

The Competencies of Sales Associates on the Ready-To-Wear Industry in Qatar: Basis of Improving Sales Performance

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Abstract

The utilization of sales competencies plays a crucial role in enhancing the performance of sales associates and achieving organizational objectives. The objective of this study aims to investigate the sales competencies exhibited by sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry in Qatar. This study utilized the quantitative descriptive research design, wherein a survey questionnaire was given to sales associates to describe their sales competencies. The study involved one hundred participants, evenly distributed with fifty (50) males and fifty (50) females, selected as respondents. The results of this study showed that a majority of sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry in Qatar fall within the 21-25 age range, with a finished tertiary level of education, and have been working for 1-3 years. All of the six sales competencies, Product Knowledge, Presentation Skills, Listening Ability, Objection Handling, Convincing Skills, and Interpersonal Ability, have been always used. The study identified Product Knowledge as the most frequently utilized sales competency, with the highest weighted mean of 3.67. This competency, which empowers consumers with comprehensive product information, can lead to advantageous outcomes such as upselling, cross-selling, and increased profitability. The overall order of utilization for sales competencies, from most to least employed, includes Product Knowledge, Convincing Skills, Interpersonal Ability, Presentation Skill, Objection Handling, and Listening Ability. It is recommended that sales associates must have a comprehensive understanding of their products and enhance their communication skills to elevate customer engagement, increase sales effectiveness, and improve overall success in the competitive ready-to-wear industry.

Keywords: Convincing skills; Interpersonal ability; Listening ability; Objection handling; Presentation skills; Product knowledge; Sales associate; Sales competency

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The performance of a sales force is critical to an organization's success and growth. Sales associates must interact successfully with customers to secure more transactions. Monitoring sales performance also helped meet or exceed the company's revenue targets (Reddy et al., 2019). Sales associates can improve their work performance and accomplish desired objectives by applying sales management strategies to use. However, ineffective sales techniques have been the cause of poor sales performance in an organization (Plouffe et al., 2017).

Sales managers are increasingly challenged to develop a relational selling effort among their sales personnel. Many sales associates are "order-getters", a salesperson who actively persuades customers to buy rather than simply collecting orders that customers want to place, whose primary goal is transactional, or closing-focused (Keillor et al., 2015). Sales management is becoming a more significant part of the production strategies of many providers today. Learning new skills is necessary for relationship selling, especially in customer needs understanding and connection building. These competencies include probing, managing arguments, and closing. Coaching techniques and programs developed to teach these skills need to be updated and occasionally dysfunctional (Doyle & Roth, 2014).

The management competencies of a sales associate come with a variety of problems. One of these is the lack of confidence (Yu et al., 2015). The improvement in self-confidence was cited by the sales associates as the coaching's top advantage. This was an advantage as a lack of self-confidence was identified as a major negative affecting the staff's motivation to sell. Customers need sales associates to help them recognize the value of what one is offering. It takes time, planning, and patience. Salespeople closed enough deals to make their sales performance even worthwhile to analyze without grit and strategic persistence, negatively affecting sales performance (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2020).

The job of selling has grown increasingly analytical, and it is a central item on the agenda of senior management in business markets. Despite its obvious importance for business success, little is understood about how to properly implement it or the mechanisms by which sales strategy affects performance (Terho et al., 2015). Sales management competencies aid in a company's improvement of its reputation. Assessing for the most effective skill may lead to loyal and potential customers. Sales executives understand that building a positive buyer experience requires a variety of emotional intelligence, goes beyond a customer's contentment with their purchase, and takes into account overall brand engagement.

Sales associates have the burden of juggling several tasks at once (Nurmi & Hinds, 2020). These include tracking sales performance data, analyzing progress towards goals, and making modifications as necessary to meet targets. Keeping consumers, dealers, and distributors satisfied is another problem in sales and marketing. Sales associates frequently work nights and weekends taking calls and responding to emails (Kossek & Ollier-Malatarre, 2020). Sales associates need to communicate both frequently and effectively in real-time to maintain a cohesive team that works as one.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

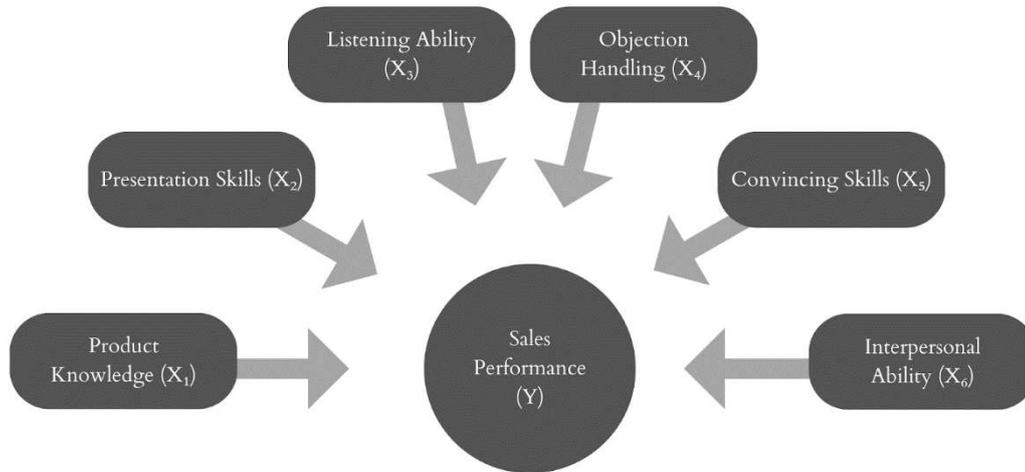


Figure 1: Impact of Competencies on Sales Performance by Punwatkar & Varghese (2014)

Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework used in the study. It shows the different skills needed for a positive sales performance. There are multiple sales management competencies. The most common competencies of sales performance are product knowledge, presentation skills, listening ability, objection handling, convincing skills, and interpersonal ability.

