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COLLABORATION BETWEEN SALES AND MARKETING INCREASES THE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM PAKISTANI EXPORT INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to know whether superior levels of collaboration between marketing and sales are linked with improved business performance and to highlight factors that are administratively related to this interface. This study aims to explore the marketing and sales working relationship through quantitative research, survey of Pakistani Export companies through questionnaires is being used in this research study. The research concludes that high level of organizational learning, communication, minimizes interdepartmental conflicts, results as better business performance. This study has many implications for managers, for instance, for better sales and marketing department relations, senior management need to create a positive coordination, which can help them to reduce interdepartmental conflicts. Top management should provide such training programs and environment that encourage functional departments to work together to get maximum productivity. However, literature significantly supports hypothesis of this study, but it also raises additional research issues which are yet to be explored; similar model can be used in other industries of Pakistan to better understand the implications of this model.

KEYWORDS

Marketing and Sales Interface, Collaboration between sales and marketing, Organizational Learning, Business Performance.

INTRODUCTION

This has been the most important issue in business-to-business organizations that how to improve coordination and working relationship between marketing and sales department (Kotler, Krishnaswami, & Rackham, 2006). Empirical evidences on the topic of collaboration between sales and marketing in business-to-business organizations are very limited, although a fewer number of authors have tried to conceptualize the relationship of collaboration between sales and marketing departments (Brencic & Biemans, 2007). The major cause that this area has been ignored until now is that previously marketing and sales department treated as separately e.g. both departments have their own goals, but the ultimate goal of both these two departments is to increase market share (Jensen & Homburg, 2007). Conversely, in multinational organizations, marketing and sales are commonly controlled as separate departments (Kotler *et al.*, 2006) that execute different tasks (Shapiro, 2002). Kotler, Krishnaswami, & Rackham, (2006) entitled "Ending the War between Sales & Marketing." This review anticipates that marketing and sales do not always operate collaboratively to the profit of the organization.

Every organization should improve the coordination and working relationships between marketing and sales department (Kotler, Krishnaswami, & Rackham, 2006). Munn (1998) indicate that functions of marketing and sales departments are interlinked, hence these activities should be highly coordinated. Marketing depends on sales professionals to convey the marketing message to valuable customers in order to achieve higher market share (Chonko & Colletti, 1997). Furthermore, Blythe & Yandle (2000) identified that sales function are normally directly related with marketing functions to give a steady supply of potential customers with the help of their promotional actions. Consequently, sales and marketing have same ultimate goals to effectively target and sell their products and services in order to increase organization's profitability.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Although this interface demonstrate the most crucial relationships within an organization (Dawes & Jobber, 2000; Dawes & Massey, 2005), hence this importance have build up interest of academics and practitioners to explore issues regarding these two departments (Kotler *et al.*, 2006; Rouzies *et al.*, 2005). One reason of being ignored by organizations and customers generally considered sales and marketing as a single function (Webster, 1997), customers usually perceive about sales and marketing department that both departments performing similar tasks and functions. In large organizations, sales and marketing department's role are very different for each other. For instance, the function of sales department is to stimulate and sell the products to the target customers. While marketing perform different functions, their major concern is identifying potential customers and markets. Furthermore, to integrate sales, distribution, and integrated

marketing plans (Webster, 1997). Prior studies highlighted several negative aspects of marketing and sales departments (Dawes & Massey, 2005; Piercy, 2006; Kotler *et al.*, 2006), e.g. usually poor coordination between marketing and sales results as in poor planning and goal setting (Olson *et al.*, 2001; Kotler *et al.*, 2006).

Prior studies have highlighted antecedents that cause high collaboration between marketing and sales department e.g. communication, market intelligence, management attitudes towards coordination, organizational learning (Ken Le, Meunier-FitzHugh, & Nigel F. Piercy 2007). Furthermore, interdepartmental conflicts should be minimized that both sales and marketing departments work with higher collaboration to achieve better results for business performance (Ken Le, Meunier-FitzHugh, and Nigel F. Piercy 2007).

The purpose of this study is to know whether superior levels of collaboration between marketing and sales are linked with improved business performance and to highlight factors that are administratively related to this interface. This research includes to the conceptualization by Jobber & Dewsnap (2000) and Rouzies *et al.*, (2005) by providing an empirical investigation of antecedents that might influence collaboration between marketing and sales departments and their interrelated functions.

