



## Comparison of Sales Skills in Women and Men (The Study of Tourism Agencies in Mashhad)

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### ABSTRACT

All things to do and accomplish a specific purpose and finally the activity of a person, a group or organization, its success is dependent on sales and the success depends on the strength of sales activity and performance of vendors. Increasing competition and shrinking untapped markets, the importance of sales performance has increased a lot. The aim of this study was to examine gender differences in sales performance sellers. In this study, according to the realms of time and place of study population, all sales staff in tourist agencies in Mashhad that 230 people were selected as sample. All research using a questionnaire that was proved to be reliable 0/90 on three factors interpersonal, organizational factors and environmental factors were collected. The results indicate significant differences between men and women was in sales skills and sales skills were more men than women.

**Keywords:** Gender, sales skills, interpersonal interactions, environmental factors, organizational factor.

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### INTRODUCTION

a person or people, who have been trained through agency and are considered as its human resources. The sellers and marketers are active communication interfaces between organizations and customers (or target market). Each of them is a full view of agency. In other words, customer can visualize and understand and organization based on his / her feeling and perception about vendor and marketer. According to the terms of the business environment in Iran, using this method (direct Sales and Marketing) is very effective. Iranian culture is also matched with these method (Rousta et al , 1391, 21-28).

Thus in today's competitive markets of tourism sector, various services provided and reduction of untapped markets, important of sale skills has increased. The importance of sales forces' skills goes back to the early 1900s. Since then different studies have been conducted to determine and identify the factors affecting sales skills and attractiveness of sales and sales force is growing. On the other hand, sales skills are considered as an individual factor affecting sales force performance. Sales skills are important, since the people who work in this sector require the skills to interact and communicate effectively with customers and also distinguish the needs and demands of customers. Sellers can create

competitive advantage for companies by improving the long-range communications with customers, which ultimately leads to improved performance (Planck Richard and Newell, 2007, PP 125-138). In sales skills theory, experts assess this component using 3 interpersonal, marketing and technical skills (Ahmad , Basir , Kytchn, 2010, PP 29-36; Rentz, Kahrilas, Stanghellini, Tack, Talley, Trudeau, & Revicki, 2004, PP 43-58).

In interpersonal skills, psychological and communication methods used in social interactions and communications to achieve special effects and results are investigated (Rentz et al. 2004, PP 43-58). Sales force usually work in the sales department, are responsible for outputs organization sale. In order to achieve high levels of sales performance, it is necessary to consider type of relationships with clients and make a plan for long-term relationships with clients. In fact, in today's turbulent environment that organizations increasingly depend on communication with their customers, effectiveness of this communication for organizations success is necessary, which is true regarding service organizations. Marketing skills is a knowledge that allows the seller to cope with the market environment (Rentz et al., 2004, 43-58). The main focus of marketing skills is appropriate allocation and coordination of activities and resources to meet operational objectives of the company in terms of a special market/product (Walker, Body, Larreche, & Mullins 2003, 1124-1132). In addition, according to the fact that these organizational strategies must be coordinated with each other and have a strategic alignment, it

can be said that sales skills are affected by people-based marketing strategy. Here, the important point is that using male or female sellers is done according to gender differences between them in sales department, each of them with different features and capabilities may have a different effect in the sales process. Given that different institutions and especially travel agencies tend to attract and recruit female workforce, comparative study of men and women sales skills is necessary (Di Angeles, translation Ebrahimi, 1383, PP 78).

Although the impact of gender on human interaction has been investigated in social psychology literature but in marketing literature, the effect of gender in the position of buying and selling services and its impact on sales performance is less discussed. In a study which was conducted by Ganji in 1383 entitled the relationship between creativity and gender in sales, it was found that men are more creative in sales (Ganji, 1383, PP 9). In the study of Sinaie in 1387 entitled sales force management performance in verbal sales of insurance industry in Mashhad, it was concluded that there is no difference between male and female managers. Brief and Oliver (1976) examined the impact of gender on retail in 1976, that obtained results showed no significant difference between both genders. Mvnkryf, Babakv, Kravns and Johann Stone in 2000 conducted a study aimed to examine gender differences in, and obtained results indicated gender differences in individuals' sales performance.