Product Knowledge

Product knowledge can increase sales. An adept understanding of product information is required to explain a product to a consumer in detail is known as product knowledge (Mukherjee, 2022). If a salesperson is unable to demonstrate the features and how a certain product met the demands of the customer, it becomes difficult to effectively market to them. Not only does having a thorough understanding of the product increase the salesperson's confidence and passion, but it also helps him present the product effectively and dispel any potential consumer objections or skepticism. One must have a thorough awareness of the market trends affecting the industry. One may make more educated decisions about the company's operations and strategy by being aware of such market trends. Product expertise can result in upselling, cross-selling, and multiple sales that are more profitable (Waters, 2014).

Presentation Skills

With presentation skills, a sales associate may show a customer the characteristics, advantages, and usability of the good or service. Both salespeople and sales managers concur that effective sales presentations are essential for closing deals. The most telling body language indicators to watch throughout any kind of sales

presentation are prospect engagement and disengagement habits. The former shows interest in a salesperson's communication effectiveness, presenting in a positive tone and manner to improve sales (Goman, 2015). Sales presentation enhances communication abilities that can help salespeople interact with clients more effectively (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2020).

Listening Ability

A salesperson's communication skills, capacity to uphold strong relationships, and capacity to establish trust are all intended to be predicated on listening. Salespeople's use of listening skills may be the most advantageous to managers who prioritize long-term connections in a dyadic buyer-seller relationship (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). Listening to the customers' needs and wants suggests a substantial positive association between empathy and the following: salesperson listening, salesperson trust, and salesperson satisfaction. Furthermore, listening is positively related to the buyer's trust in and satisfaction with the sales associate (Pryor & Paradise, 2013). Listening allows a sales associate to "mind read" their customers to interpret a customer's meanings and needs. Sales associates focus on the need to be aware and knowledgeable about the differences between customers' needs and can use what they know to co-create value with them (Alnakhli et al., 2021).

Objection Handling

Objection handling is the reservations a potential customer has about the sales associates' offering or their internal barriers to buying. The ideal reaction alleviates the prospect's worries, inspires confidence in the solution one offers, and takes the deal forward (Geist, 2021). The result of these effectively handled objections is improved sales and, as a result, a higher degree of sales performance from salespeople. A salesperson can turn an anticipated sale into a definite sale by overcoming objections dynamically and effectively. Salespeople are trained in understanding customers, asking questions, active listening, making benefit statements, negotiating, closing, and so forth. This process is influenced by the professionalism of salespeople and their expert knowledge and skills. (Guenzi, et al., 2014). Sales associates who understand their customers' perspectives and empathize with them typically have stronger listening and relationship-building abilities (Drollinger & Comer, 2013). Feedback gathering and management to support efficient and accurate product and service designs. A company takes a series of actions to motivate the customers to provide feedback on the products they have acquired and after a long and time-consuming procedure, extract the customers' opinions, and exploit this information for future product design (Bernard et al., 2018).

Convincing Skills

One approach of interpersonal communication that humans utilize to accomplish their desires for other humans is persuasive communication. A customer is convinced in hope that they continue to purchase the product. Persuasion moves the buyer to the next stage of the purchasing process (Putrianti et al., 2022). The concept of persuasive tactics is developed to define and describe the universal persuasive technologies employed in the business. Knowledge of convincing approaches boosts sales success by subtly influencing the customer's tastes and attitudes without limiting their freedom (Romanova & Smirnova, 2019). Understanding consumer buying behavior is the core secret to approaching and engrossing clients, and persuading them to purchase products or services from brands (Le, 2021). Salespeople are no longer selling simply a product instead they're providing benefits to convince clients it would achieve their objectives. The flexibility to answer the queries of consumers and provide them with solutions ends up in a powerful relationship between a salesman and a customer (Yohitha & Raghuram, 2020).

Interpersonal Ability

Interpersonal skills indicate a salesperson's capacity to construct and develop relationships with their customers to generate a profitable and fruitful connection for both parties. Interpersonal abilities are mental and communicative algorithms that are utilized during social communications and interactions to achieve specific effects and results, these result in self-efficacy, adaptive marketing, and better sales performance (Gabler et al., 2019). With effective interpersonal listening skills, sales associates get perspectives needed for adaptive selling actions, which is beneficial to sales performance. An effective interaction happens when appropriate interpersonal skills are used (Amor, 2019).

Sales Performance

The effectiveness of sales associates over a given time period is referred to as sales performance. Sales Performance plays a vital role in the execution of job responsibilities by an individual in a specific professional area. This hugely contributes to and assists in carrying out various sales responsibilities (Punwatkar & Varghese, 2014).

1.3. Research Questions

The objective of this study is to investigate the competencies of sales associates in the Ready-To-Wear Industry in Qatar. Specifically, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. level of education; and
 - 1.4. number of years in service?

2. What is the level of utilization of the following management competencies by the respondents in terms of:
 - 2.1 product knowledge;
 - 2.2. presentation skills;
 - 2.3. listening ability;
 - 2.4. objection handling;
 - 2.5. convincing skills; and
 - 2.6. interpersonal ability?

