

MICRO ENTERPRISE RETAILER SALESPEOPLE'S SELF-EVALUATIONS OF SALES PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF TWO COUNTRIES, ONE FROM CENTRAL AMERICA AND ONE FROM WESTERN AFRICA

AUTOEVALUACIONES DEL RENDIMIENTO DE VENTAS DE LOS VENDEDORES MINORISTAS DE MICROEMPRESAS: UN ESTUDIO DE DOS PAÍSES DE AMÉRICA CENTRAL Y ÁFRICA OCCIDENTAL

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Classification: Empirical paper – research
Received: July 1, 2022 / Revised: December 9, 2022 / Accepted: December 15, 2022

Abstract

Salespeople are crucial piece of the puzzle in micro business retailing environments of developing countries. With no formal training and education in salesmanship, they practice the modern version of the customer relationship management to achieve success. However, empirical studies regarding the salesperson's performance in such environments in developing countries are scarce. We contribute to the existing literature by extending the application of the behaviour-based salesperson self-evaluation into micro enterprise environments of under-researched countries in Central America and Western Africa. Using an empirical data collected from two developing nations, we examined the importance ratings of the Bush et al. (1990) behaviour-based scale dimension in micro enterprise retail shops in Ghana and Guatemala. Our results indicate that the dimensionality of the behaviour-based salesperson performance evaluation scale holds in both countries. In addition, the importance of some of the performance evaluation dimensions differed in the countries studied.

Key words: Micro enterprise retailers, salesperson performance, behaviour based, Ghana, Guatemala.

Resumen

Los vendedores son una pieza crucial del rompecabezas en los entornos minoristas de microempresas de los países en desarrollo. Sin capacitación ni educación formal en ventas, practican la versión moderna de la gestión de relaciones con los clientes para lograr el éxito. Sin embargo, los estudios empíricos sobre el desempeño de los vendedores en dichos entornos de los países en desarrollo son escasos. Contribuimos a la literatura existente al extender la aplicación de la autoevaluación del vendedor basada en el comportamiento a entornos de microempresas de países poco investigados de América Central y África Occidental. Utilizando datos empíricos recopilados de dos países en desarrollo, examinamos las calificaciones de importancia de la dimensión de escala basada en el comportamiento de Bush et al. (1990) en tiendas minoristas de microempresas en Ghana y Guatemala. Nuestros resultados indican que la dimensio-

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nalidad de la escala de evaluación del desempeño del vendedor basada en el comportamiento se mantiene en ambos países. Además, la importancia de algunas de las dimensiones de la evaluación del desempeño difería en los países estudiados.

Palabras clave: microempresas minoristas, desempeño del vendedor, basado en el comportamiento, Ghana, Guatemala.

Introduction

Micro enterprise (ME, hereafter) retailer shops throughout the developing nations of Africa and Central America play a crucial role in their nations' economic development, job creation, and service delivery to the public. Reynoso and Cabrera (2019) affirm that "...micro-businesses are created as a way to satisfy their basic daily needs through the development of a dynamic, integrated network of owner, employees and customers who integrate scarce resources building win-win-win relationships based on trust and social ties (p. 113)." Although such businesses represent over 90% of the businesses in developed economies (WTO), their role in the economies of less developed and developing countries is even more pronounced due to the limited number of large enterprises operating in the country. According to Statista (2021), MEs accounted for 96.12% of all businesses in Guatemala and they are considered the backbone of the Ghanaian economy as well, representing more than 90% of all businesses and employing approximately 60% of the workforce and contributing to more than 70% of Ghana's GDP (International Trade Center, 2018). However, empirical research focusing on microbusinesses especially in the developing economies has historically been scant (Devins et al., 2005; Kelliher & Reinl, 2009).

Informal business activities/functions are predominantly practiced by these MEs. For instance, marketing activities mainly rely on the intuition and energy of the owner (Blankson & Stokes, 2002), they use "...less costly and less sophisticated marketing strategies such as word of mouth, personal selling, direct marketing and relationship marketing focused on price-sensitive customers (Reynosa & Cabrera, 2019, p. 114)." Considering the challenges these MEs are facing in their operations related to financing, technology, and HR, the survival and success of these retailers in developing nations mainly depend on their abilities in establishing localised social connections[relationships] and in offering value added services to their customers. These shops need to maintain a consistent and loyal customer base in order to survive because they do not count on a very large customer base (their trading area may be limited only to a few blocks), and their biggest competitors might literally be located adjacent to their shops (Li & Green, 2011). Since the

principal value they provide is intangible[service], they rely heavily on a few salespersons who play a vital role in facilitating transactions, establishing relationships[connections], bargaining, offering layaway credit, logging informal bookkeeping, and encouraging repeat future purchases (Crosby et al., 1990). These salespeople provide crucial information to their customers concerning products by means of making product recommendations and suggestions because customers usually have little, or no knowledge of the products' content or ingredients and they are looking for input from people they can trust. In general, most ME employees do not go through a formal development process and rely on on-the-job training (Darbi et al., 2018) and are expected to multitask, performing several activities as needed and learning by doing, without formal, planned training. With little or no formal[professional] personal sales education and training, these salespeople perform a variety of the professional sales functions effectively by way of establishing close personal relationships with customers. These shops usually play an important role as a "neighbourhood meeting place" and it is very common in these shops that customer relationship management (CRM) is practiced effectively through completely informal means of business practices and sales methods that are individually tailored to each customer with limited or no technology (database) assistance.

