R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------------|-------|----------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1.(Constant)| .357a | .127     | .123              | .74023                    |

a. Predictors : (Constant), The presence of Salesperson

| Model                          | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t    | Sig.  |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|-------|
| 1.(Constant)                   |                             |                           |      |       |
| The presence of Sales People   | 1.572                       | .292                      | 5.379| .000  |
|                                | 487                         | .089                      | 5.500| .000  |

a. Dependent Variable: WTB

In the table 5, $R^2 = 0.127$, it means that 12.7% of the variation can be explained a linear relationship with the predictor. Beta coefficient is 0.357 and statistically significant, the regression beta coefficient is positive. The interpretation is that every unit increase in the predictor variable.

From table 3, $R^2 = 0.291$ may be required to say there is a strong linear relationship and $R^2 = 0.127$ there is a weak linear relationship. The low $R^2$ value is probably spread widely around the regression. The regression model can only explain $R^2 = 0.291$ or 29.1% of the variation of the dependent variable. It means that Brand Knowledge has strong relationship with Willingness to Buy (WTB).

**Table 6.** Regression of Brand Knowledge and Attendance of sale people as Independent variable

| Model                          | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F    | Sig.  |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----|-------------|------|-------|
| 1. Regression                  | 41.338         | 2  | 20.669      | 48.025| .000  |
| Residual                       | 88.660         | 206| 430         |      |       |
| Total                          | 129.998        | 208|             |      |       |

a. Dependent Variable: WTB  
b. Predictors : (Constant), Attendance Of Sales People, Brand Knowledge
In the table 6, beta of brand knowledge has a stronger effect than a beta of Attendance of sales people. The higher the absolute of the beta coefficient, the stronger the effect. In regression analysis, Brand knowledge has a stronger affect to Willingness to Buy, and attendance of sales has lower affect to Willingness To Buy (WTB).

### 4. Implications

Salesperson must be able to explain the detail of the product to the customer. Moreover, customer will feel better if the salesperson brings the product together with them to be used in order to get the real effect and feeling to the product. That is only practicable if the customer candidate is not busy and do not want to be disturbed.

In practical, brochure should only contain a bulk of details that cannot be remembered by human. Brochure may contain pictures too, but instead of looking at the picture, the customer will know more about the product by touching, holding, or using it directly. Meanwhile, dropping brochure to houses without the owner knowing is not appropriate.

This paper suggests salesperson to focus on building the good image of the brand and to ensure the customer that the same product quality will still exist when the order happen again in the future. Of course, this paper also suggests salesperson to not too relies on the brand image or the product appearances because people also need to be told.

### 5. Limitations and Future Research

The paper is intended to study the effect of interactivity on brand knowledge, and brand knowledge on WTB. The paper mainly focuses on personal care, snack, soft drink, and energy drink sector. Moreover, we didn’t have adequate time and resources to study the effect of prestige and luxurious life; and utility (desire or needs) on WTB.

Location factor also limits this paper. This paper only covers a small portion of people in North Sumatera province in Indonesia. Further research may analyses more complicated problems in a bigger area coverage.

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