3. Based on the profile of the respondents, what type of management competency is dominantly used in terms of:
 - 3.1 age;
 - 3.2. sex;
 - 3.3. level of education; and
 - 3.4. number of years in service?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized the descriptive design of the research. Descriptive research is research that aims to provide a glimpse of an existing phenomenon. It provides a rather full picture of what is going on at a given time and enables the development of research questions. In this study, the phenomenon that was investigated is the sales management skills of sales associates in the clothing industry in Qatar. The descriptive research design is the most suitable for the study's purpose and for acquiring the necessary data to achieve it (Stangor & Walinga, 2019). The quantitative method was also used to collect data through survey questionnaires and the analysis of results. Quantitative method provides numerical data and it attempts to identify the strength of association or correlation between variables, generalization, and objectification of the results through a sample for population inference (Cadena-Iniguez et al., 2017). The quantitative data acquired in this study can help validate original findings and describe the phenomenon being examined.

2.2. Research Locus and Sample

This study was conducted at Doha, State of Qatar. Fifty male sales associates and fifty female sales associates who were chosen as respondents in this study. Quota and purposive sampling techniques to select the respondents. Quota sampling is a nonprobability sampling approach in which the sample of people obtained corresponds to the proportions of people in the overall population of interest (Lamm & Lamm, 2019). Purpose sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the researcher makes selections about which person is included in the sample based on a number of characteristics such as specialist knowledge of the research subject or capability and willingness to engage in the research (Campbell et al., 2020). In order to meet a predetermined quota, this combined sampling strategy entails identifying and choosing individuals or groups of individuals who are knowledgeable and skilled about the topic of interest. Proper procedures were followed in gaining the approval of the authorities and respondents in order to conduct this research after receiving the respondents' consent.

2.3. Research Instrument

A self-made survey questionnaire was developed to meet the objective of this study. It has closed-ended questions and is based on primary and secondary sources. The researchers followed several steps for the purpose of using a valid instrument. The first part of the instrument includes the letter to the respondents, the second part is the demographic profile of the respondents, and the third part contains the various types of sales management skills: Product Knowledge, Presentation Skills, Listening Ability, Objection Handling, Convincing Skills, and Interpersonal Ability.

2.4. Development and Validation of the Instrument

STEP 1 – Content Validation

In this stage, pre-research was conducted to get the necessary data which was also included in the questionnaire. The questions were based on the theoretical framework of strategic implementation.

STEP 2 – Face Validation

The test items were examined and judged to see if they were valid for measuring the variable being studied. The questionnaire was checked by experts in the field and revised based on the recommendations of the validators.

STEP 3 – Final Administration

The respondent questionnaires were facilitated to sales associates in Qatar during the months of March to October 2023.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The data were collected in the following manner: First, the number of respondents was determined through quota and purposive sampling techniques. Second, sales associates in Qatar were selected. It was ensured that they had adequate English comprehension, only then were the instructions thoroughly explained, along with the purpose of the questionnaire, and they were asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. Once the respondents had no more questions, and completely understood and agreed, they signed and answered the questionnaire with the researcher's assistance, such as translating the words that the respondents had trouble understanding into simpler terms. The third step was the actual administration of the questionnaire to the respondents, followed by its retrieval. The data was then tallied and analyzed.

2.6. Statistical Treatment of Data

This study used percentage, frequency, and weighted mean as the statistical tools applied to the collected data to determine the answers posted in this study. Percentage and frequency were used to calculate the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was used in determining the most dominant sales management skills of ready-to-wear sales associates in Qatar that affect their sales performance. The table below shows the weighted mean scale and their designated verbal interpretations following the normal curve.

Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
3.26 - 4.00	Always	Always Utilized
2.51 - 3.25	Often	Often Utilized
1.76 - 2.50	Rarely	Rarely Utilized
1.00 - 1.75	Never	Never Utilized

3. Results

Sales Associates are employees who can perceive, understand, and regulate emotions to facilitate interaction with customers. Sales associates are responsible for handling each customer and answering all customer questions regarding the products and services (Sandroto & Fransiska, 2021). The objective of this study is to identify the competencies of sales associates in the ready-to-wear industry in Qatar.

Table 1. The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
21-25	27	27%
26-30	15	15%
31-35	18	18%
36-40	16	16%
41-45	13	13%
46-50	6	6%
51-55	2	2%
56-60	0	0%
Above 60	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Age. Twenty-seven or 27% of the respondents are 21-25 years old. Eighteen or 18% of the respondents are 31-35 years old. Sixteen or 16% of the respondents are 26-40 years old. Fifteen or 15% of the respondents are 26-30 years old. Thirteen or 13% of the respondents are 41-45 years old. Six or 6% of the respondents are 46-50 years old. Three or 3% of the respondents are 60 years old. Two or 2% of the respondents are 51-55 years old. Zero or 0% of the respondents are 56-60 years old.

Sales Associates usually belong to the early adulthood to early middle age range as it takes time to practice adaptive selling (Allen et al., 2014). In this study, the table indicates that most sales associates are younger, with more than half falling between the ages of 21 and 45.

Table 2. The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	50	50%
Female	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Table 2 shows the profile of the respondents according to their Sex. Out of one hundred (100) respondents, Fifty or 50% are males and Fifty or 50% are females.

In this study, a 50-50 distribution of respondents in terms of sex to ensure the representativeness of the sample. With half of the one hundred respondents being male and the other half being female, a balanced reflection of the overall population was captured.