Since the main competitive advantage of these MEs is their established customer connections in the niche they serve and the value-added services they offer (e.g., delivery, layaway, bulk breaking, convenience, product recommendations, etc.), their salespeople (which includes the shop owner) may be considered the single most critical asset in competitive markets where a high level of customer contact is necessary. Bush et al. (1990) sustained that although the various antecedent factors such as motivation, skills, experience, and aptitude may play a crucial role in salesperson performance, they concluded that there is a scarcity of empirical information in the literature regarding the tasks performed by salespeople that contribute to their job performance in such retail settings. Furthermore, the literature is even more scant with respect to salespeople working for MEs in developing countries of Africa and Central America.

Hence, the objective of this research is to examine the self-reported job performance of salespeople who work at ME retail shops in Western Africa and Central America. Using a behaviour-based scale developed by Bush et al. (1990), we investigate retail salespeople's self-assessed job performance measures in order to understand the expected sales job activities that are considered important to MEs in Western Africa and Central America. The Bush et al. (1990) model contains five ability pillars: merchandise procedure ability, customer service ability, sales ability, product-merchandise knowledge, and knowledge of store policy. In this study, we attempt to ascertain whether ME salesperson self-assessed job performance dimensions will differ in two under-researched countries in Central America and Western Africa, namely, Guatemala and Ghana. We expect that the results of this study will contribute to the existing literature by providing new empirical insights regarding salesperson performance factors along with providing a validation of the salesperson job assessment scale in the two understudied country environments of Ghanaian and Guatemalan micro enterprise retailers.

Research Questions

Using empirical data collected directly from the two countries —Ghana and Guatemala, we investigate the following research questions with respect to the behaviour-based model dimensions of the retail salesperson performance framework suggested by Bush et al. (1990):

R1: How will the dimensionality of behaviour-based retail salesperson performance hold up in the ME environment of the two developing countries?

R2: How do ME salespeople in Ghana and Guatemala perceive the importance of each dimension of retail salesperson performance dimensions?

R3: Are there any differences between Ghanaian and Guatemalan ME salespersons' perceptions regarding the importance of each dimension?

Retailing Environment in Ghana and Guatemala

The general environment for micro businesses in these two countries may be considered to be challenging because of various limitations and restrictions. The retailing environment in developing countries (LDC) may generally be characterised as small or micro sized, fragmented, with inefficient technology adoption and informal sales procedures (Samiee, 1993). Retail shops are often considered centres for social interactions for the neighbourhood (Sim, 2000). By being social interaction centres these neighbourhood retail shops enable the for-

mation of trusting relationships between customers and the store personnel. It is very common that informal credits or layaways are extended to customers who promise to pay in the future without any formal contracts or legal basis, based on the interpersonal trust between parties (Lenartowicz & Balasubramanian, 2009). In this regard, Ghana and Guatemala have some real similarities and differences. A comparison of both countries can be useful in showing how both public consumer groups respond to the retail sales environments in each country. Some of the similarities and differences are presented on Table 1 and summarised below:

- Both countries are Presidential Republics.
- Both countries are closely ranked from a political stability point of view with Ghana at 47th place and Guatemala at 53rd.
- Both countries have a similar ranking in the cost-of-living indicator with a score of 45th percentile.
- Both countries have a similar rating of personal freedoms (Ghana and Guatemala register 7.64 and 7.14 respectively).
- Both countries have identical human freedom indices, which is at 7.21.
- Finally, both countries have identical scores of financial freedom index, which is 70%.
- These similarities and differences provide a perspective on what makes these two countries good examples for studying retail sales performance in developing nations (World Data, 2021 and Georank, 2021). Some of the differences are summarised below:
- Ghana's population is (31 million) approximately double the population size Guatemala (17 million).
- Ghana is an English-speaking country which presents a major advantage for international trade and business activity.
- Ghana's inflation rate is 3 times higher than Guatemala's.
- Ghana's average income is much lower than that of Guatemala.
- Ghana has less concentration of various religious denominations than Guatemala. For instance, Christianity account 87% of the population in Guatemala while it account only 71% of the population in Ghana.

Literature Review

Salespeople are an integral part of retailing and high performing salespersons are very important for all retailers. However, literature provides evidence that various methods of salesperson performance evaluations may be used. Although some retailers may prefer to evaluate their

Table 1. Comparative selection information on Ghanaian and Guatemalan environments

Characteristics	Ghana	Guatemala
Demographics		
• Population (in millions)	31	16
• Language	English	Spanish
Economy		
• GDP (PPP) in 2020 in billions	US\$ 179	US\$ 150
• Income level per capita (GNI)	Lower middle income	Lower middle income
• Services composition of GDP	45%	62%
• Business climate	Mediocre	Difficult
Trade Statistics		
• Export (Import) rank	66 (79)	74 (67)
• Total Exports (Imports) in billions	\$16 (\$10)	\$12 (\$20)
Risks		
• Business climate rating	B	C
• Country risk rating	B	D
Indices		
• Political stability ranking	47	53
• Cost-of-living indicator score	45	45
• Personal freedoms rating	7.64	7.14
• Financial freedom index	70%	70%
• Global entrepreneurship index	21.6	18.7
• Global competitiveness index	51.2	53.5
Retail environment		
• Retail industry market value (US\$ in billions)	33	29
• Percent of micro & small retailers	85%	89%
Hofstede Index		
• Ind/collectivism	15	6
• Uncertainty avoidance	65	98
• Power distance	80	95
• Masculinity	40	37

salespeople’s performance based on sales, others might use behavioural evaluations or a combination of the two. Bush et al. (1990) argued that behaviour-based performance assessment would be more appropriate for evaluating retail salesperson performance and the method used should be closely aligned with the goals and objectives of an organisation.

