

Farmer SMEs Salesforce Performance: How are the Role of Adaptive Selling, Learning, Performance, and Customer Orientation?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between learning orientation on salesforce performance, performance orientation on salesforce performance, customer orientation on salesforce's performance, adaptive selling on salesforce performance. **Theoretical Framework** – Integrated with the low-level consumption and purchasing power of the consumers, one of the hard efforts that should be raised and encouraged is the role of salesforce performance. It has a strategic and important role in creating competitive advantage and superior company performance in many companies. In recent studies in the field of sales interest, the sales force's goal orientation is categorized into two orientations, namely: learning orientation, and performance orientation. In addition, according to several studies, customer orientation has an impact on salesforce performance. **Design/Methodology/Approach** – The approach in this study was a quantitative approach. The respondents in this study were 245 SMEs farmers who were determined by the simple random sampling method. Data analysis techniques in quantitative research with statistical calculations using partial least squares (PLS) with SmertPLS 3.0 software tools. The research data was obtained by distributing online questionnaires. **Findings** – The findings show that learning orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance, performance orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance, customer orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce's performance, adaptive selling has a positive effect and significant effect on salesforce performance. **Originality/Value** – Regarding facts that supporting with the previous research and theory of scholars as described, it led the researcher to conduct the study about three key issues: learning orientation, performance orientation, and customer orientation's effect on salesforce performance as mediated by adaptive selling in the industrial vitamin of Indonesia as the key issues. **Research Implication** – It is worth reiterating that studying salesforce performance is interesting because there are found some factors that can be considered due to the important role in creating competitive advantage and superior company performance. **Practical Implication** – To increase the salesforce's performance, sales managers and human resource managers should be encouraged with a performance orientation, customer orientation, and adaptive selling among salesforces **Social Implication** – Increasing adaptive selling, learning, performance and customer orientation variables will encourage an increase in

salesforce performance so that it will have a social impact, namely increasing the welfare and prosperity of farmers SMEs.

Keywords: Farmers, SMEs, Sales Performance, Adaptive Selling, Learning Orientation, Performance, and Customer Orientation.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic not only has an impactful on health threats and national economic growth, but also on the business sector including the trade, transportation, and tourism sectors, especially in the Small and Medium Enterprises (henceforth, SMEs) sector. Furthermore, the impact faced by public companies' business sector tends should be differentiated from the other sector. It is due to being able to drive a decline in sales and efforts to increase revenue. According to Yeo et al. (2019); Ramendra and Gopal, (2013) SMEs are the first steps to starting and implementing business strategies. One of the examples is selling the food industry such as snacks in Bandung which uses online marketing during the pandemic COVID-19. As a result, it was given a negative impact on the domestic economy, such as a decline in consumption and people's purchasing power, which have been experienced by the seller. The real threat to the consumption aspect of people's purchasing power is declining due to unemployment. In line with this fact, McIntyre et al. (2000); Park et al. (2003) strongly stated that the amount of loss of income greatly affects the level of consumption and purchasing power of the people, especially those in the category of informal workers and daily workers. In addition, the decline in people's purchasing power for consumer goods puts pressure on the producer side.

Integrated with the low-level consumption and purchasing power of the consumers, one of the hard efforts that should be raised and encouraged is the role of salesforce performance. It has a strategic and important role in creating competitive advantage and superior company performance in many companies. In addition, salesforce performance is a common variable considered in measuring sales results because of its important role in ensuring organizational success. The previous research conducted by some scholars regarding the antecedents of salesforce's performance mentioned that, in short, goal orientation impacts salesforce performance, as well as, salesforce performance itself was influenced by goal orientation (Hughes et al.: 2013; Kara et al.: 2013; and Kaynak et al.: 2016). Furthermore, regarding the motivational theory, a goal orientation was adapted before implementing an assignment or responsibility becomes a cognitive structure basis on how individuals understand, analyze, and act during carrying out the tasks or achieving their goals. However, in recent studies in the field of sales interest, the sales force's goal orientation is categorized into two orientations, namely: 1) learning orientation, and 2) performance orientation. In addition, according to Chakrabarty et al. (2013); Giacobbe et al. (2006), as a matter of fact, customer orientation has an impact on salesforce performance. Then, a high-performing, salesforce can apply various sales methods depending on customer requirements and difficulty (Kaynak et al.: 2016). By doing that, these salesforces are displaying an adaptive selling method. Based on the previous research, adaptive selling has been found that give a positive impact on the salesforce performance.

