ITINERARY CHALLENGES OF SALESFORCE IN PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION AND DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN MARKET

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ABSTRACT

This is an empirical research study to examine the itinerary challenges of sales force in product distribution and delivery in Nigeria market. The researchers adopted descriptive survey research. Questionnaires were administered to 135 respondents chosen as a sample size and there was 100% rate of returns. Chi-square statistical tool was used to test the three hypotheses formulated for the research study. The researchers found that social economic characteristics of sales force have significant effect on product distribution and delivery; that there are no significant itinerary challenges faced by salesforce and that itinerary challenges faced by sales force and that itinerary challenges faced by salesforce and that itinerary challenges significantly affect product distribution and delivery. In view of these findings, researchers recommended that due to the level of competition among the products in the market, very agile and young sales person should be recruited and well recommended that due to the level of competition among the products in the market, very agile and young salesperson should be recruited and well recommended. Government at all levels, be proactive in enhancing effective and efficient product distribution through good road network.

Keywords: *Itinerary Challenge, Sales force, Product distribution, produce delivery, Nigerian Market.*

Introduction

Product distribution and delivery are key functions of sales people. Products distribution and delivery Centre around the movement of goods from points of production to places of consumption by sales force, through intermediaries such as distributors or middlemen and directly to the final consumers. This critical nature of distribution and delivery is why production is said to be incomplete until what is produced gets to the final consumer (Stanton, 2009). Adeyanju Adetunji (2013) asserted that distribution is the marketing mix element by which place and time utilities are provided in the market place. Ballon (1978) stated that distribution and delivery of product is the task that involve planning and implementation of the physical flow of final goods from point of origin to a point of use or consumption in order to meet the needs of customers at a profit.

Moreover, Parker (1962) outlined that physical distribution system consists of a set of decision on the number, location and size of warehouses, freight policies and inventory policies. However, each possible physical distribution system is associated with its distribution and delivery cost.

Consumers do not want to travel far or exert much effort to purchase any product, rather they want to procure the product at a maximum level of convenience. This is one of the reasons why firms employ sales people. Sales force ensures that products are distributed and delivered in good conditions to the middlemen or directly to the final consumers for need satisfaction. However, in carrying sales activities in Nigerian market.

Sales force is faced is with problems of itinerary. The problem of the study is to determine the effect of road conditions, road network, and traffic condition; on distribution and delivery of goods in the Nigerian market. Other problems such as conditions of vehicles, market segmentation, numbers and spread of middlemen in the market etc. still subsist.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the itinerary challenges of sales force in distribution and delivery of products to the target market. However, specific objectives are to:

- assess the effect of the socio-economic characteristic of the sales force in product distribution and delivery.
- identify itinerary challenges faced by sales farce in product distribution and delivery.
- assess the effect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised for this study:

- what extent does socio-economic characteristics of the sales force affect product distribution and delivery?
- what are the itinerary challenges faced by sales force in product distribution and delivery?
- what are the effects of itinerary challenges on product distribution and delivery?
- what are the effects of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are stated in null and alternate forms.

Hypothesis 1

Ho: Socio – economic characteristics of sales force have significant effect on product distribution and delivery.

H_1: Socio-economic characteristics of sales force have significant effect on a product distribution and delivery.

Hypothesis 2

H_o: There are no significant itinerary challenges faced by sales force in product distribution and delivery.

H_1: There are significant itinerary challenges faced by sales force in product distribution and delivery.

Hypothesis 3

H_o: There is no significant effect of itinerary challenges on product distribution and delivery.

H_1: There is significant effects of itinerary challenges on product distribution and delivery.

Hypothesis 4

H_o: There is no significant effect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods.

H_1: There is significant affect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods.

Literature Review

Distribution and delivery complete production. However, distribution and delivery of goods begins when an order is placed and sales force act in response to the order. Customers are not concerned with the design of the supplier's distributive system nor in any supply problem, but in the efficiency of the sales force in distribution and delivery of goods in good physical condition (Murkey & Wilson, 2011; Coleman 2018).