Literature provides evidence that salesperson performance evaluation has been extensively studied (Herjanto & Franklin, 2019). In general, these performance measurement approaches may simply be classified into two broad groups —*outcome measures* and *judgmental measures*. Outcome measures are considered more meaningful if the salesperson performance (output) can be accurately measured by some objective criterion, such as sales volume. However, one of the concerns about measuring salesperson performance based on the outcomes is related to the fact that the evaluations do not include crucial salesperson behaviours important to retailer success (i.e., team player, customer focus, ability to establish relationships, etc.). Judgmental measures on the other hand, focus on salesperson behaviour that may not be directly related to making sales but rather measures performance by gather-

ing and weighing various useful information concerning salespersons. These evaluations can be done managerially and/or through salesperson self-evaluations.

We sustain that salesperson self-performance evaluation would be more meaningful for assessing salesperson performance for MEs in less developed[developing] countries because of the unstructured nature and the complexity of the ME sales environment and tasks performed. In such environments, salespeople are better positioned to observe and evaluate all aspects of their own job[tasks] and could provide a more accurate assessment of their own performance. An important caveat to note is reliance on such measures relates to the potential that salespeople can inflate their self-performance. However, the literature does not provide any strong evidence that such an inflation of job performance (Churchill et al., 1985) has complicated performance evaluations.

Behaviour-Based Retail Salesperson Performance Framework

Many scholarly works have been conducted worldwide on the relationship between salesperson behaviour and job performance. Halimin et al. (2019) explored salesperson performance factors. The researchers systematically reviewed existing literature on the characteristics of effective salesmanship. The Meta –analysis approach was used to study the salesperson performance literature of more than 250 papers published from 1986 to 2017. The study revealed that personal, organisational, co-worker, buyer, and situational factors influence salesperson performance. Similarly, Basir et al. (2010) examined the relationship between sales skills and salesperson performance. Their findings showed that interpersonal skills had a positive effect on salesperson performance. Their findings however did not identify any relationship between salesperson marketing skills and salesperson performance. Kamrul et al. (2017), surveyed the mobile phone service providers in Bangladesh on factors influencing salesperson performance. Using a sample of mobile phone operators in Dhaka city, the findings showed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, organisational commitment, and compensation were significantly related with the salesperson performance. The Ul Zia and Akram (2016) investigation mainly focused on small retail shop salespersons’ perceptions of performance factor in Lahore City in Pakistan. The researchers used 500 retailers as sample. The analysis indicated that customer satisfaction is the most important factor for small retailers in order to be sustainable and survive. Nigerian, West African scholars, Eberchuku et al. (2017), conducted a study on the salesperson’s personality traits and their

effect on sales performance in Fast Moving Consumer Goods in Abia State of Nigeria. Their results revealed a strong positive relationship among the three personality trait factors (empathy, assertiveness, and ambition) on sales performance.

In Ghana, Yamoah (2013) examined the factors that affect insurance salespersons' performance with a specific aim at their motivation and resourcefulness as key factors. Using a descriptive study, they concluded that salesperson motivation is the paramount factor that affects the performance of insurance sales personnel. Domfeh et al. (2018), also carried out an assessment of the impact of sales force automation systems on quality service delivery and reporting among MEs in the Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The findings showed that sales force automation application (SFA) significantly and positively predicted the variance in the quality of delivery in the sales operations of MEs. It was also shown that there was a significant, high positive correlation between the use of SFA and sales reporting by the sales force.

Bush et al. (1990) developed a behaviour —based model for retail salesperson performance, which contains five ability critical dimensions: merchandise procedure ability, customer service ability, sales ability, product-merchandise knowledge, and knowledge of store policy. Using this model as the conceptual framework, we empirically evaluate how self-evaluations of ME retail salesperson performance evaluations differ along these five dimensions in two regions of the world, Ghana, and Guatemala. We contend that ME retailer salespeople in developing countries need to exhibit behaviours that include the ability to provide courteous service to customers, the ability to handle customers' problems/complaints, follow proper procedure for merchandise returns and lay-always and suggest add-on or complimentary merchandise to customers. The measures will be investigated to ascertain the effect of salesperson customer service ability on job performance.

Merchandise Procedure Ability

Various studies have been conducted on the specific tasks and activities a retail salesperson performs in their work environment. American Marketing Association (AMA) defines merchandising as a term that includes "...initiatives run by the retailers to make products stand out as well as promotional activities run by the manufacturers in the form of special presentations that take place within retailers' points of sale." In other words, merchandising comprises all commercial actions aimed to stimulate customers' purchases when customers enter the stores. Mer-

chandising procedure involves the use of eye-catching product showcasing, pricing, store layout, signage, promotional events, and other sales-driven abilities to raise the image and profit of a small retail business. Ensuring proper merchandising procedure attracts an increase in customer-retail-shop visitation, and a sales increase.

Mehrabian et al. (1975), contend that environmental features create emotional behaviours at the sales space, and this is difficult to explain from a psychological point of view. Fabricio et al. (2012), opine that implementing merchandising procedure plays an important function in providing an attractive shop environment and product display in a manner that enhances purchasing activity. Respecting the ME, Danso et al. (2018) remark that merchandising procedure involves all activities a retailer carries out in the shop premises, creating an attractive shop space to invite more buyers, and potentially influence their purchasing decision within the competitive business environment.

With Bush et al. (1990), merchandise procedure ability required of a retail salesperson involves the ability to count accurately and carry out proper merchandise inventory, prevent merchandise shrinkage, place merchandise on sales floors quickly after merchandise arrival, and demonstrate a good knowledge of the designs and specifications of the warrantees and guarantees of merchandise groups. It is worth noting from the foregoing that a retail salesperson, equipped with the merchandise procedure ability or knowledge is very relevant to the ME shops. His or her expertise, when properly implemented, goes a long way toward maximising revenue.

Available scholarly literature has investigated retail merchandising factors and their effects on income generation, customer purchasing behaviour and sales. However, little or no study has been undertaken to ascertain whether there is a significant relationship between ME merchandising procedures and the retail salesperson job performance at the retail shop. For instance, Baker et al. (2002) explored environmental factors of existing merchandising practices. This time, they focused on the design factors available in the store atmosphere. They also segmented the environmental factors, influencing human feelings connected with the lighting, sound or noise, smell, and temperature of the shop space.