Table 3. The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary (Elementary Graduate)	1	1%
Secondary (High School Graduate)	11	10.9%
Tertiary (Undergraduate)	53	52.5%
Bachelor's degree	27	26.7%
Master's Degree	7	6.9%
Doctorate Degree	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Level of Education. Fifty-three or 52.5% of the respondents have Tertiary as their highest level of educational attainment. Twenty-seven or 26.7% of the respondents have Bachelor's as their highest level of education attainment. Eleven or 10.9% of the respondents have Secondary as their highest level of educational attainment. Seven or 6.9% of the respondents have Master's as their highest level of educational attainment. Two or 2% of the respondents have Doctorate as their highest level of educational attainment, and 1 or 1% of the respondents have Primary as their highest level of educational attainment.

Sales jobs depend on the use of analytical and intensively quantitative skills; the majority of sales associates require massive training and education to master the challenges or prefer to be reassigned to sales of just goods-centric offerings (Ulaga & Loveland, 2014). The results of the survey questionnaire answered by the respondents are similar, indicating that a majority of the respondents have completed their tertiary education.

Table 4. The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Number of Years in Service

Number of Years in Service	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1	11	11%
1-3	31	31%
4-6	30	30%
7-9	20	20%
10-12	6	6%
13-15	0	0%
16 and above	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Table 4 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Numbers of Years in Service. Thirty-one or 31% of the respondents have the highest total of years is 1-3 years. Thirty or 30% of the respondents have 4-6 years of service. Twenty or 20% of the respondents have 7-9 years of service. Six or 6% of respondents have 10-12 years of service and 0% in 13-15 years of service. Lastly, 2% of the respondents are 16 and above.

On average, employees commonly change roles every two to four years. Sales jobs have been known for having one of the highest turnover rates among occupations, many salespeople actively seek new employment opportunities that offer improved compensation and prospects for professional development (Keshavarz et al., 2023). However, the survey questionnaire indicates that respondents in the study generally fall within the range of 1-6 years in service.

Table 5. The level of utilization of Product Knowledge management competency by the sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry

Product Knowledge	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
As a sales associate, I have a proficient understanding to explain the products I sell to a consumer in detail.	3.77	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I am aware of such market trends that are related to the products I sell.	3.65	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I am familiar with the features of the products that I sell.	3.58	Always	Always Utilized
Overall Weighted Mean	3.67	Always	Always Utilized

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 5 shows the level of utilization of Product Knowledge management competency by the respondents. The overall weighted mean of 3.67 which is verbally interpreted as Always and is “Always

Utilized” by the respondents. The three indicators under Product Knowledge received the verbal interpretation of Always and are “Always Utilized”. These statements are as follows: “As a sales associate I have a proficient understanding to explain the products I sell to a consumer in detail.” (3.77), followed by “As a sales associate I am aware of such market trends that are related to the products I sell.” (3.65) and “As a sales associate I am familiar with the features of the products that I sell.” (3.58).

These results indicate the crucial importance of sales associates to fully understand the products they sell. They must know the product functions, features, uses, and support requirements (Waters, 2014). An essential part of a salesperson's job is to transfer information to customers and assist in problem-solving. Salespeople are knowledge brokers managing different sources of information (Groza et al., 2016). Knowledgeable salespeople are better at handling customer problems, identifying solution requirements, and diagnosing relationship potential leading to more successful sales (Leigh et al., 2014). It is essential for sales associates to demonstrate how it meets the specific needs of the customer to successfully sell a product.

Table 6. The level of utilization of Presentation Skills management competency by the sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry

Presentation Skills	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
As a sales associate, I show the characteristics of the product to customers.	3.64	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I keep customers engaged by maintaining an approachable behavior.	3.55	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I am able to connect with customers by being conscious of their body language.	3.38	Always	Always Utilized
Overall Weighted Mean	3.52	Always	Always Utilized

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 6 shows the level of utilization of Presentation Skills management competency by the respondents. The overall weighted mean of 3.52 which is verbally interpreted as Always and is “Always Utilized” by the respondents. The three indicators under product knowledge received the verbal interpretation of Always and are “Always utilized”. These statements are as follows: “As a sales associate I show the characteristics of the product to customers.” (3.67), followed by “As a sales associate I keep customers engaged by maintaining an approachable behavior.” (3.55) and “As a sales associate I am able to connect with customers by being conscious of their body language.” (3.38).

The results could be interpreted to mean that presentation skill is not merely presenting idea with loud voice, proper body language, good eye contact to build interaction with audience, but also speaking performance that distributes across multiple modalities speech content, intonation, and well- structure language in order to make audience understand easily the presentation (Kuswoyo & Siregar, 2019). Salespeople with good presentation skills will engage in appropriate and meaningful communication with customers, be able to explain the features, benefits and usability of the product better, be capable of anticipating customer needs and as a result, will better achieve targets and goals (Høgevoid et al., 2021).

Table 7. The level of utilization of Listening Ability management competency by the sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry

Listening Ability	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
As a sales associate, I establish trust with customers by listening attentively.	3.63	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I listen to customers to build buyer-seller relationships	3.60	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I “mind read” the customers to interpret their needs.	3.24	Often	Often Utilized
Overall Weighted Mean	3.49	Always	Always Utilized

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 7 shows the level of utilization of Listening Ability management competency of sales associates. The overall weighted mean of 3.42 which is verbally interpreted as Always and is “Always Utilized” by the respondents. Two out of the three indicators under Listening Ability received the verbal interpretation of always and are “Always Utilized”, while one received a verbal interpretation of Often and is “Often Utilized”. These statements are as follows: As a sales associate I establish trust with customers by listening attentively.” (3.63), followed by “As a sales associate I listen to customers to build buyer-seller relationships” (3.60) and “As a sales associate I “mind read” the customers to interpret their needs.” (3.24).