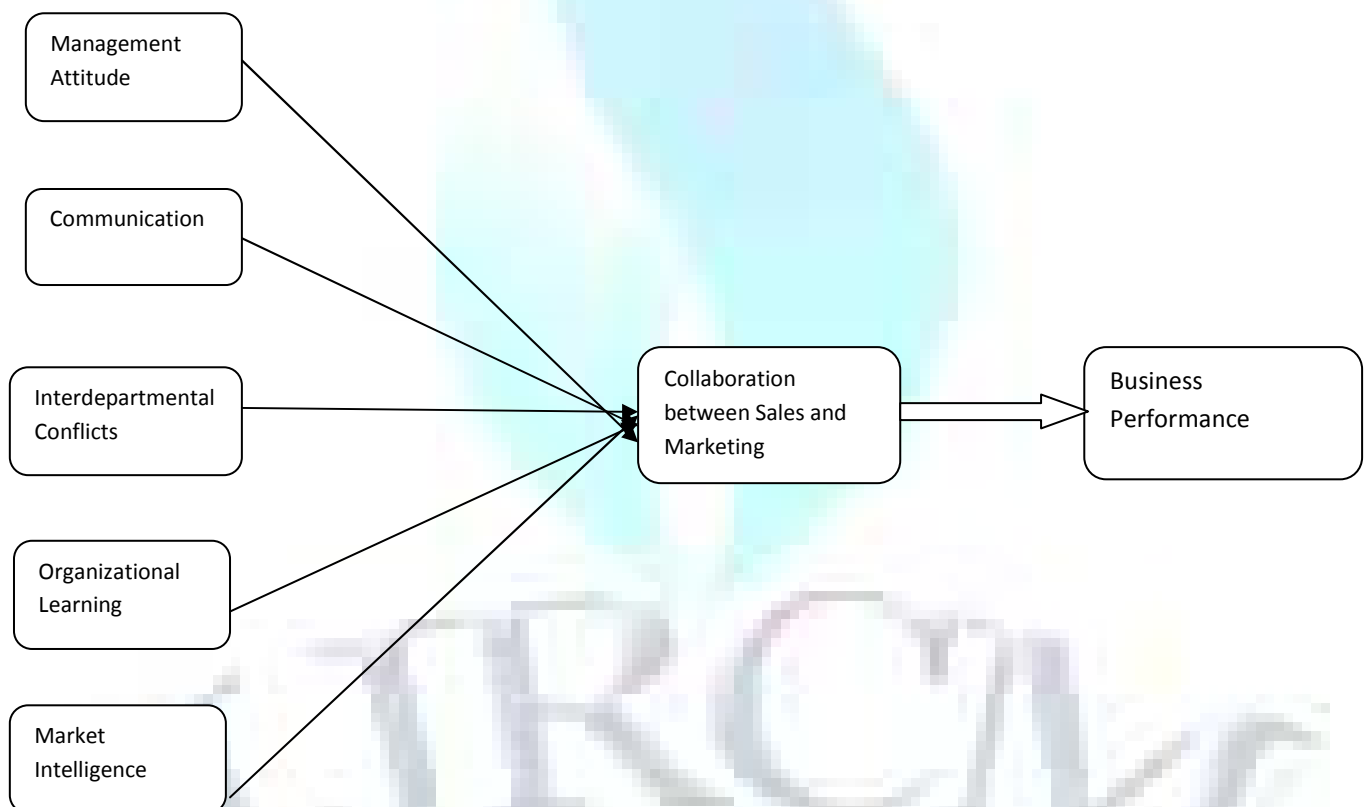
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study identifies five antecedents to collaboration between marketing and sales and anticipates a significant relationship between business performance and marketing and sales collaboration. Interdepartmental conflict between the marketing and sales activities is depended on inadequately aligned objectives (Massey & Dawes 2005; Piercy 2006). In addition, some marketing and sales departments practice role uncertainty, and there might be a lack of recognizing of both departments' roles (Kotler, Krishnaswamy, & Rackham, 2006).