Fabricio et al. (2012) conducted a study on the effects of merchandising factors on revenue in two types of retail footwear stores. The research was experimental —where merchandising factors were considered, and control— where the designed merchandising features remained untouched. The merchandising factors comprised the atmospheric factors such as social, environmental and design. The design features employed included the lay-

out of the sectors of the stores, the existing communication between the sectors, the arrangement of product lines, display of products, combination of colours, brand placement of promotional labels and prices, using showcase, posters, pictures and displays. The results revealed that merchandising factors increase revenue, due to their influence on buyer's store choice type and his/her behaviour in a sales environment. Danso et al. (2018), also investigated merchandising practices and their impact on consumer buying behaviour in the Kumasi Metropolis. Using a sample of 134 adult buyers in the four communities determined for the study, the results showed that consumers have the perception that grocery store dealers sufficiently employ merchandising procedures, and this accounts for 44.5% variation in customer buying behaviour. This study only neglected the relationship between salesperson performance and merchandising ability. Knowledge of merchandising practices is likely to improve performance, however the studies conducted in Ghana on the connection between salesperson merchandising procedure ability and job performance in ME stores is scarce, hence the need for this investigation to fill the gap (Danso et al., 2018).

Customer Service Ability

A customer is a client or a buyer who receives goods or services from a business entity in an exchange for money or any valuable consideration (Azigwe et al., 2016; Blythe, 2008). Service, on the other hand, is an intangible offering given by an entity to another party in exchange for money. Service can be intangible (salesperson or employee – buyer relations), and tangible (physical facilities). The tangible and intangible services together must lead to customer opinion of quality service and virtually creates consumer behaviour change and satisfaction (Badu, 2016). According to Haris (2000), customer service refers to anything done for the consumer, client or purchaser that brings an enhancement to his/her experience. Darbu (2016) defines customer service as all the activities within a customer's engagement with a firm, starting from initial arrival at the store to purchasing product and beyond.

Sufficient research has been carried out regarding customer service quality, customer care, customer satisfaction, and customer retention. For example, Cudjoe et al. (2015), examined the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in Ghanaian banking firms by using SERQUAL (Parasurman et al. 1988). Using a sample of 120 subjects, their results revealed that five SERQUAL dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibility) were consistent in enhancing qual-

ity service delivery in the Ghanaian banking industry. Wanjiku (2016) assessed the effect of customer service strategies on customer satisfaction in the Telecommunication sector in Kenya. The result showed a significant relationship between customer service strategies and customer satisfaction in business firms.

Aden (2016) investigated the effect of customer care on the organisational performance of telecommunication industries in Mogadishu, Somalia, Africa. The findings indicated that a significant positive relationship exists between organisational performance and service quality, customer relationship management, customer satisfaction and customer service delivery. Based on the foregoing literature review, it is evident that little or no attention has been paid to examining the effect of salesperson customer service ability on his/her job performance. Addo (2016) asserts that the salesperson performs an essential behavioural function in creating a customer and salesperson relationship. The salesperson behaviour therefore connects with customer satisfaction and performance impact. This virtually means that the salesperson's knowledge of customer demands together with implementing customer service-related abilities does not only enhance the buyer-seller relationship, but will also improve sales performance.

Ul Zia and Akram (2016), examined the impact of salesperson behaviour on customer satisfaction in the dairy retail outlets in the city of Lahore, Pakistan. Using a sample of 500 retailers, the results revealed that customer satisfaction was the key for dairy companies to stay alive. In addition, the result indicated that customer orientation triggers strong abilities in sales representatives since they have enough knowledge of customer demands. A salesperson with sufficient knowledge in customer orientation has strong compassion and the ability to bring the emotions of oneself and that of customers under control. A close study of the reviewed literature demonstrates a relationship between salespersons customer service ability and their job performance. With Jones et al. (2005), a salesperson's knowledge, smart response, total communication of information, and goods/service offerings relate to a correspondent increase in the knowledge of customer expectations.

Sales Ability

In business, the overall sustainability of a firm depends on revenue generation which virtually results in the innovation of new products or services and offerings (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In doing this, the relevance of sales strategies and skills is worth noting, since they form the basic means which help the company to generate income

(Azigwe et al., 2016; Malaysian Business 2002). Therefore, it is obvious that the sales ability or skill of the salesperson is equally pivotal for maximising sales and income for the firm (Chen, 2000).

According to Aqmala (2019), sales ability is akin to the overall, systematic, and related behaviours demonstrated by a salesperson in an interaction with a customer in order to influence his/her purchasing decisions at the point of sales. Rentz et al. (2002) posit that selling skills involve the person's acquired abilities used at effecting essential tasks in the sales job. Many authors have contributed to the discussion of sales activities in relation to salesperson behaviours and job performance. Some of these scholars used different terminologies such as Sales orientation strategy, Customer Orientation (SOCO) strategy, Adaptive Selling strategy, and more to describe sales strategies, skills, forms, and abilities required of a salesperson to perform his/her tasks. For example, the scholars of sales and customer orientation strategies contend that in sales orientation the salesperson focuses on selling activities that importantly stress 'getting the sales', but with customer orientation the attention of the salesman is directed toward understanding the customer's personal needs, providing him with an assistance to identify available options, making evaluations and giving the best solutions (Boles et al., 2001).

Jaramillo et al. (2007) support the customer orientation segment of SOCO as effective, considering the salesman's abilities in meeting the interest of the customer. The authors claim that SOCO as a selling strategy is likely to enhance salesman job performance. Najan et al. (2016) assessed the perception of people in Pakistan regarding salesman behaviour at retail shops. The result indicated that customer orientation triggers more stable salesperson abilities since they have an accumulation of in-depth knowledge of customer needs.