The findings indicate that sales associates often utilize their listening skill to build trust with their customers. Listening to customers throughout the different steps of the buying process allows salespeople to convince customers they are advocates for better buying decisions. While a salesperson can learn about customers through listening, customers are also more willing to communicate with salespeople employing effective listening skills (Itani et al., 2019). Salespeople advance their understanding about their customers and the sales situation through listening. Listening facilitates salespeople's efforts to adapt their selling behaviors to satisfy customers (Anaza et al., 2018). Developing a relationship with the clients would further enhance their experience and increase their trust. In that case, sales associates have the opportunity to recommend features, services, and solutions that would truly address their issue and benefit both parties simultaneously (Irgui, 2020).

Table 8. The level of utilization of Objection Handling management competency by the sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry

Objection Handling	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
As a sales associate, I motivate the customers to provide feedback on the products they have acquired.	3.57	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I empathize with customers to further resolve the situation.	3.50	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate when I anticipate objections, I provide effective solutions by understanding the customer's perspective.	3.47	Always	Always Utilized
Overall Weighted Mean	3.51	Always	Always Utilized

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 8 shows the level of utilization of Objection Handling management competency of sales associates. The overall weighted mean of 3.51 which is verbally interpreted as Always and is "Always Utilized" by the respondents. The three indicators under Objection Handling received the verbal interpretation of Always and are "Always Utilized". These statements are as follows: "As a sales associate I motivate the customers to provide feedback on the products they have acquired." (3.57), followed by "As a sales associate I empathize with customers to further resolve the situation." (3.50) and "As a sales associate when I anticipate objections, I provide effective solutions by understanding the customer's perspective." (3.47).

The essence of sales is handling objections and truly understanding how you can help your prospect meet her needs. It is a demonstration of your skills as a salesperson to find the opportunity in these objections (Motwani, 2023). Company acquires sales associates to gather feedback on the customers' acquired products (Bernard et al., 2018). It is to manage the products and support innovative ideas for the product in the future. This is through extracting the customers' desires into the product's use to improve the company's sales. Additionally, the success of the products is when it meets the needs and wants of the target customers.

Table 9. The level of utilization of Convincing Skills management competency by the sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry

Convincing Skills	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
As a sales associate, I provide benefits of why our product would best help the customers achieve their objectives.	3.67	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I understand customers' buying behavior in order to convince them to purchase products.	3.61	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate, I can increase sales by subtly influencing customers to products that meet their needs and preferences.	3.58	Always	Always Utilized
Overall Weighted Mean	3.62	Always	Always Utilized

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 9 shows the level of utilization of Convincing Skills management competency of sales associates. The overall weighted mean of 3.62 which is verbally interpreted as Always and is “Always Utilized” by the respondents. The three indicators under Objection Handling received the verbal interpretation of Always and are “Always Utilized”. These statements are as follows: “As a sales associate I provide benefits of why our product would best help the customers achieve their objectives.” (3.67), followed by “As a sales associate I understand customers’ buying behavior in order to convince them to purchase products.” (3.61) and “As a sales associate I can increase sales by subtly influencing customers to products that meet their needs and preferences.” (3.58).

Personal selling requires persuasion on the part of the seller to the prospective customers to buy the product. A salesperson must have the ability to convince the customers so that an interest may be created in the mind of the customers to use that product (Melkie, 2019). Convincing takes the customer to the next level of the buying process (Punwatkar & Varghese, 2014). Sales associates who can convincingly and persuasively sell to customers tend to achieve better and longer-lasting sales performance.

Table 10. The level of utilization of Interpersonal Ability management competency by the sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry

Interpersonal Ability	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
As a sales associate I interact with the customers to get better sales performance.	3.66	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate I connect with customers on a personal level to understand their preferences.	3.65	Always	Always Utilized
As a sales associate I develop relationships with the customers to generate profitable connections between myself and the consumer.	3.50	Always	Always Utilized
Overall Weighted Mean	3.60	Always	Always Utilized

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 10 shows the level of utilization of Interpersonal Ability competency by the respondents. The overall weighted mean of 3.60 which is verbally interpreted as Always and is “Always Utilized” by the respondents. The three indicators under Interpersonal Ability received the verbal interpretation of Always and are “Always Utilized”. These statements are as follows: “As a sales associate I interact with the customers to get better sales performance.” (3.66), followed by “As a sales associate I connect with customers on a personal level to understand their preferences.” (3.65) and “As a sales associate I develop relationships with the customers to generate profitable connections between myself and the consumer.” (3.50).

The results indicate that the sales interaction is a dynamic process. It is not only through the salesperson’s perceptions of the customer’s needs but also when the customer’s needs change. Responses are obtained before, during, and after the salesperson–customer interaction (Hall, 2015). It evaluates customer needs interactively and influences the performance outcomes of a sales exchange while this shows the perceptual accuracy of the salesperson. The accuracy of salespeople’s relationship quality judgments is made after many interactions with customers. This improves the profit salespeople generate from customers. It is in

result of the deliberative analyses of information provided by customers where the salespeople's judgment is made after the interactions (Mullins et al., 2014).