Distribution and delivery employ the transportation system for effectiveness and efficiency. sales force distributes and deliver goods to the target markets for purpose of need satisfactions at a profit. However, studies assert effectiveness and efficiency of distribution and delivery can be measured in terms of whether goods are loaded on time, customers are satisfied and the turnover of stock (Mc Afee 2002; Devaraj & Kohli, 2000, Barva 1995).

Transportation system available in a country determines how effective and efficient distribution and delivery of goods can be in the market. In Nigeria, the predominant transportation system is road transportation. Road transportation is the use of all goods and people. Goods are transported from the production places to the market places. Unfortunately, the conditions of most roads in Nigeria are filled with failed parts, no good network of road, road congestions, slow traffic which tend to affect distribution and delivery. In addition, sales force has to contend with the challenges of market segmentation and number and spread of the middlemen in the market, in their itinerary in the distribution and delivery goods.

The Salesforce

The salesforce is described in terms of people employed by organizations for marketing of goods produced at a profit. Salesforce are people who distribute and deliver goods to the intermediaries or final consumers in the market place. The success of sales people is determined by how they persuade the target audience to make purchase and the amount of sales made at a given period of time (Kotler, 2009, Stanton 2009).

Jones, stated three fundamental ideas which salesforce must put into consideration in the distribution and delivery of goods to the target market. Firstly, prospects are not victims to be sold goods which they cannot use advantageously and do not satisfy their needs. Secondly, sales should not be regarded as a cold, scientific process, but a red blooded, man –to-man transaction. Thirdly, is the necessary knowledge of salesmanship with a strong desire to improve and develop personal selling ability; acquire strong and positive business qualities, to eliminate weak ones and thus acquire character, caliber and personality.

Characteristics of a Successful Salesforce

Kotler (2009), Stanton (2009), Adeyanju (2013), Leon Wilson (2011) and many scholars seem to agree on the following characteristics of the salesforce:

- Ability to build long-term relationship with customers: this means thinking of long-term and leveraging the current sales into more business in future from the same customer or via referrals.
- Ability to listen and stay in tune with customer needs sales persons need not spend all their time talking the prospective customer into purchase but also need to find out what customers actually want. Active listening is part of salesmanship.
- Sales people need not promise what they cannot deliver: broken sales promises turn off customers faster and subsequent sales offers becomes difficult.
- Ability to be tenacious; tenacity is required in salesmanship because there may be several attempts to make a sale, so there should not be a give up on a potential customer.
- Self-motivation and positive attitude: high level of initiative and constantly seeking for new opportunities are traits of personal motivation and positive attitude.
- Community Service: a good salesperson should give back to the community through donations to charities etc.

Distribution of Goods

Coleman (2018) opined that distribution / delivery goods and services means to spread the product throughout the market place such that a large number of people can buy it. Distribution and delivery can make or break an organization. An effective distribution and delivery contribute to the strategic competitive advantage of an organistion. Organizations must adopt a system that allows its sales force to distribute and deliver its products than its competitors. Salesforce of any organization must spread the products of its organization wider and faster in the market place at a lower cost than the salesforce of other organization. Distribution and delivery are critical for organizations because they make goods available for sale in the marketplaces.

Factors Influencing Distribution and Delivery

- A good transport system to take the goods into different geographical locations of market places.
- A good tracking system so that the right goods and right quantities reach the market places at the right time.
- A good packaging for the goods which absorbs the wear and tear of the transportation.
- Tracking the places where the product would be placed so that there is maximum opportunity to buy it.
- It also involves a system to take back goods from the trader.

Product

Product is the foremost of the 7Ps of marketing. It generates revenue for any organization. It is the primary purpose of existence of any organization. A product is anything that is being offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption. In addition, product is what the sellers want to sell and what buyers want to buy. Product is said to be a complex of tangible and intangible attributes such as packaging, colour, service etc. which the buyer accepts as offering satisfaction to their desires, wants and needs. Moreover, product is designed to appeal to different occasions, demand to different social groups and are distinguished between different brands. (Kotler, 2009, Stanton, 2009).