Adaptive selling strategy is conceived as the process in which a salesperson gathers information about a sales situation and develops a special presentation to meet the demands of the buyer, using the information gathered (Weitz, 1990). Abed et al. (2009) claim that adaptive selling involves the process of information gathering by a salesman regarding a sales engagement properly tailored and transmitted as a sales message to the buyer. Feedback is then collected by the salesman to ascertain whether the sales information given is effective.

Nguyen (2019) undertook an assessment of major factors that influence salesperson performance in information service industries. Using the structural equation model and measurement model, the results revealed that with customer orientation and adaptive selling behaviour, the customer has a positive effect on the salesper-

son. It was further shown that customer orientation has a strong positive effect on adaptive selling, and the relationship with salesperson. The author suggests that the social relationship between the salesperson and the buyer has a stronger effect on performance than adaptive selling behaviour and customer orientation.

Aqmala (2019) considered evidencing the relevance of the salesperson's customer smart response capability for insurance companies in Indonesia. The result revealed the relevance of customer smart response capability for enhancing salesperson performance. The aforementioned literature reviewed regarding sales skills or abilities suggests that the salesperson is quite paramount in his performance at a sales job. Therefore, there is an available connection between the salesperson's sales ability and job performance. In this study, the researchers consider the salesperson's ability to close sales, to promote sales, to assist others and to demonstrate team spirit.

Product-Merchandise Knowledge

Cable and Turban (2001) explain product knowledge as organised and processed information that provides understanding, experience, more learning, and expertise needed for a peculiar business challenge. With Lin and Lin (2007), product knowledge refers to perceived information of shoppers regarding a certain product, considering previous experience gained in using the product.

Lubris (2015) verifies the view that product knowledge concerns an aggregation of information on a particular product, regarding its category, brand, features, terms, price, and its reliability. The product has the potential to raise the intention to buy again because the information regarding the quality of the product propels a repurchasing action (Elsyal et al., 2020). According to Hudson (2018), product knowledge implies more sales for retailers. There is difficulty in effecting sales to customers when the salesperson is unable to demonstrate and explain in detail the effectiveness of a product in order to meet the demands of a customer. The scholar further emphasises that with in-depth product knowledge, the retailer can apply diverse skills and approaches, introducing the product to customers. In this regard, the salesman shows good communication skills presenting the product to customers through adaptive selling techniques.

Clark (2016), asserts that product knowledge helps the salesperson to close sales, generate revenue, build good relationships, trust, and customer loyalty through good communication skills. With Leigh et al. (2014), a salesperson's knowledge of the product helps to familiarise themselves with the product features, and applying customer orientation skills, they positively compete

with other businesses, meeting their customers' interests. Rapp (2014) asserts that salespersons are recognised as being responsible for revealing product information to help solve customers' problems. Understanding the product's benefits, relevance and values depends on the communicative skills demonstrated by the salesman toward the customers (Schmidt et al., 2010). Sangtani et al. (2017) emphasised that a salesperson's strong product knowledge does not only inspire customer confidence in purchasing a product, but also it limits the cost of information search. High product knowledge is perceived as an important stimulant for performance; however, there is no available investigation in Ghana on the connection between salesperson product knowledge and job performance, and this is the focus of the researchers.

Knowledge of Store Policy

According to Hudson (2018), 'knowledge is power', and according to Hartman (2017), store policy consists of the comprehensive guidelines that spell out the overall practices to be observed by employees in order for a business entity to realise its objectives and goals. Policies are roadmaps or work ethics for a business breakthrough. This comprises many duties and responsibilities that must be carried out aside from sales. Salespeople are receiving, preparing in addition to tagging merchandise, cleaning and facing shelves, counting cash and credit, handling returns and more. Retail store policies are the codified rules, regulations, and procedures for governing hours of operations once the store opens. Therefore, knowledge of the store policy involves the general knowledge required of the salesman regarding the rules, regulations and procedures used as broad guidelines to adhere to by workers. Salespersons should be knowledgeable about competitors together with the overall merchandise. This involves the competitors' policies, strategies, products and features, packaging, performance benchmark, distribution channels in comparison with his/her own retail shop. The retail shop policy knowledge expected of a salesperson in this study concerns the ability of a salesperson to provide and complete accurate paperwork, attend to cash and credit transactions, be punctual and prompt (at work, meetings, and training), obey instructions from immediate supervisors, and overall work attitude.

Methodology

Questionnaire

The study questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section of the questionnaire included the 22-item job performance scale (Bush et al., 1990). This scale

consisted of five dimensions: (1) Merchandise procedure ability (5 items), (2) Customer service ability (4 items), (3) Sales ability (4 items), (4) Product merchandise knowledge (4 items) and (5) Knowledge of store policy (5 items). All scales were measured using a Likert type rating scale ranging from 5 being "Very good" to 1 being "Very poor." The second section of the questionnaire included limited demographic information that is mainly used for description and classification purposes. The questionnaire was developed in English. The English version was administered in Ghana, but it was translated into Spanish for the Guatemalan sample.

Data Collection Ghana

Although there are different criteria used in different countries regarding classifying an enterprise as a micro-enterprise, in this study, we used the International Finance Corporation (IFC) criteria to define a micro and small enterprise (Stone & Carbajo-Martinez, 2019). The IFC uses two important criteria for micro and small enterprise classification: (1) less than ten employees, and (2) annual sales less than \$100,000. The developed survey instrument was used to collect data from salespeople working in ME retail shops located in four business centers in the city of Kumasi (Adum, Old Tafo, Kejetia Market, and Kumasi Central Market) in Ghana. Using convenience sampling and established personal networks, salespeople from various retail shops in those business centres were invited to participate in the study. Once the subjects agreed to participate in the study, the questionnaire was delivered in person and the subjects were reminded that the interviewer would retrieve the completed surveys in two weeks' time. This type of data collection is usually known to yield higher response rates in developing countries. Based on the resources available to the researcher, a total of 355 questionnaires were distributed to salespeople working for a wide range of small retailers in the four selected business districts. After two weeks, 306 (86.2%) completed questionnaires were retrieved. Four questionnaires were discarded due to several incomplete sections, resulting in a dataset of $n = 302$.