Table 11. Summary of the level of utilization of the following management competencies by sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry in Qatar

Competencies	Overall Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
Product Knowledge	3.67	Always	Always Utilized
Convincing Skills	3.62	Always	Always Utilized
Interpersonal Ability	3.60	Always	Always Utilized
Presentation Skills	3.52	Always	Always Utilized
Objection Handling	3.51	Always	Always Utilized
Listening Ability	3.49	Always	Always Utilized

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 11 shows the result of the mean and its verbal interpretation on the management competencies of the respondents. The competency Product Knowledge got the highest mean of 3.67 followed by Convincing skills with a mean of 3.62. Interpretation Ability with 3.60, Presentation Skills with 3.52, Objection Handling with 3.51 while Listening Ability got the lowest with a weight of mean of 3.39. The results indicate that all sales competencies are verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as "Always Utilized".

The findings suggest that Product Knowledge boosts the salesperson's confidence and passion. It does not only help the salesperson to present the product but also dispel any objections. It also increases sales which is the result of having knowledge in market trends affecting the industry (Waters, 2015). This also shows that the salesperson understands and meets the demands of the customers.

Table 12. Management competency used dominantly in terms of Age

Age	Product Knowledge		Presentation Skills		Listening Ability		Objection Handling		Convincing Skills		Interpersonal Ability	
	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
21-25	3.57	Always	3.36	Always	3.43	Always	3.30	Always	3.42	Always	3.48	Always
26-30	3.11	Often	3.51	Always	3.49	Always	3.38	Always	3.71	Always	3.64	Always
31-35	3.70	Always	3.59	Always	3.57	Always	3.80	Always	3.78	Always	3.70	Always
36-40	3.85	Always	3.71	Always	3.58	Always	3.60	Always	3.71	Always	3.75	Always
41-45	3.87	Always	3.74	Always	3.56	Always	3.79	Always	3.87	Always	3.64	Always
46-50	3.72	Always	3.67	Always	3.67	Always	3.78	Always	3.72	Always	3.83	Always
51-55	3.83	Always	3.67	Always	3.33	Always	3.33	Always	3.5	Always	3.83	Always
Above 60	2.33	Rarely	2.33	Rarely	2.33	Rarely	2.33	Rarely	2.33	Rarely	2.33	Rarely

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 12 provides the summary of the responses from sales associates across various Age groups regarding their utilization of management competencies. The age range 21-25 dominantly utilized Product Knowledge with a mean of 3.57 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Moving forward, the age range 26-30 dominantly utilized the Convincing Skills with a mean of 3.71 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Interestingly, the age range 31-35 dominantly utilized Objection Handling with a mean of 3.80 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Moreover, the age range 36-50 dominantly utilized Product Knowledge with a mean of 3.85 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Similarly, the age range 41-45 dominantly utilized Product Knowledge and Convincing Skills with a mean of 3.87 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. In addition, the age range 46-50 dominantly utilized Interpersonal Ability with a mean of 3.83 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Furthermore, the age range 51-55 dominantly utilized Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Ability with a mean of 3.83 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. However, a significant shift from these patterns is observed among sales associates above 60 years of age. Despite exhibiting competence in all management competencies: Product Knowledge, Presentation Skills, Listening Ability, Objection Handling, Convincing Skills, and Interpersonal Ability, their mean of 2.33 is verbally interpreted as Rarely and is explained as Rarely Utilized.

The results reveal that the dynamics differ between younger and older sales associates. Younger sales professionals enhance selling effectiveness by staying attuned to the modern world, displaying a willingness to take calculated risks, and embracing innovative approaches. In contrast, older salesmen tend to operate independently, relying on their own established methods and ideas (Ingram, 2019).

Table 13. Management competency used dominantly in terms of Sex

Sex	Product Knowledge		Presentation Skills		Listening Ability		Objection Handling		Convincing Skills		Interpersonal Ability	
	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Male	3.70	Always	3.37	Always	3.44	Always	3.51	Always	3.65	Always	3.65	Always
Female	3.63	Always	3.57	Always	3.54	Always	3.59	Always	3.56	Always	3.56	Always

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 13 provides the summary of the responses from sales associates across Sex regarding their utilization of management competencies. The results indicate that both male and female sales associates dominantly utilized Product Knowledge with a mean of 3.70 and 3.63 respectively. These are verbally interpreted as Always and are explained as Always Utilized.

An understanding of market trends and customer buying patterns is critical when it comes to selling (Steenburgh & Ahearne, 2018). Market intelligence and industry knowledge may help salespeople interpret the actions of their competitors so they can take a proactive approach to not fall behind (Itani et al., 2017). The competitive intelligence collected by salespeople provides them with a better understanding and stronger insight about customers' needs and selling environment, and it is part of the information they can use to assist in their adaptive selling (Rapp et al., 2015).