For that reason, it is anticipated that interdepartmental conflict will negatively influence collaboration between marketing and sales department. Cross-functional learning can guide to better collaboration between teams because information might conveyed through informal systems (Wilemon & Mayers, 1989). Consequently, organizational learning will have a positive impact on collaboration between marketing and sales. Market intelligence could be a method on which both marketing and sales can relay to accomplish combined success, and it is anticipated to encourage collaboration. Improved collaboration between sales and marketing possibly will be found on the better communications between the two departments.

The management attitude towards coordination between marketing, and sales is the main construct within the framework. Thus, top management should establish and encourage integrated working relationships between marketing and sales. In conclusion, where top managers succeed in integrating cross-functional activities organizations will get higher level of profits (Workman, Homburg, & Krohmer, 2002), this proposed that high levels of coordination and collaboration between sales and marketing will give better business results.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL



COLLABORATION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

The term "collaboration" suggested by Kahn's (1996) that collaborative essentials of mutual understanding, shared resources, collective goals, informal activity and common vision do have a significant influence on business performance. Focus is not only to think about integrations of these activities of marketing and sales. Kotler (2006), and Shapiro (2002) proposed, that marketing and sales departments have different functions or tasks which are performed by different people of these two departments. Although the ultimate goal is to maximize profits and make customers more loyal towards their brand but still marketing and sales have dissimilar or distinctive functions as well, which can't be ignored at the same time these tasks are interdependent to each other.

The main theme of this study is to more focus on collaboration between sales and marketing rather than integration. The foremost issue is to identify potential benefits through collaboration. Literature supports that there are operational benefits can be achieved through better internal collaboration (Spiro & McGee, 1988). It is also indicated that internal integration leads to superior performance (Webster, 1997), at the same time Tjosvold (1988) anticipate that collaboration and integration between functional departments results as competitiveness and productivity. Prior studies proposed that those organizations who promote better internal relationships leads to higher value for their target customers (Jaworski & Kohli 1990; Turnell & Morgan 2003). There is confirmation of strong relationship collaboration between sales and marketing departments or other functional department leads to enhanced business results.

H1: Collaboration between marketing and sales department has direct impact on business performance

MANAGEMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD COLLABORATION

Practical specialization is vital for operational efficiency but it can only be done through building collaborative working relationships (Piercy, 2006). Olson and Viswanath (1992) proposed that role of senior management is very critical to provide such a collaborative working environment for functional departments. Top management should provide such training programs and environment that encourage functional departments to work together to get maximum productivity (Kahn, 1996). The process of building collaborative environment leads to collective vision (Senge 1990). Similarly Kotler, Krishnaswamy, and Rackham, (2006) proposed that senior management should organize resources which minimize the affect of interdepartmental conflicts. Major responsibility of senior management is to minimize interdepartmental conflicts between marketing and sales departments. Thus we hypothesized as follow

H2: Management Attitude toward collaboration has direct impact on business performance

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication between functional departments is a key construct in collaboration (Kotler, Krishnaswamy, & Rackham, 2006). Sounder (1988) anticipate that regular meetings to discuss about new market trends gives a detailed information to each functional department and cause better inter-functional relationships. Through flow of market information across functional department professionals tries to better strengthen interdepartmental relationships, although this decrease interdepartmental conflicts but still it is not enough (Massey and Dawes 2005). If the interaction is unfriendly, there will be no benefits of information for both sales and marketing departments (Rouzies *et al.*, 2005). Effective communication is multi directional and can reduce interdepartmental conflicts. Therefore, study hypothesized as;

H3: Communication between marketing and sales department has direct impact on business performance

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Prior researches recommend that feedback from the sales professionals should be included in congregation of market intelligence (Kotler, Krishnaswamy, & Rackham 2006). In addition, Tandon and Wood (1994) anticipate that market intelligence data will be useless if it is not disseminated among functional departments. It is not only related to dissemination of the data, it is also crucial to processed, analyzed and interpret it properly (Allgaier & Powell, 1998). Consequently, in order to get higher level of collaboration between marketing and sales departments market information should be gathered and disseminate systematically. Thus, study hypothesized;