Regarding facts that supporting with the previous research and theory of scholars as described, it led the researcher to conduct the study about three key issues: learning orientation, performance orientation, and customer orientation's effect on salesforce performance as mediated by adaptive selling in the industrial vitamin of Indonesia as the key issues. This study will be presented in the form of research-based that consist of an introduction, research methods, results, discussion opinion, and the last is a conclusion. It can be described deeply as follows.

Literature Review

Adaptive Selling

When salespeople carry out adaptive selling, they need the ability to adapt themselves in using sales strategies by taking into account the typical, motives and sales behavior that occur during interactions with customers or cross-customer interactions based on perceived information about the characteristics of the sales situation. In other words, competence owned by the salesperson makes it easier. The higher the competency of the salesperson, the higher the adaptive selling capability. Several studies on adaptive selling (Pettijohn, 2000) show a positive relationship between adaptive selling and sales performance (Giacobbe, 2006). Adaptive selling capability shows the ability and skills of the sales force in carrying out certain techniques and approaches appropriately by taking into account the conditions and situations encountered. Salespeople will be able to provide a need satisfaction to customers because they are able to recognize each different customer's needs and desires and provide an alternative approach to the right sales. In the end, this adaptive selling capability will improve sales performance achieved by salespeople (Porter, 2003).

Learning orientation

This means that a set of values that are fundamental to the core of the company's learning orientation which are the fundamental values held for learning where these values affect whether an organization tends to develop a learning culture or not, because these values and culture are a condition. According to Baker (1999) states that learning orientation can be defined as the achievement of members in an organization in different understandings, interpretations, and insights with respect to the organization or its environment. This means that learning orientation can be defined as the attainment of each member in the organization on different understandings, interpretations, and insights with respect to the organization or its environment. As for some of the dimensions contained in the learning orientation based on the main research journal reference research by (Calantone, 2002) are as follows (a) Open mindedness, where a mind that is open to something new. An open mind is a prerequisite in the learning process because companies must be willing to question the routines and assumptions that comprise the mental models that drive thought and action. (Wang et al., 2008) explained that an open mind is a value of commitment to a group of individuals who each study their corporate environment. (b) Commitment to learning, is the level of how strong the desire is to maintain a learning culture in a company. Where individuals position learning as something that can maintain the viability of the company.

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Sales force performance

Brown et al. (2002) concluded that the performance of salespeople is the contribution of salespeople in achieving company goals. Brockman et al. (2012) added that salespeople were able to achieve sales targets set by the company because they had communication skills, sales skills and technical knowledge. In line with this, Challagalla and Zhang (2010) also stated that salesperson performance is a level where salespeople the seller can achieve the set sales target. Salesperson performance is determined by the behavior of individual salespeople. Zhang (2010) states that the performance of salespeople can be evaluated using factors that can be controlled by the salespeople themselves and can be measured through total sales volume and achievement of sales targets. The use of sales models, both indirectly and directly by salespeople, will influence consumer decisions about purchasing products or services, which in turn will have an impact on sales force performance. This is in accordance with the statement of Brockman et al. (2012) that every effort made by salespeople has an impact on the performance of individual employees sales and sales force performance. For the company each individual sales force is responsible for implementing the marketing strategies set by the company. Therefore, it is important for salespeople to be able to contribute to the company by achieving sales volume, profits for the company and customer satisfaction