Table 14. Management competency used dominantly in terms of Level of Education

Level of Education	Product Knowledge		Presentation Skills		Listening Ability		Objection Handling		Convincing Skills		Interpersonal Ability	
	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Primary Education	3.33	Always	3.67	Always	3.67	Always	2.67	Always	3.33	Always	3.33	Always
Secondary Education	3.53	Always	3.40	Always	3.53	Always	3.33	Always	3.40	Always	3.40	Always
Tertiary Education	3.72	Always	3.57	Always	3.49	Always	3.59	Always	3.72	Always	3.61	Always
Bachelor's Degree	3.74	Always	3.58	Always	3.57	Always	3.64	Always	3.67	Always	3.70	Always
Master's Degree	3.57	Always	3.52	Always	3.52	Always	3.29	Always	3.48	Always	3.57	Always
Doctorate Degree	2.33	Rarely	2.17	Rarely	1.83	Rarely	1.83	Rarely	2.00	Rarely	2.33	Rarely

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 14 provides the summary of the responses from sales associates across various Levels of Education regarding their utilization of management competencies. The dominantly used competencies by respondents who graduated with Primary Education are Presentation Skills and Listening Ability with a mean of 3.67 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Interestingly, the dominantly used competencies by respondents who graduated with Secondary Education are Product Knowledge and Listening Ability with a mean of 3.53 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Similarly, the dominantly used competencies by respondents who graduated with Tertiary Education are Product Knowledge and Convincing Skills with a mean of 3.72 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Additionally, the dominantly used competency by respondents who graduated with a Bachelor's Degree is Product Knowledge with a mean of 3.74 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Moreover, the dominantly used competency by respondents who graduated with a Master's Degree are Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Ability with a mean of 3.57 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Interestingly, the dominantly used competency by respondents who graduated with a Doctorate Degree are Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Ability with a mean of 2.33 and is verbally interpreted as Rarely and is explained as Rarely Utilized.

The highest weighted mean computed is Product Knowledge (3.74) from respondents who graduated with a Bachelor's Degree. Based on the data shown the respondents who finished Secondary Education, Tertiary Education, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctorate Degree dominantly utilized this management competency. Highly educated salespeople tend to develop higher-level knowledge structures (Hamzah et al., 2023).

Table 15. Management competency used dominantly in terms of Number of Years in Service

Number of Years in Service	Product Knowledge		Presentation Skills		Listening Ability		Objection Handling		Convincing Skills		Interpersonal Ability	
	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Below 1	3.42	Always	3.42	Always	3.33	Always	3.45	Always	3.51	Always	3.48	Always
1-3	3.68	Always	3.47	Always	3.35	Always	3.40	Always	3.50	Always	3.66	Always
4-6	3.73	Always	3.64	Always	3.70	Always	3.67	Always	3.79	Always	3.61	Always
7-9	3.83	Always	3.58	Always	3.62	Always	3.58	Always	3.75	Always	3.68	Always
10-12	3.87	Always	3.74	Always	3.56	Always	3.79	Always	3.87	Always	3.64	Always
13-15												
16 and Above	2.33	Always	2.17	Always	2.17	Always	2.17	Always	2.00	Always	2.83	Often

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 15 presents the summary of the respondents categorized by their Number of Years in Service regarding their utilization of management competencies. The respondents who have worked Below 1 year dominantly utilize Convincing Skills with a mean of 3.51 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. In addition, respondents who have worked for 1-3 years dominantly utilize product knowledge with a mean of 3.68 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Furthermore, respondents who have worked for 4-6 years dominantly utilize Convincing Skills with a mean of 3.79 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Moreover, respondents who have worked for 7-9 years dominantly utilize Product Knowledge with a mean of 3.83 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Similarly, respondents who have worked for 10-12 years dominantly utilize Product knowledge and Convincing skills with a mean of 3.87 and is verbally interpreted as Always and is explained as Always Utilized. Meanwhile, respondents who have worked for more than 16 years and above dominantly utilize Interpersonal Ability with a mean of 2.83 and is verbally interpreted as Often and is explained as Often Utilized.

The study indicates that everything starts from sales; nothing happens until a sale happens. Moreover, the sale itself does not merely represent a final transaction for selling products or services, but it also stands for negotiation (Cvetkoska & Iliev, 2016). Product knowledge and Convincing Skills serve as the fundamental building blocks for a sales associate. A comprehensive understanding of the products and the ability to navigate negotiations seamlessly lay the groundwork for achieving both short-term transactions and long-term customer relationships. In addition, as a sales associate continues to work, his/her overall ability to recognize, differentiate, and appraise a variety of emotions accurately to achieve desired outcomes increases. This plays an important role first in recognizing the patterns of emotions exhibited by salespeople that arise from their desire to satisfy conflicting customer demands (Kadic-Maglajlic et al., 2017).

4. Discussion

This study describes the competencies of sales associates in the ready-to-wear industry in Qatar. From its utilization, dominant styles used, and the respondents' age, sex, number of years in service, and highest level of educational attainment.

The data gathered from the survey are from sales associates in the ready-to-wear industry. Respondents are adults with ages ranging from below 21 to above 60 years old, with a majority who are ranging 21 to 25 years old and the least who are 56-60 years old. It was also found that sales associates are usually middle-aged as it takes time to practice adaptive selling (Allen et al., 2014). In this study, the table indicates that most sales associates are younger, with more than half falling between the ages of 21 and 45.

This study gathered with a 50-50 distribution of respondents in terms of sex with an aim of balancing the overall population. With half of the one hundred respondents being male and the other half being female.

In terms of the highest level of education, most of the sales associates attained tertiary education. Sales jobs depend on the use of analytical and intensively quantitative skills; the majority of sales associates require massive training and education to master the challenges or prefer to be reassigned to sales of just goods-centric offerings (Ulaga & Loveland, 2014). This suggests that an individual is required to undergo adequate training and possess a high level of education in order to pursue a career as a sales associate.