Data Collection Guatemala

Using a convenience sample and established networks, salespeople from retail shops in various neighbourhoods were invited to participate in the study people to complete a paper survey instrument. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with several statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Since respondents were told that participation was voluntary a convenience sampling

procedure was used. Respondents were a cross-section of Guatemalans working in small retail shops in various districts of Guatemala City. In all, three hundred and one ($n = 301$) respondents participated in the survey.

Analysis and Results

Descriptive analysis of the sample profile reveals that gender distribution of the participants was approximately the same in both countries and consisted of approximately 50% males and 50% females. However, the Guatemalan sample was younger and mostly single in comparison to the Ghanaian sample. Although most of the subjects considered their current occupation/role as professional or managerial in both countries, the Ghanaian sample had a more diverse listing of occupations. Income levels were comparable in both countries and most of the participants earned less than US\$20,000 per year. The majority of the micro retail establishments in both countries had less than ten employees. Finally, the majority of the participants had some college or a college degree. Results show that the Guatemalan sample had higher educational levels than the Ghanaian sample. The higher educational levels of the sample seem to differ from the general human resource conditions that these micro enterprises are known to deal with. It is possible that the challenging employment conditions faced in these countries contribute to the decision to accept these jobs by the educated labour force. In addition, the informal nature of these micro enterprises may allow highly educated labourers to work there on a part-time basis and some of them could be relatives and friends helping voluntarily. Table 2 summarises the profiles of the respondents who participated in the study.

We successively checked the scale reliabilities for all five constructs identified in the behaviour-based model for retail salesperson performance by Bush et al. (1990). Table 2 reports the scale reliabilities along with item means and statistical differences between the two countries.

The reliability scores reported on Table 3 are either right at or higher than the cutoff levels suggested (0.70) in the literature, they were deemed to be satisfactory considering that the scale items used in our study have been previously used in several studies and have established content validity and reliability.

Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To confirm the underlying factor structure, we conducted exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 4). The exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation

Table 2. Sample Profiles

Characteristics	Ghana		Guatemala	
	$n = 302$	%	$n = 301$	%
Gender				
• Male	160	53	158	52
• Female	142	47	143	48
Marital Status				
• Single	128	42	289	95
• Married	158	53	12	4
• Divorced	16	5	3	1
Age				
• Less than 20	8	3	154	51
• 20-30	160	53	143	48
• 31-40	86	29	3	1
• 41-50	43	14	1	0.3
• 51-60	5	2	-	-
Current title/role				
• Professional or managerial	135	45	234	78
• Technical	79	26	51	17
• Services	32	11	6	2
• Farming	7	2	6	2
• Craft and Repair	13	4	4	1
• Operations	36	12	-	-
Annual revenues				
• Less than \$10,000	167	55	131	43
• \$10,000 to \$20,000	80	27	98	33
• \$20,001 to \$30,000	50	17	22	7
• \$30,001 to \$40,000	4	1	29	10
• \$40,001 to \$50,000	-	-	20	7
• Over \$50,000	1	0.3	-	-
No of employees				
• 0 to 5	149	49	31	10
• 6 to 10	90	30	151	50
• 11 to 20	44	15	93	31
• 21 to 50	15	5	15	5
• 51 to 100	4	1	8	3
Educational level				
• Less than high school	13	4	10	3
• High school graduate	82	27	5	2
• Some college	69	23	163	54
• College graduate	95	32	108	34
• Grad school	43	14	14	5

resulted in five factors (dimensions) of retail salesperson performance with a cumulative explained variance of 58% and the factor loadings were high, indicating that data supported the five-dimensional nature of the behaviour-based model as conceptualised. Next, we used CFA where specific scale items were forced to their relevant dimensions and we examined the goodness-of-fit of the model using various fit indices utilised in previous studies, including the χ^2 statistic, comparative fit index (CFI) goodness-of-fit index (GFI); standardised root mean square residual (RMR); and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The results of the estimation of the five-factor to represent the retail salesperson performance revealed a very good fit ($\chi^2 = 467.144$, $p < 0.00$; GFI = 0.93; CFI = 0.95; RMR = 0.034; RMSEA = 0.04).