Given that tourism industry market is growing rapidly and this service industry is one of the world's largest business fields and current competitive conditions, high sales performance seems to be essential. Moreover, research background indicated that there is conflicting views about the effect of gender on sales performance. This study seeks to initial steps in examination of gender differences on sales performance.

### Theoretical Foundations

Sales is one of the following elements of marketing, and Alone means art, knowledge and ability to accomplish all attempts and efforts that organization senior officials do as marketing. Formation of these efforts results as creation of market share or control or dominate market and supplying goods and services is continuous for client. Program secrets of success are as follow (Kotler and Armstrong translations zaree, 1389, PP 26).

- A. Creating a notable market share at the beginning of work
- B. Maintaining market share in in short term using communications, services, customer satisfaction, widespread distribution.
- C. Increased market share in long term using communication, service, product variety, meeting the demands and clients' interest (Bolurian Tehrani, 1382, Roustae et al, 1391, PP 32).
- D.

#### Sales Procedure

For better results in the sales and marketing process, any of the following steps can be helpful.

Follow these steps in the sales process not only leads to better results, but also leads to maintaining and improving performance levels of vendors and visitors.

- Customer acquisition: this subject is aimed to determine qualifying potential customers through examining the needs, abilities and determining their geographic area and we can contact them by newspapers, magazines, manuals, phone and post. Various methods are used for customer access, for example vendors in cold sale method without notice visit different locations to attract customers and provide required information to customer.

2. Preliminary contacts: Sellers usually have to acquire the necessary information about organization before face contact with the customer, which includes relevant organization needs, people affecting decision making and purchase, and it is possible with with reference to reliable sources inside the organization.

3. Primary contact: At this point, the seller should consider exactly the statements and information in his conversation with customer and try to attract customers' attention.

4. product introduction: at this point, advantages and savings resulting from the use of product must be clarified and product characteristics should be considered. The seller should examine buyer's needs and ideas and introduce the product, try for customer satisfaction and use brochures, CDs or product samples to introduce it.

5. Customers recommendations: investigation of customers' comments and recommendations is another stage in sales process, which in turn can help to improve the ability of vendors and organizations.

6. Sale stage: After completing these steps, it is time to contract a sale agreement according to buyer's sensory and physical symptoms.

7. Follow up stage: it is the last step of sale process and seller is intended to attract customer's satisfaction, which can be done appropriately by providing service planning program after sale (Roustae et al, 1387).

### Gender differences in sales process

According to various changes in position of women and men, make these world not a world for men but a world, where women also need a fortunate position. Researches show that both men and women marketers have entered to the field of sales and marketing because of need for business and individual independence. In many cases, both of them are under the influence of frustration or dissatisfaction with their previous jobs or need to change their environment (Hylgard translations Rafie, 1384, PP 87-95).

Some differences are as follows:

Work experience:

There is some differences in terms of profession between men and women marketers. Although both are experienced in their respective fields, but men often have more authority in many working techniques. In addition, the nature of men Entrepreneurs is in the field of business, finance and technical issues. Unlike women, most of them limited to middle level management jobs in services such as education or retail.

**Personality characteristics:**

There are similar points between entrepreneur’s women and men in the field of personality. Both of them are energetic, purposeful and independent or they want to be. Although men often have more confidence and less flexibility than their female counterparts. Investigation of 76 marketer women in San Francisco shows that marketer women were different from men marketers in terms of behavior and thinking, and most of them tend to take advantage from opportunities and are more compatible in their innovation capabilities (Hylgard, 1384, PP 56).

**Research Hypothesis**

There are significant differences between men and women sales skills.

There are significant differences between men and women interpersonal skills.

There are significant difference between men and women marketing skills.

There is a significant difference between men and women technical skills.

**Research method**

This study is functional in terms of objective , and is causal-comparative in terms of method. In this study , according to time and space realm of research , statistical population included all sales staff in tourist agencies of Mashhad.