H4: Market Intelligence increases Business performance

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

Organizational learning is necessary to be competitive and profitable in the market. Organizational learning refers to structure and facilitates the development of new strategies that have potential to compete (Slater, Hult, & Ketchen, 2002). Effective learning involves experience and knowledge to integrate new concepts. Each member of the organization has the potential to add in learning (Cravens 1998). Organizational learning supports employees in groups that they can come up with their new ideas and these new ideas would result better for the organization (Crosson & Vera, 2004). Bunderson and Van der Vegt proposed that people from diverse backgrounds share new ideas, and when they work together, productivity would be increased. Learning is the sharing of knowledge, ideas, and concepts with others encourage collaboration among people. The intention is that marketing and sales required developing sharing behaviors. Thus, study hypothesized;

H5: Organizational Learning has direct impact on business performance

INTERDEPARTMENTAL CONFLICTS

Interdepartmental conflicts, the dissimilar goals, cross-purposes and not welcome each other's rolein decision making. Prior research identified that there are interdepartmental conflicts exists between marketing and sales department (Massey & Dawes, 2005). Blythe and Yandle define interdepartmental conflicts as a miss-match in functions in a way, that employee feel not comfortable working together. There are many causes behind lack of collaboration between marketing and sales, representatives of these departments have their own way of working, philosophies, and mostly having different backgrounds (Piercy, 2006). Thus, study hypothesized;

H6: Interdepartmental Conflicts are negatively associated with business performance

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study is about the inter-relationship between the marketing and sales departments and market-orientation in small and large business-to-business companies from Pakistan exporting their products to different parts of the world. Even though it is mostly accepted that coordination among internal departments lead to organizational success (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Slater & Narver, 1994).

The collaboration between internal departments sales and marketing is directly related to the business success still under-researched. Furthermore, there is prove to highlight that this relationship posses lack of unity and even disagreements (Rouzies *et al.*, 2005; Kotler, Rackham, & Krishnaswamy, 2006). It has been observed that most of the conflicts occurred due to difference of objectives and job differences (Donath, 2004; Homburg & Jensen, 2007).

It is proposed that due to low collaboration between sales and marketing departments lead to spoil overall business performance (Corstjens & Corstjens, 1999). Consequently, the significance of collaborative marketing and sales departments has been unnoticed, rather it is not only important to market orientation but it has potential benefits to overall business performance.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

How collaboration between sales and marketing departments can be effective to business performance. What remedial measures organizations should take to increase the productivity of these two essential internal departments in order to minimize conflicts?

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to know whether superior levels of collaboration between marketing and sales are linked with improved business performance and to highlight factors that are administratively related to this interface. This research includes to the conceptualization by Jobber & Dewsnap (2000), and Rouzies *et al.*, (2005), by providing an empirical investigation of antecedents that might influence collaboration between marketing and sales departments and their interrelated functions.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: Collaboration between marketing and sales department has direct impact on business performance

H2: Management Attitude toward collaboration has direct impact on business performance

H3: Communication between marketing and sales department has direct impact on business performance

H4: Market Intelligence increases Business performance

H5: Organizational Learning has direct impact on business performance

H6: Interdepartmental Conflicts are negatively associated with business performance

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample of Pakistani business-to-business organizations is included, although Pakistani industrial organizations are not very large in numbers as compared to International organizations. Export companies of Sialkot are selected for this research study, who deals in export of surgical, veterinary, and apparel goods. Authors personally visited these companies in order to collect reliable data. 100 questionnaires are being distributed to sales and marketing departments of these companies. Sialkot export industry is selected because they are very successful all over the world in export of surgical, veterinary, and apparel goods.

Majority of the respondents lies in the age group of 30-40 and 20-30, 47% respondents belongs to the age group of 30-40 and 41% respondents belongs to the age group of 20-30. Other details of age group are shown in appendix 1 and bar chart 1.

The respondents who are working in sales and marketing departments have the minimum experience of 3 years. The maximum respondents got five years working experience in their respective departments, other details of respondents' experience are shown in below chart.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We selected five independent variables, one mediating and one dependent variable. Independent variables are (Management attitude toward coordination, Interdepartmental conflicts, Communication, Market Intelligence and Organizational Learning), mediating variable is collaboration between sales and marketing, and Business performance as dependent variable.