Table 3. Scale Items and Reliability

Scales	Ghana		Guatemala	
	Mean	Alpha	Mean	Alpha
Merchandise Procedure Ability		0.69		0.80
• Employee accuracy in counting and inventorying merchandise.	3.90***		3.48	
• Prevents merchandise shrinkage due to mishandling of merchandise.	3.92		3.22	
• Keeps merchandise in a neat and orderly manner on sales floor.	4.05*		3.73	
• Gets merchandise on sales floor (shelves, racks, displays) quickly after merchandise arrival.	3.80		3.79	
• Knows the design and specifications of warranties and guarantees of the merchandise groups.	3.91***		3.59	
Customer Service Ability		0.70		0.87
• Provides courteous service to customers.	4.10		3.99	
• Handles customers' complaints and/or service problems as indicated by store procedure.	3.92		3.94	
• Follows proper procedures concerning merchandise returns and layaways when conducted through credit transactions.	3.76*		3.82	
• Suggests add-on or complimentary merchandise to customers.	3.83		3.97	
Sales Ability		0.76		0.86
• Has strong ability to close the sale.	3.91		3.63	
• Promotes sales of merchandise items having profit margins.	3.87		3.84	
• Acts as a resource to other departments or other salespeople needing assistance.	3.83*		3.73	
• Works well with fellow workers in primary merchandise department.	4.10**		3.81	
• Knowledge of design, style, and construction of merchandise group.	3.86***		3.71	
• Knowledge of special promotions and/or advertised sale items.	3.86***		3.75	
• Knowledge of material (fabric), color coordination, and complimentary accessories related to merchandise group.	3.92***		3.70	
Product Merchandise Knowledge		0.75		0.76
• Provides accurate and complete paperwork related to product or merchandise.	3.93**		3.60	
• Provides accurate and complete paperwork related to work schedules.	4.04**		3.72	
• Provides accurate and complete paperwork for cash and credit transactions.	4.02*		3.88	
Store Policy Knowledge		0.61		0.83
• Shows up on time for work, sales meetings, and training sessions.	4.02		3.96	
• Accurately follows day-to-day instructions of immediate supervisor.	3.89*		3.97	
• Employee's overall job-related attitude.	4.01*		3.99	

***p < 0.000; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Comparison of Important Dimensions

To examine if there were any differences in terms of the perceived importance of each dimension between Ghana and Guatemala, we used t-test on each dimension. Figure 1 displays mean importance differences of each dimension between the two countries.

Results show that three out of five dimensions (merchandise procedure ability, sales ability, and product

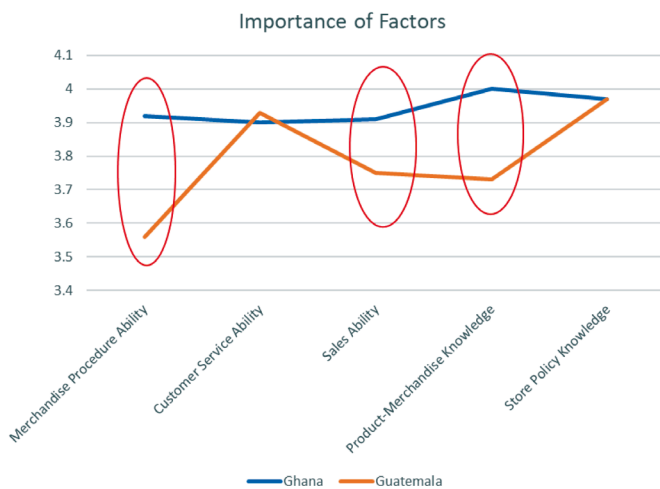
Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis

Performance Statements	Factors				
	MP	CSA	SAK	PMK	SPK
Merchandise Procedure					
• Employee accuracy in counting and inventorying merchandise.	.699				
• Prevents merchandise shrinkage due to mishandling of merchandise.	.722				
• Keeps merchandise in a neat and orderly manner on sales floor.	.656				
• Gets merchandise on sales floor (shelves, racks, displays) quickly after merchandise arrival.	.595				
• Knows the design and specifications of warranties and guarantees of the merchandise groups.	.561				
Customer Service Ability					
• Provides courteous service to customers.	.625				
• Handles customers' complaints and/or service problems as indicated by store procedure.	.722				
• Follows proper procedures concerning merchandise returns and layaways when conducted through credit transactions.	.700				
• Suggests add-on or complimentary merchandise to customers.	.683				
Sales Ability & Knowledge					
• Has strong ability to close the sale.	.611				
• Promotes sales of merchandise items having profit margins.	.658				
• Acts as a resource to other departments or other salespeople needing assistance.	.633				
• Works well with fellow workers in primary merchandise department.	.649				
• Knowledge of design, style, and construction of merchandise group.	.521				
• Knowledge of special promotions and/or advertised sale items.	.529				
• Knowledge of material (fabric), color coordination, and complimentary accessories related to merchandise group.	.495				
Product-Merchandise Knowledge					
• Provides accurate and complete paperwork related to product and merchandise.				.711	
• Provides accurate and complete paperwork related to work schedules.				.726	
• Provides accurate and complete paperwork for cash and credit transactions.				.632	
Store Policy Knowledge					
• Shows up on time for work, sales meetings, and training sessions.				.645	
• Accurately follows day-to-day instructions of immediate supervisor.				.751	
• Employee's overall job-related attitude.				.702	

Cumulative explained variance 58%.

merchandise knowledge) received different importance ratings from Ghanaian and Guatemalan salespeople while no differences were found in the other two dimensions (customer service ability and store policy knowledge).

Figure 1. Importance of Factors by Country



Significant t-test differences between two countries for MPA, SA, and PMK at $p < 0.01$.

Discussion of Findings

Marketing systems among developed countries can provide a template for how retailers in developing countries can structure their retail business operations. In countries like Ghana and Guatemala, retailing is very similar. While there are many structured brick and mortar retailers, there are also many itinerate retailers scattered all over each country. Moreover, each country has large open markets where consumers go every day to purchase both hard goods, soft goods, and durables. These open markets are descendants of antiquity and tradition. The openness, the existence of heavy competition and the haggling that goes on between the customer and vendor or between vendor to vendor is a process that has occurred for centuries. The personal relationships that become part of the salesperson—customer activity is critical to the sales process. The interactions that take place between the salesperson and the customers are known to satisfy both parties' goals and are clearly present in contemporary business environments. Ghana and Guatemala are countries that have preserved their historical traditions.