According to the time and space realms of research , statistical population includes all sales staff in tourist agencies of Mashhad. According to this large population , using Jersey Morgan table , acceptable sample was estimated 340 people that were selected using Stratified random sampling. In this study , data collection was conducted in two parts, first in the field of theoretical information and research background , which was conducted using library resources , internet , articles and thesis in the field of tourism and sales performance and in second part there was questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two parts: general questions : it is aimed to get general information and respondents’ demographic information and includes items such as gender, age, occupation and education. The second part of marketing questionnaire consists of 24 closed questions by examining three hypotheses. Items related to each question were scored based on five-item Likert scale and finally three components Interpersonal skills, marketing skills and technical skills in the sample were evaluated. Validity was assessed using face validity, to this end; the questionnaire was confirmed by expert professors. To ensure the reliability of research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used. Accordingly , the questionnaire reliability by a factor of 73/0 was appropriate ; since according to experimental rule , at least alpha must be 0.7 to consider the scale , reliable (Davos, 1381: 253). Sub-scales reliability was confirmed.

The information is available to researcher by questionnaire. In order to analyze the research data, spss version 21 was used. Regarding descriptive statistics , for characteristics of population such as age, sex, education and work history , indexes such as central index, standard deviation, data displays, graphs and frequency, etc. were used , and in statistical section Two-way variance analysis methd (Manoa) was used.

**Results**

Descriptive indexes of research components can be observed in table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive indexes of demographic variables based on gender

Technical skills	Marketing skills	Interpersonal skills	Sales skills		Groups
153	153	153	153	Number	<b>Man</b>
3/02	3/22	3/07	3/42	Mean	
1/01	0/041	0/083	0/045	standard deviation	
1	1	1	1	minimum	
4	4/12	3/62	3/74	maximum	
187	187	187	187	Number	
3/52	3/47	3/04	3/62	Mean	
0/049	1/07	0/012	0/074	standard deviation	

1	1	1	1	minimum	<b>Woman</b>
4/08	3/45	3/68	3/78	maximum	

Descriptive indices of sales performance components are indicated in table 1 , obtained results show that average index in women sale performance was higher than men. In addition, regarding interpersonal marketing and technical skills , women obtained better average and in marketing skills obtained better average compared to men with little difference. Before analysis

of multi variable variance (MANOVA), what should be considered is the issues related to compliance and examination of statistical assumptions. The assumptions considered in analysis of variance (MANOVA) include , assumption of normal distribution using test (Kolmogorov - Smirnov) or (K-S). The study was performed on variables.

Table 2. Assumption of normal variables.

Sig	K-S	Number	gender	variables
0/14	1/21	187	<b>Woman</b>	<b>Interpersonal skills</b>
0/23	1/29	153	<b>Man</b>	
0/42	1/41	187	<b>Woman</b>	<b>Marketing skills</b>
0/74	1/36	153	<b>Man</b>	
0/33	1/73	187	<b>Woman</b>	<b>Technical skills</b>
0/22	1/74	153	<b>Man</b>	

As it can be inferred from the results of Table 2, since significant level obtained in test (K-S) is more than 0.05 in most research variables, it can be said that studied variables distribution in statistical sample is normal and research hypotheses can be tested through parametric tests. Another assumption, which is necessary to comply is assumption of variance of homogeneity. To this end , in order to examine homogeneity of variance - covariance matrix of sales components in studied groups , box test was used.

Box test results are summarized in Table 3:

Sig	F	Box sm
0/234	1/741	<b>4/92</b>

Table 3. the results of box test to examine homogeneity of matrix-like assumption

Table 3 shows that significance level is less than 0.5 and indicates that homogeneity condition of variance- covariance matrix is well respected (741/1 = F and p <05/0). In order to examine the assumption of sales performance components

variances equality in studied groups , the Levene test was used. Levene's test results are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of Levene test to examine the variance analysis assumption in sales performance components

sig	df2	D	F	variables
0/124	388	1	1/438	Interpersonal skills
0/278	388	1	1/640	Marketing skills
0/128	388	1	0/225	Technical skills

The above table shows that variances of sales performance components in both groups are equal and there is no significant difference between them, and this finding indicates the reliability of next results. According to the results obtained from box & Levine tests, analysis of the effects between participants were studied , and related results can be seen in table 5 :