Method

The approach in this study was a quantitative approach, the respondents in this study were 245 SMEs farmers who were determined by the simple random sampling method. Data analysis techniques in quantitative research with statistical calculations using partial least squares (PLS) with SmartPLS 3.0 software tools. The research data was obtained by distributing online questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale of 1 to 7. The stage of data analysis was the Validity Test, namely testing the significance of the validity of the indicators forming the variables analyzed from the value of the standardized regression weight and the significance value of each indicator. The reliability test is a measure of the internal consistency of the indicators of a construct that shows the degree to which each indicator indicates a construct or a common latent factor. The approach used is to assess the amount of Construct Reliability and Variance Extracted from each construct. Hypothesis testing, namely testing the significance of the effect between variables, is analyzed from the probability value with the testing criteria.

The hypothesis in this study is

- H1:** Learning Orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance
- H2:** Performance Orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance
- H3:** Customer Orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce's performance
- H4:** Adaptive Selling has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance

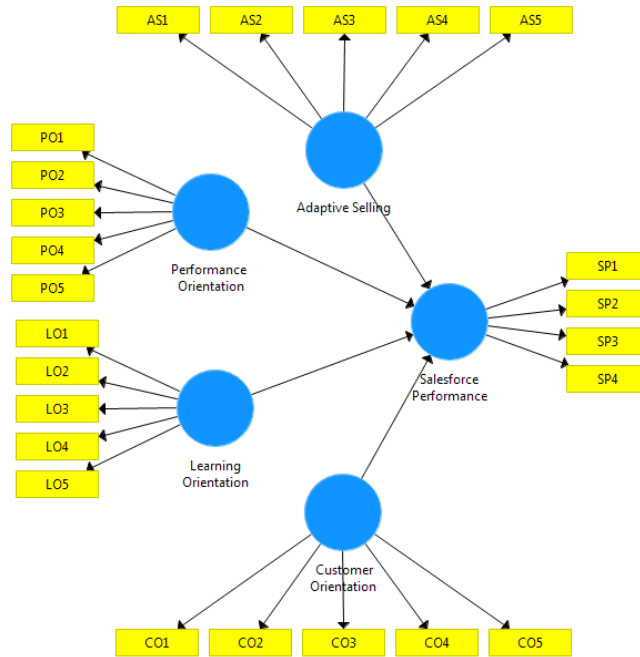


Fig 1. Research Model

Findings and Discussion

The analysis is carried out by evaluating the measurement results of the outer model and evaluating the inner model by testing the Partial Least Square (PLS) outer model which aims to test the validity and reliability of latent variable indicators. The validity test criteria in a study refer to the magnitude of the outer loading of each indicator on its latent variables

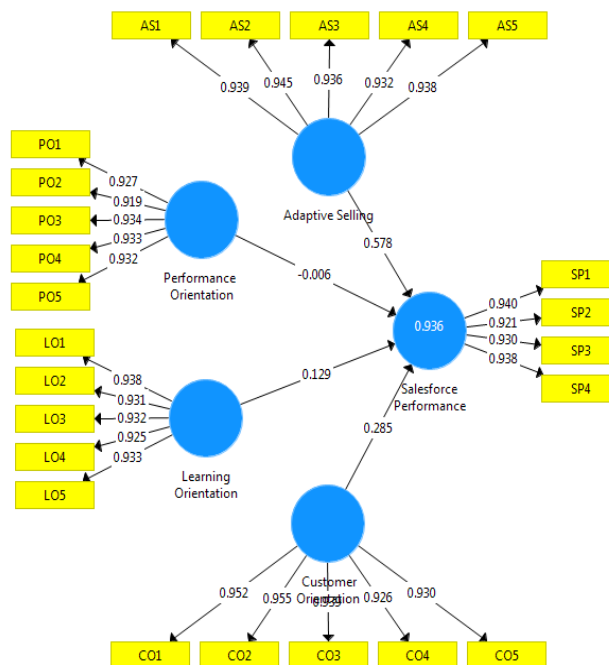


Fig 2. Validity Testing

In testing the outer model aims to see the validity and reliability of a model. The analysis of this test will be seen from the influence of factor Loading, Average Variance Extratcted (AVE), and Discriminant Validity, as well as composite reliability