However, product is taken as the generic name for goods and services. This study focuses on the distribution and delivery of goods by salespeople in the market places.

Characteristics of a Product

The followings are regarded as characteristics of product:
- It must offer satisfaction to consumers and buyers.
- It must be of interest to consumers or buyers.
- Buyers or consumers must willingly express need for it.
- It includes both the tangible and intangible aspect of the offering.
- It must provide benefits to the consumers or buyers.

Itinerary challenges of Salesforce in Product Distribution and Delivery in Nigerian Market.
Salesforce is part of the human resources of an organization whose official duties is not within the confines of offices but outside the organization, most especially in market places. Salesforce distribute and deliver goods produced to market intermediaries and final consumers at a profit.

As personnel within the offices is faced with office stress and fatigue in relation to office duties so are salesforce faced with itinerary challenges in distribution and delivery of goods in market places. Organisations provide motor vehicle for salesforce for distribution and delivery of goods for competitive advantage.

The Nigerian market is said to be made up of above 170 million people who are scattered around the geographical territory of Nigeria.

Nigeria is a developing nation and sales force face the following itinerary challenges:
- Poor Road Infrastructure: larger proportion of roads in Nigeria have failed portions. This failed portions negatively impact distribution and delivery in terms of lateness in
  market reach, damage of goods, damage of vehicle. However, eventual occurrence of any of these is at cost to organizations.
- Poor network of Road: roads in Nigeria are not adequately networked or linked. Therefore, in distribution and delivery, salesforce have to make unnecessary and unavoidable driving or travelling in order to reach the various target market
- Time Wastage: Salesforce spends longer time in reaching market intermediaries and final consumers as they drive through failed roads that are not adequately and well linked.
- Spread of Markets and Market intermediaries: markets and market intermediaries are widely located. This condition can make market segmentation difficult. Sales force may find it hard to reach some market and market intermediaries. This may mean that some profitable target market may be unreached and this can indicate loss of sales revenue.
- Travelling Stress and Fatigue: Nigerian roads are not easy to drive through. Failed portions are numerous and road network is poor which make travelling tedious and hard. These lead to stress, fatigue and eventually health challenge for salespeople which may negatively impact distribution and delivery.

  Movement of goods from the factory and its delivery to market intermediaries and final consumers in good condition are paramount responsibilities of salesforce. Therefore, salesforce of organizations are in competition and tend to adopt various personal styles and marketing strategies to overcome these itinerary challenges in order to attain allotted sales quota and revenue.
- Road Accident: itinerary challenges of salesforce may include road accident. Bad road conditions coupled with long distances to reach the target audience may open salesforce to road mishaps. Loss of any part of the body or loss of life may be the personal cost of the salesforce.

Somehow, salespeople in Nigeria have seemed to understand and grasp these itinerary challenges. They seem not to be deterred with these challenges as they focus on better ways of distributing and delivering goods in the market place in good physical conditions better than other competing salespeople.

Theoretical Framework
Two simple theories are adopted as basis of theoretical framework for this study. Firstly, is the theoretical definition of market. There are two definitions of market, viz the narrow definition of market that tends to state that market is a geographical location or a particular where buyers and sellers have physical contact in order to exchange goods for a monetary value.

Secondly is the theory of distribution channels. There are two major distribution channels viz direct and indirect channels of distribution.

However, this study adopts distribution channel. Indirect distribution channel postulates that the manufacturer sells indirectly to the final consumers through market intermediaries. Market intermediaries receive these goods through salesforce.

In line with the narrow definition of market, marked intermediaries can be located in various marketplaces in the Nigerian market. Salesforce are able to meet these market intermediaries in their respective market locations for purpose of product delivery in exchange for monetary value.

Methodology

The research study is a survey of salesforce in the conduct of product distribution and delivery. The population of the study is the center salesforce in Nigeria. However, in choosing the sample, the simple random sampling was employed to choose 5 salespersons per 27 firms from the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) Industry located in the Industrial Estate of Sango Ota, Ogun State. Therefore, a total of one hundred and thirty-five (135) respondents were chosen for this study. Salespeople are saddled with the responsibility of distributing and delivery the various produced goods from Sango Ota of Ogun State to various locations of middlemen and final consumers in the market place.