Management attitude toward coordination and business performance has a positive relation ($r=0.81$, $n=100$, $p<0.01$) strong relationship between these two variables i.e. if Management Attitude toward coordination increase, business performance will be better. Communication increase the business performance ($r=0.83$, $n=100$, $p<0.01$) has strong relation and Communication impact on business performance is at high ratio. Interdepartmental Conflicts and business performance has a negative relation ($r=0.16$, $n=100$) it means that if interdepartmental conflicts increases it will decrease the business performance. Organizational learning and business performance both have a strong positive relation ($r=0.095$, $n=100$, $p<0.01$). If organization more concerned more about organizational learning it will definitely increase business performance. Market Intelligence and business performance has a positive relation ($r=0.95$, $n=100$, $p<0.01$) strong relationship among these two variables i.e. if Market intelligence increase, business performance will be better. Collaboration between sales and marketing increase the business performance ($r=0.41$, $n=100$, $p<0.01$) has a moderate relation and Communication impact on business performance is at moderate ratio.

In first equation, we want to check the effect of all variables on Business Performance. 2.251 is a fixed value, which will occur in every situation. It means that if there is no management attitude toward coordination and effect of other variables then how much management advocates the business performance. The coefficient of retailer background is 0.048 that if management attitude toward coordination is going upward business performance will be increased. The R square value for all variables is between .02-0.12, which shows that there is a mediating effect exit of collaboration between sales and marketing department.

Management Attitude toward collaboration has direct impact on business performance, it has significant impact on market intelligence and interdepartmental conflicts. Management plays an important role to provide such a platform where collaborative relationship between sales and marketing should be promoted. Top managers should promote aligned and integrated goals between functional departments.

Communication between marketing and sales department has direct impact on business performance. Communication is the main construct in this study, it give prospect to sales and marketing department to share information. It is also helpful to minimize interdepartmental conflicts among functional departments. Flow of information gives positive results for the organization (Kotler, Krishnaswamy, & Rackham 2006).

Market Intelligence is vital for both marketing and sales departments; it gives a better understanding of customers in a effective way. Market intelligence data will be useless if it is not disseminated among functional departments (Allgaier & Powell, 1998). Consequently, in order to get higher level of collaboration between marketing and sales departments market information should be gathered and disseminate systematically.

Organizational Learning is a key construct in this study; Organizational learning refers to structure and facilitates the development of new strategies that have potential to compete (Slater, Hult, & Ketchen, 2002). Effective learning involves experience and knowledge to integrate new concepts. Furthermore, organizations grow, and sharing ideas, working together would be better enhanced.

Interdepartmental Conflicts are negatively associated with business performance. It happened when interdepartmental conflicts increase, collaboration between marketing and sales is more likely to be decreased. Effective learning involves experience and knowledge to integrate new concepts. Each member of the organization has the potential to add in learning (Cravens, 1998). Organizational learning supports employees in groups that they can come up with their new ideas and these new ideas would result better for the organization (Crosson & Vera, 2004).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has many implications for managers, for instance, for better sales and marketing department relations, senior management need to create a positive coordination, which can help them to reduce interdepartmental conflicts. Top management should provide such training programs and environment that encourage functional departments to work together to get maximum productivity. Furthermore, senior management should organize resources which minimize the affect of interdepartmental conflicts. Major responsibility of senior management is to minimize interdepartmental conflicts between marketing and sales departments. Routine meetings should be integrated that higher level of information flow.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes strong support for the hypothesis "Collaboration between marketing and sales department has direct impact on business performance". Even though this hypothesis has been anticipated in the literature that collaboration between marketing and sales department has direct impact on business performance (Rouzies *et al.*, 2005; Kotler, Krishnaswamy & Rackham, 2006; Jobber & Dewsnap, 2000), this is the first empirical investigation that collaboration between marketing and sales department has significant impact on business performance. These findings propose that organizations should promote relationship between sales and marketing department. We conclude that although these independent variables have direct impact on business performance but only when collaboration between sales and marketing exists.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

However, literature significantly supports hypothesis of this study, but it also raises additional research issues, which are yet to be explored, similar model can be used in other industries of Pakistan to better understand the implications of this model. Secondly, a large sample in which marketing and sales department staff members should be included. Therefore, this study could be tested in other industrial areas of Pakistan.

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