Table 1. Reliability Testing

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	(AVE)
Learning Orientation	0.854	0.824	0.761	0.619
Performance Orientation	0.810	0.809	0.809	0.608
Customer Orientation	0.865	0.854	0.745	0.643
Adaptive Selling	0.812	0.831	0.842	0.613

Convergent Validity is a measurement of the validity of a reflexive indicator as a variable measure which can be seen from the outer loading of each variable indicator. An indicator is said to have good reliability if the outer loading value is above 0.70. While the outer loading value can still be tolerated up to 0.50 and below the value of 0.50 can be dropped from the analysis. The number on the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) used to determine whether the average variance in the indicators in each variable is homogeneous or not for each research variable shows above the number 0.5. Thus the data collected has met the requirements to be homogeneous. Based on the table above, it is known that the discriminant validity number is above 0.6 so that all variables are declared valid.

Hypothesis testing

After testing the measurement model (outer model), the next step is testing the structural model (inner model) to find out whether the hypothesis can be accepted or rejected. This study will use a significance value (α) of 0.05 or 5%. The relationship between variables can be considered significant if the P value is smaller than the predetermined significant value ($P < 0.05$).

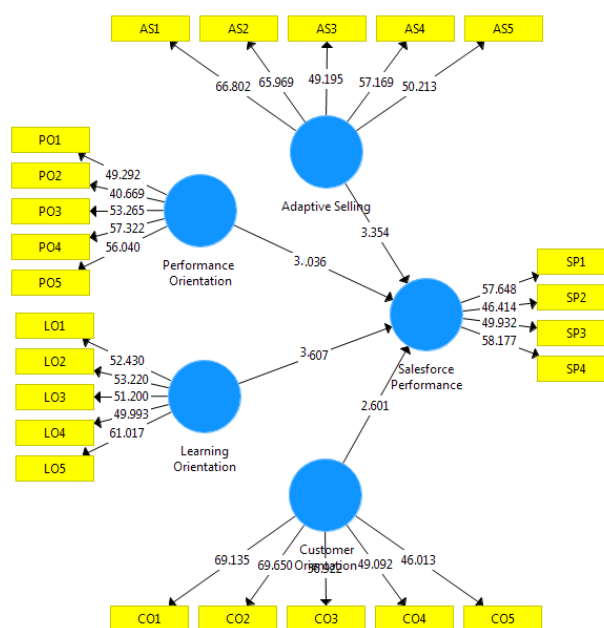


Fig 3. Hypothesis testing

Table 4. Hypothesis testing

	T Statistics	P Values	Result
Performance Orientation - salesforce performance	3.607	0.000	Supported
Customer Orientation - salesforce performance	2.601	0.001	Supported
Adaptive Selling - salesforce performance	3.354	0.004	Supported
Learning Orientation - salesforce performance	3.607	0.001	Supported

Learning Orientation and salesforce Performance

Based on the hypothesis test, the results obtained were t value $3.607 > 1.96$ so it was concluded that learning orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance. Most Recently, Yeo et al. (2019); Ramendra and Gopal, (2013) state that salesforce performance can be defined as sales results achieved by the sales force through business implementation, and research capabilities on sales force performance. Personal, organizational, co-workers, customer, and situational are kind of factors that influenced sales force performance. Personal factors, for example, it is referred to as factors within the individual that help him to achieve the best performance. In addition, personal factors are the most studied factor in the research scope on salesforce performance, and even, is also considered the main factor in building good relationships between consumers, colleagues, and other stakeholders.