The research instrument employed in this study is a structural questionnaire that aims at soliciting appropriate responses from the respondents. In addition, the Pearson Chi-square (x^2) was adopted as the statistical tool to test the hypothesis. The Pearson Chi-square (x^2) is a test statistic that aims at determining relationship between the variables of the study. Evident relationship will be determined whether Ho is rejected or accepted.

The formulae for x^2 test of independence is:

$$X^2 = \frac{(Fo - Fe)^2}{Fe}$$

Decision Rule: we reject the null hypothesis (Ho) when competed value of x2 given by (1) is greater than some critical values at the point probability (P) value of 0.05 otherwise we accept (Ho)

Tests of Hypotheses and Discussion

Hypothesis 1

Ho: Socio – economic characteristics of sales force have significant effect on product distribution and delivery.

H_1: Socio-economic characteristics of sales force have significant effect on a product distribution and delivery.

Variables	X^2 Value	df	P-Value	Significance	Decision
Age	24.959	3	0.05	.000	Significant
Income	10.230	4	0.05	.037	Significant

Source: Field Survey, January, 2018.

We reject the null hypothesis (H_o) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_1).

Therefore, socio-economic characteristics of sales force have significant effect on product distribution and delivery.

Organizations tend to recruit young people into the salesforce than old people. Young people are agile, healthy and stronger. They can move about and around. They are more able to surmount itinerary challenges. In addition, organization attract and keep salesforce with good income. Young sales people do not mind itinerary challenges as long as income is good.

Socio-economic characteristics of age and income of sales force are significant variables that positively contribute to and aid product distribution and delivery in the Nigerian market.

Hypothesis 2

H_o: There are no significant itinerary challenges faced by sales force in product distribution and delivery.

H_1: There are significant itinerary challenges faced by sales force in product distribution and delivery.

	X^2 Value	df	P-Value	Significance	Decision
Itinerary challenges reduce salesforce performance at sales	14.88	4	0.05	0.01	Significant
Do you agree that itinerary challenges cause stress and fatigue for salesforce?	3.39	4	0.05	0.50	Not Significant
Do you agree that good vehicles reduce itinerary challenges of salesforce	2.68	3	0.05	0.44	Not Significant
Do you agree that road condition, traffic condition are challenges to salesforce?	2.02	4	0.05	0.73	Not Significant
Do you agree that salesforce motivation reduce itinerary challenges?	1.56	4	0.05	0.82	Significant
Do you agree that salesforce need to be convenient with road network?	11.39	4	0.05	0.02	Significant
Do you agree that good itinerary will boost salesforce performance	7.12	4	0.05	0.13	Not Significant

Source: Field Survey, January, 2018.

Itinerary challenges are identified to be road challenges, traffic condition, stress, fatigue, knowledge of road network etc.

In the test of hypothesis 2, there were seven questionnaires raised. Two questionnaires were significant, while five were not significant.

It is significant at 0.01 level of significance that itinerary challenges reduce salesforce performance at sales. In addition, it is significant at 0.02 level of significance that salesforce need to be conversant with road network.

However, it is not significant that

- itinerary challenges cause stress and fatigue for salesforce.
- good vehicles reduce itinerary challenges of salesforce.
- salesforce motivation reduce itinerary challenges and
- good itinerary will boost salesforce performance.

Therefore, we tend to accept the null hypothesis (H_o) that there are no significant itinerary challenges faced by salesforce in product distribution and delivery.

Salesforce do not allow itinerary challenges constraint their performance at sales since they understand the competitive nature of their job in the market place.

Hypothesis 3

H_o: There is no significant effect of itinerary challenges on product distribution and delivery.

H_1: There is significant effects of itinerary challenges on product distribution and delivery.