While much of the developed and industrialised world uses internet for a great deal of retail purchases, developing countries use the traditional retail sales model with salespeople playing a central role in the success of the retail business. Economic development and sustainability are dependent on the success of the retail sector in most developing countries. In some countries small shops sell 80-90 percent of the consumer goods (TechnoServ, 2022). Micro and small retailers are challenged by the modernisation trends which require the traditional retail model to change and become more efficient. Since the retail salesperson is at the centre of a retailer's daily

business, it is critical that the retailer know the effectiveness and productiveness of each salesperson working in the business. This is vitally important to micro and small retailers because they have limited or no flexibility. Evaluating the salesperson's performance is also important so that weaknesses and strengths can be identified. This can lead to a better understanding of what type of person to recruit, what expectations need to be presented to the sales persons and what training is required to make a salesperson more productive (InclusiveBusiness.net, 2017). The results presented in this study focus directly on the salespersons' expectations. The results demonstrate that the scale of determinants used in this study provide significant insight into micro and small business salespersons performance assessments. Clearly, the study has demonstrated that understanding salesperson activities is possible and can be used for assessment purposes on a routine basis.

Retail markets are exceedingly important in both countries because they offer goods and services but also because they provide social and information sharing arenas for all kinds of people. The structured retail operations and the open market operations in both countries are almost identical. One of the authors has travelled to both countries and he can testify that the retail operations in Ghana are extremely similar to those operated in Guatemala. The resulting isomorphic relationship indicates that ideas, even in yesteryear, travelled to all parts of the world and provided templates and operating structures for new world participants. The data presented in this study demonstrates that similar characteristics exist in both retail environments and among retail salespeople. This insight provides international business managers with the ability to develop management systems and strategies that can effectively meet the needs of the customers more efficiently and effectively.

Study results evidence that the dimensionality of the behaviour-based retail salesperson performance instrument holds in both countries. Exploratory factor analysis results show that five factors explain almost 60% of the variation in data. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis results reveal that the five-factor structure results in good model fit. Therefore, our response to the first research question is that the results of this study validate the dimensionality of the scale in unlike retail environments.

The second research question was related to the importance of each dimension for salespeople in both countries. ME retail salespeople in both countries perceived that the five dimensions of retail salesperson performance measures were important in assessing their performance. Although the ME retail salespeople agreed

regarding the importance of all five dimensions in both countries, Ghanaian salespeople assigned the highest ratings to product-merchandise knowledge, while Guatemalan salespeople rated customer service ability as the highest importance dimension.

The third research question is related to the differences between the perceptions of the Ghanaian and Guatemalan salespeople with respect to the importance of each dimension. In general, there were no statistical differences found in two out of five dimensions, while differences existed in the other three dimensions. Based on our in-depth understanding of these countries, we can explain that the Guatemalan and Ghanaian retail salespeople may differ in their perceptions of several dimensions for a variety of reasons. We can affirm that comparatively, from a structural point of view, Ghanaian and Guatemalan retailers are very much the same. Both have brick and mortar type stores while also having the popular open air market arrangements. They both have informal and formal market structures that determine how the merchandise is presented, how the vendor approaches the sales process.

However, the sales approaches used in Guatemala will depend on where the sales function is carried out. In the towns and villages, Guatemalan vendors may prefer to use very aggressive sales tactics. They persevere with their sales methods until they are able to sell the product or service. While Ghanaian's have several of these characteristics, much of the salesmanship is a method based on tradition, culture, and geographic location. Salespeople carry forward the methods that their culture suggests. For example, in Guatemala in the areas where there is a heavy concentration of indigenous people the retail sales methods and operations are based on traditions and customs that have been operating for centuries. The open markets that exist in both countries are artifacts of history. In the 21st century technology and the introduction of training regarding new retail methodologies has accelerated the supply chain functions and provided different approaches to retail operations. The degree of adoption of these different or new methods again depends on the acceptance of the people in their respective geographic location in Ghana and Guatemala (Addae-Boateng et al., 2013). In addition, in all three differences in dimension ratings found between the two countries, Guatemalan salespeople had lower average scores than those of the Ghanaian salespeople. We postulate that this could be influenced by the cultural differences in both countries with respect to selecting scale points that are closer to the centre. We used an English questionnaire in Ghana while the questionnaire was translated into Spanish for the Guatemalan sample. Potential semantic differences in scale points may have confounded the comparability of

the ratings in both countries and future studies need to use statistical procedures to correct the response style effects in the data.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of this study that should be remedied in future studies. Firstly, while the study was able to provide an overview and objective profiles of the types of salespeople that operate in Ghana and Guatemala, future research should focus on the relationship and performance behaviours of salespeople in both structured and unstructured personal sales environments. Second, future studies should also focus on validating the importance of these dimensions from the perspective of store owner/manager to see if there are any discrepancies in importance ratings. Third, along with the behaviour-based performance rating, future studies should include other objective performance factors and or customer feedback regarding salesperson performance. Fourth, replicating the findings of this study in countries with different economic environments or restricted economic freedoms such as Cuba and Venezuela, like the studies conducted by Felzensztein and Gimmon (2021), Felzensztein et al. (2021), and Gimmon and Felzensztein (2021), would be very valuable to assess the applicability of the behaviour-based salesperson evaluation model in dissimilar environments. Finally, completing more interpretive analysis would help practitioners to see which interactions between the ME retail salesperson and the customers had higher levels of impact on sales performance, and then using that knowledge to offer insights to other salespeople on how to adapt or modify their relationship by allowing the salespeople to participate in the decision-making environment.

Conclusion

This empirical study extends the prior literature on behaviour-based salesperson performance evaluations in MEs in two developing markets. Whether is it done formally or informally, salesperson performance evaluation is important for store owners or managers as well as the salespeople themselves. Our findings evidence that the dimensionality of the behaviour-based model held in the ME retail environments of both countries studied. In addition, we have identified the differences between the salespeople importance ratings of those dimensions in both countries. We hope that the insights offered in this article encourage other researchers to conduct additional studies to investigate this subject in different cross-cultural environments and minimise the limitations or our study to provide more generalisable results.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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