Broadly speaking, in order to work effectively, the salesforce should be more organized in using their social media supported by their intellectual capability at social communication competence. It was trusted as a salesforce capability to arise and to grow the social sensitivity and social conditions in the process of promoting social competence. Social competence itself refers to the salesforce's ability which has a role in organizing the appropriate responses to deal with sales situations ethically and helpfully. Some important components of social competence are adaptive sales behavior and customer orientation. Those components can be carried through learning orientation.

Learning orientation is a high preference to develop selling competencies continually to the mastery level. In addition, it is the capability also to see the circumstances of competitive sales as an opportunity to develop their competencies in the sales context. Furthermore, salesforce who have high curiosity to know in learning orientation, their learning process will arise continually, and it was useful to support their job as sales. Even, salesforce who have a learning orientation mindset will enjoy learning how to sell the product or service effectively, and how to promote the value of self-development, added to their interest in demanding circumstances or attempting a novel method or things. However, learning orientation is found to have a positive influence on salesforce performance. Another that, previous research shows that the performance-linked will be integrated with individual learning styles that can give influence their performance effectively. Moreover, based on the learning theory already described that a person's approach to studying something is a form of personality aspect. How to build a performance orientation mindset will be explained in the following section.

Performance Orientation and Salesforce Performance

Based on the hypothesis test, the results obtained were t value $3.607 > 1.96$ so it was concluded that Performance Orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance. Performance orientation is defined as a trait in a salesperson's view. They have fixed capabilities as well as focus on demonstrating themselves as superiors and coworkers. On the other side, performance orientation has the main explore on proving someone's capabilities and trying to avoid failure when doing a task. Additionally, they strive to obtain a good assessment also given by their superiors or their colleagues to become perceived as better than their peers. Every individual with a high orientation on performance will take higher attention to showing their performance, proving their capabilities, and avoiding the underperformance results, they will be going the extra mile than the expectation.

Previous research highlighted that in the salesforce context, performance orientation has a positive impact on performance. Salesforce with a high-performance orientation strived to achieve its target, due to they have a high awareness of achievement than other members of

the team. Furthermore, they also have a long acknowledgment and appreciation. A strong desire to obtain recognition from superiors and co-workers will encourage the salesforce to work harder, and it leads them to show their best performance yet. It is in line with Jaramillo et al. (2007); Kara et al. (2013); and Kaynak et al. (2016) statements who concluded that performance orientation has a positive impact on sales performance. How the customer orientation approach affects repeated purchases and creates loyal customers will be discussed in the following section.

Customer Orientation and Salesforce's Performance

Based on the hypothesis test, the results obtained were t value $2.601 > 1.96$ so it was concluded that Customer Orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce's performance. Customer orientation is a sales approach that focuses on providing solutions faced by customer problems. Customer-oriented salesforce shows a genuine intention to help customers and prospective customers dealing with taking satisfactory purchasing decisions by understanding their needs and offering products that fit the customer's needs. It is supported by the statement of Itani et al. (2017); Jaramillo et al. (2007); Kara et al. (2013); Kaynak et al. (2016) that conclude customer orientation have a redline on salesforce performance positively. Customer-oriented salesforce has a vocal point as an adviser for their potential customer and predicts give feedback by their customer with higher satisfaction level. Furthermore, it is not impossible to make consumers repurchase the product to become loyal customers. Even, customers could refer the salesforce's company to other customers. It also builds a good ecosystem to help the salesforce obtain better sales performance. Another research conducted by some scholars mentions that highlights and suggested that adaptive selling mediates the influence of customer orientation on salesforce job performance. How adaptive selling works and affects sales performance will be discussed as follows.