	X^2 Value	Df	P-Value	Significance	Decision
Do you agree that itinerary challenges do not favour product distribution	32.03	16	0.05	0.01	Significant
Do you agree that road condition and traffic condition hinder product distribution and delivery	21-.96	16	0.05	0.15	Not Significant
Distance between factory and market hinders products distribution and delivery	45.37	20	0.05	0.001	Not Significant
Do you agree that salesforce are reluctant to distribute products?	4.04	16	0.05	0.01	Significant
Do you agree that vehicle condition affect product distribution and delivery?	51.84	16	0.05	0.000	Significant
Do you agree that good knowledge of road network and linkage by salesforce aid product distribution and delivery?	17.59	16	0.05	0.35	Not Significant
Do you agree that good itinerary aids product distribution and delivery?	17.77	16	0.05	0.34	Not Significant

Source: Field Survey, January, 2018.

In the test of hypothesis 3, four questionnaires were significant while there were not significant. Therefore, we tend to reject the null hypothesis (H_o) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_1) that states that challenges on product distribution and delivery.

It is to be noted that:

- itinerary challenges do not favour product distribution and it is significant at 0.01 level of significance.
- distance between factory and market hinders product distribution and delivery and significant at 0.01 significant level.
- vehicle condition affect product distribution and delivery, significant at 0.000 level of significance.

Itinerary challenges have significant effect on product distribution and delivery in the Nigerian market.

Hypothesis 4

H_o: There is no significant effect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods.

H_1: There is significant effect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods.

	X^2 Value	Df	P-Value	Significance	Decision
Do you agree that road condition affect physical condition of goods	32.27	12	0.05	0.001	Significant
Do you agree that market s-egmentation aids delivery of goods in good physical condition?	16.04	15	0.05	0.38	Not Significant
Do you agree that distance between factory and market affect physical condition of goods?	18.44	12	0.005	0.10	Not Significant

Do you agree that good itinerary will aid delivery of goods in good physical condition?	15.09	12	0.05	0.24	Not Significant
Do you agree that good vehicles aid delivery of goods in good physical condition	10.01	12	0.05	0.61	Not Significant
Do you agree that salesforce motivation aid delivery of goods in good physical condition?	12.16	12	0.05	0.39	Not Significant
Do you agree that good knowledge of road network by sales force aid delivery of goods in good physical condition?	11.29	12	0.05	0.44	Not Significant

Source: Field Survey, January, 2018.

In the test of hypothesis 4, there seem to be a consensus among respondents that tends to favor the acceptance of the null hypothesis (H_o) that there is no significant effect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods. Available data that contribute to the no-significant effect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods are:

- market segmentation does not significantly aid delivery of goods in good condition.
- distance between factory and marketplaces does not significantly affect physical condition of goods.
- good itinerary does not significantly aid delivery of goods in good physical condition.
- salesforce motivation does not significantly aid delivery of goods in good physical condition.
- good knowledge of road network by salesforce does not significantly aid delivery of goods in good physical condition.

Summary and Conclusion

Salesforce encounter itinerary challenges in product distribution and delivery from factory to the market places. However, these itinerary challenges are not sufficiently significant to create a problem for salespeople in product distribution and delivery in the various market places.

However, there are significant effect of itinerary challenges on product distribution and delivery. Itinerary challenges slow down and delay the pace and process of product distribution and delivery in various market places.

Nevertheless, there is no significant effect of itinerary challenges on physical condition of goods. Goods are in most cases distributed and delivered in good physical condition.

In conclusion, socio-economic characteristics and income of sales force contribute significantly to salesforce ability to overcome and overlook itinerary challenges in such a way that most goods are distributed and delivered in good physical condition in the Nigerian markets.

Recommendations

This study recommends that:

- Organisations that wants to be strategically competitive in the market place need more of young and agile salesforce that will not be perturbed by itinerary challenges. Therefore, organizations should recruit young people in their salesforce.
- Organisations should reward their salesforce with good income package.
- Organisations need to be more aware of the competitive nature of salesmanship in the marketplace. In view of this, organizations need to train and retain their salesforce on awareness, knowledge and coping with itinerary challenges in such a way that salesmanship, product distribution and delivery and physical condition of the product in the market place are not adversely affected.
- Government should provide good roads and better road networks that will quicken distribution and delivery of goods into the various market places.

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