Ita square	sig	F	MS	df	SS	dependent variable	References
0/034	0/007	1/82	77/04	1	77/04	<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	grouh
0/034	0/000	2/86	89/34	1	89/34	<b>Marketing skills</b>	
0/039	0/001	2/11	80/16	1	80/16	<b>Technical skills</b>	
0/068	0/000	2/86	194/34	1	194/34	<b>Sales skills</b>	
-	-	-	10/21	388	63/47	<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	Error
-	-	-	14/56	388	102/41	<b>Marketing skills</b>	
-	-	-	13/02	388	93/02	<b>Technical skills</b>	
-	-	-	9/52	388	97/54	<b>Sales skills</b>	

The results of above table indicate that there is a significant difference between men and women sales performance ( $1/82=F$ ,  $p<0/05$ ). In addition men had better sale performance compared to women and group variable 6.8 accounts for sales performance variance. Interpersonal skills also showed a significant difference between men and women ( $F = 86/2$ ,  $P <0/05$ ). The results showed that in the field of interpersonal skills women are better than man and group variable 3.4 accounts for sales performance variance. Regarding marketing differences, the results showed a significant differences between women and men ( $F = 2/86$ ,  $P <0/05$ ). In this component, men gained relative superiority compared to women. Chi It also shows 4.3 percent of sales performance variance. Finally the results showed that there is a significant difference between men and women technical skills ( $F = 2/11$ ,  $P <0/05$ ). In this component men were better than women and group variable 3.4 explains sales performance variance.

### Discussion and conclusion

Sales as one of the following elements of marketing, means arts, knowledge and ability to accomplish all attempts and efforts that senior officials do as marketing. Formation of these efforts results as creation of market share or control or dominate market and supplying goods and services is continuous for client. This study is aimed to investigate the differences in sales skills. Obtained results indicate that men are more successful than women regarding sales performance in travel agencies. Ganji (1383) that examined the relationship between creativity in sales and gender concluded that men are more creative than women in sales and the results of Mvnkryf (2000) were in line with Sinaie that examined men and women sales performance in insurance industry and concluded that there was no significant difference between male and female sales performance, and the results of Bref et al (1976) were not consistent. In explaining the results it can be said that according to cultural and social conditions of Iran and the fact that travel agencies and using tours or choosing a safe travel is included in secure activities, most of the referring to travel agencies are men. In other words, men are the target population in this sector and because of easy communication, men have better performance compared to women. One of the sales skills evaluation indexes is interpersonal skill.

Interpersonal skills include mental psychological and communication methods, which can be used in social interactions and individual balance to achieve special effects and results (Rntrv et al. 2002). In fact, in interpersonal skills, communication and social interaction are considered. The obtained results indicated that in this index man had better performance compared to women. This part of the study was in line with the results of Ganji (1383), Mvnkryf (2000) and antithetic to the results of Sinai (1387) and Mvnkryf (2000). In explaining the results it can be noted that, according to having more skills in the field of communication and having the ability to listen and understand the words of referents, women have appropriate tools to improve and upgrade interpersonal skills. Marketing skills are also another components, which are examined in this study. Obtained results indicated that there is a significant difference between men and women in this sector, but men are more initiative and had better performance compared to women. Marketing skills include the impact of art on buyer to purchase goods or services. In this sector, having high confidence and ability to answer the questions of referents affects marketing skills. In explaining the results, it can be said that according to explicitly and higher confidence, men are more successful than women in the field of marketing skills. Technical skills are also another indicator of sales skills. Technical skills and sales presentation skills are aspects of behavioral performance. In marketing technical skills, individual must be familiar with technical skills needed in sales performance. technical skills can be learned through training periods. The results of this study indicated that there is a significant difference between men and women regarding this field, and men are better than women. In the field of marketing technical skills, appropriate information are required about quality and quantity of necessary services as well as strategies needed to communicate with customer. One of the reasons for men superiority in the field of technical skills is problem solving. Now useful recommendations in the field of employees sales skills are as follows:

1. Managers of tourism agencies must consider a training course for workforces to teach the required technics to them
2. In employment of forces, sales skills must be considered.

3. Some measures must be adopted to consider regular training courses for women.

In the end, it should be noted that this study, along with other studies in the field of humanities has some limitations, including:

1. Given that the study was conducted in travel agencies, it is not logical to extend to other organizations.
2. Users of agencies, who do not cooperate because of work pressure
3. restrictions on access to internal and external resources for innovation in research
4. The distance between travel agencies and traffic problems
5. Restrictions on access to the questionnaires

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