Adaptive Selling and Salesforce Performance

Based on the hypothesis test, the results obtained were t value $3.354 > 1.96$ so it was concluded that . Adaptive Selling has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance . Adaptive selling is defined as a self-initiative process that could improve salesforce performance. Customer interactions have opportunities for salesforce development and opportunity more frequently than other employees. Then, through this way, the salesforce could know better what is the essential factor for the customer. Therefore, they could adjust their approach and presentation method until they can meet different customer requirements. Previous research found that learning orientation gives impacting adaptive selling positively, meanwhile, performance orientation has a negative impact on adaptive selling. According Chakrabarty et al. (2013) found that learning orientation positively impacts salesforce adaptive selling behavior. Therefore, the next hypothesis of this research is:

The main research finding that should be underlined is performance orientation has a positive effect on the salesforce's performance, and adaptive selling mediates the relationship among them (partial mediation). This result is in line with the findings of previous research conducted by Itani et al. (2017); Jaramillo et al. (2007); Kara et al. (2013); Kaynak et al. (2016) which stated salesforce's performance orientation can be expected to give a positive influence on adaptive selling. Meanwhile, in salesforce performance, the indicator which has the highest loading factor is the indicator that describes the ability to obtain a wide and higher market share when it is compared to other people in their environments. Furthrmore, according to McIntyre et al. (2000); Park et al. (2003); Pelham (2009); Yeo et al. (2019); Ramendra and Gopal, (2013), greater salesforce desire can be seen as experts in the sales context by their colleagues. In addition, it could affect a higher ability to a wider market share.

Meanwhile, for adaptive selling, the indicator with the highest loading factor is the indicator that describes the desire to try different sales techniques. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the greater salesforce's desire can be seen as an expert in the sales context by their colleagues, the greater their desire to try different sales techniques. Indirectly, this study confirms to customer orientation positively affects salesforce performance only through adaptive selling mediation.

This result is not strongly in redline with the findings of previous studies that customer orientation has a positive effect on salesforce performance. According to Ramendra and Gopal, (2013), customer orientation more relates to the attention of the customers, emphasis on learning, curiosity, and awareness to see things as opportunities. Customer-oriented salesforce often sacrifices short-term sales profits to form or maintain a good relationship for a longer time in the future, especially for a loyal customer. Even, though it is supported by the statement of McIntyre et al. (2000), which mentioned that the indicator in customer orientation with the highest loading factor is an indicator of the salesforce's effort to offer products that can solve customer problems. In short, it can be summarized that a greater salesforce's effort to offer products that can help the customer to solve their problems, leads to a higher desire to try different sales techniques.

Conclusion

The research findings show that learning orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance, performance orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance, customer orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce's performance, adaptive selling has a positive effect and significant effect on salesforce performance. In short, to conclude, it is worth reiterating that studying salesforce performance is interesting because there are found some factors that can be considered due to the important role in creating competitive advantage and superior company performance. Furthermore, three hypotheses are outlined based on the research findings, there are: 1) Performance orientation has a positive and significant effect and progress on salesforce performance, 2) Adaptive selling mediates the relationship between performance significantly, and the last 3) Customer orientation has a significant effect to strengthen the salesforce performance.

Furthermore, according to the study result, it is suggested that to increase the salesforce's performance, sales managers and human resource managers should be encouraged with a performance orientation, customer orientation, and adaptive selling among salesforces. It could be done by adding those variables as recruitment criteria and conducting training and development programs. The reason is sales competition programs themselves were trusted as the best salesforce competition and salesforce leveling based on their achievement in increasing the salesforce's performance orientation. Even, customer orientation could be increased by adding customer satisfaction as the salesforce's target, and by scheduling routine product knowledge training.

Rather, the research scope and limitations can be concluded on two points, there are: (1) To increase the generalization of this research and the significance of the research, further research should cover various industry backgrounds, and (2) For further research add more samples are suggested. Meanwhile, the recommendation for future research is suggested to study other variables which correlate with the salesforce performance impact such as selling skills, sales manager's leadership behavior, selling orientation, or other factors at the organization level.

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