In terms of the number of years in service, most of the sales associates have worked for 1-3 years. Sales jobs give an opportunity to express creativity through developing new ideas for products, packaging, branding, and advertising. Sales people become more curious and creative over the years, they learn new techniques and procedures, and improve on the old ones (Rahman et al., 2014). This indicates that as sales associates continue to work each year, they grow more creative and skilled, constantly coming up with fresh ideas for products and refining their techniques.

The general level of utilization of the management competency by the sales associates are demonstrated in this research as well. An interesting finding is that the most used style of management competency is Product knowledge followed by Convincing Skills, Interpersonal Ability, Presentation Skills, Objection Handling, and Listening Ability, respectively. Interestingly, both convincing skill and interpersonal ability are theoretically said to be the best competency as all factors have established a statistically significant relationship with a salesperson's performance (Punwatkar & Varghese, 2014). Product Knowledge, which is the most utilized style, serves as a foundation for recognizing and classifying competitive information. For instance, being well-versed in the benefits, drawbacks, and applications of one's own products provides a groundwork for researching, organizing, and utilizing information related to competitors' new and existing products (Mariadoss, 2014). Objection handling is the reservations a potential customer has about the sales associates' offering or their internal barriers to buying. Listening Ability have been found to be important determinants of customer satisfaction. Listening is an essential element for successful communication and the development of long-term relationships. In professional selling, effective listening skills are one of the most important factors that contribute to a salesperson's success (Itani & Inyang, 2015). This indicates that sales associates employ a

diverse skill set, emphasizing product knowledge, persuasive communication, relationship-building, objection handling, and attentive listening to enhance their overall effectiveness in their roles.

Specifically, the findings show the dominantly used management competencies on each specific demographic profile of the respondents. Based on the age of the respondents, Product Knowledge and Convincing Skills lead with ages ranging from 41 to 45. In terms of sex, both male and female respondents dominantly utilized Product Knowledge. In the level of education, tertiary education and as for the number of years in terms of service, Product Knowledge is the most dominant with the management competency that was used.

Moreover, based on the highest level of educational attainment of the respondents, Respondents who finished with Primary Education dominantly utilized Presentation Skills and Listening Ability, respondents who graduated with Secondary Education dominantly utilized Product Knowledge and Listening Ability. Respondents who graduated with Tertiary Education dominantly utilized Product Knowledge and Convincing Skills, and respondents who have a Bachelor's Degree dominantly utilized Product Knowledge. Respondents with either a Master's Degree or Doctorate Degree dominantly utilized Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Ability.

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that 21-45 years old is the most prevalent age of sales associates, comprising the majority of the total population of the study, which means that the sales associates in Qatar are at their prime and young ages. A 50-50 distribution of respondents by gender was achieved to ensure the representativeness of the samples, half of the one hundred respondents were male and the other half were female capturing a balanced reflection of the overall population. As for the level of education, the majority of sales associates have finished Tertiary Education.

In addition, it is concluded that the most dominant management competency is Product Knowledge. A competency that shows that the sales associates are well-versed with the products they are selling. The description, features and use of the products are explained well to the customers as well the benefits of these on how it meets the needs or demands.

It is previously indicated that based on age, the prominently used competency varies among sales associates. In the 21-25 age range, Product Knowledge stands out, while those aged 26-30 excel in Convincing Skills. Within the 31-35 age range, effective Objection Handling is notable, and sales associates aged 36-40 exhibit proficiency in Product Knowledge. In the 41-45 age range, Product Knowledge and Convincing Skills stand out. Meanwhile, respondents aged 46-50 dominantly utilized Interpersonal Ability. Respondents aged 51-55 showcase strength in Product Knowledge. However, a notable shift occurs among sales associates in the 60 and above age range, where all six competencies are prominent: Product Knowledge, Presentation Skills, Listening Ability, Objection Handling, Convincing Skills, and Interpersonal Ability. Interestingly, the respondents above 60 stand out with lower ratings, indicating a tendency rarely utilizing these competencies. The diversity in competencies across age groups suggests a nuanced approach to sales competencies.

Furthermore, the results of the most utilized competency based on sex indicate that both male and female respondents' sales associates excel Product Knowledge, this is crucial for having a better understanding of what customers' may need and allows the sales associate to present the product in an effective manner.

Moreover, the education of the sales associates requires training and should have a high level of education to pursue this career. In this study, having a tertiary education is already attainable and can

significantly contribute to the success of each individual in the field of sales. It is also within the reach of having professional development which shows a comprehensive understanding within sales.

Additionally, the number of years in service indicates that, when starting, sales associates predominantly prioritize Convincing Skills and Product Knowledge. However, as they progress in their careers, there is a shift towards emphasizing Interpersonal Ability. This implies that the importance placed on certain skills changes as sales associates progress in their career.

Based on the findings of the study, the followings are recommended: Sales associates in the ready-to-wear industry continue to emphasize the use of Product Knowledge, which entails a comprehensive understanding of the merchandise they sell, and interpersonal Ability, which involves effective communication and relationship-building skills. Moreover, the six sales strategies Product Knowledge, Presentation Skills, Listening Ability, Objection Handling, Convincing Skills and Interpersonal Ability can enhance customers' understanding of products, leading to more successful sales outcomes and fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between sales associates and customers. Furthermore, this study is conducted by Senior High School students, and recommends for future researchers who will be investigating the same phenomenon to use other statistical treatment on the data such as percentage, frequency, and weighted mean as this current study is only limited to describing the sales competency of the sales associates on the ready-to-wear industry. Finally, using this study as a foundation for sales training can help sales associates enhance their sales and management competencies, and enable them to assess and adapt their approaches to the work environment.

6. References

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