

**A SURVEY OF THE ASPECTS OF PERSONAL SELLING PROCESS
PERCEIVED AS CRITICAL IN THE PURCHASE OF AGROCHEMICAL
PRODUCTS BY THE ROSE FLOWER GROWERS IN KENYA**

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By

WARUINGI, S. M.

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**SUPERVISOR
MARGRET OMBOK**

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

Signed: Sam Waruingi

Sammy M. Waruingi

Date:

30-11-03

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

Signed: Margaret A. Ombok

Margaret A. Ombok

Lecture, Department of business Administration,
Faculty of Commerce, University of Nairobi.

Date: 30-11-2003

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my Parents Benson and Grace Waruingi

Despite lacking opportunity to get formal education, they

encouraged me to

work hard in school. They had vision for the future

anchored on God's blessings.

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate and document those aspects in personal selling process by the rose flower firms. It was based on forty-eight farms out of the total registered population of sixty firms. The key objective of the study was to identify those aspects of personal selling that are perceived to influence purchase of agrochemicals by the rose flower growers firms.

The study used primary data, which was collected by use of a questionnaire delivered by "drop- and- pick-later" method. The data was obtained from all the forty-eight firms forming the population of interest. It was then analyzed using percentages. Finding of this study revealed that there were certain aspects of personal selling process that are perceived as important by the rose flowers firms in their decision to procure agrochemicals. These aspects include, means of contact, the basis of qualifying a prospects, personal appearance and approach, products presentation by use of aids, charts, encouraging prospector to participate, developing an enabling environment for the discussion, assisting the client to understand the product and make decision to buy enhanced by issue of samples for trial purposes and making sure the product arrives on time and as ordered.

In reference to the study findings, a number of recommendations have been made in all the steps of personal selling process. First, the initial contact by telephone should uphold the positive countenance just as if it was a personal encounter. Further research about the client may be done to help the salesperson to draw a precise, simple and convincing presentation. This may give

the salesperson the confidence in the presentation. It will equip the salesperson to welcome concerns raised by the clients and assist the client make the decision to buy. Unforeseen risks by the clients would be addressed by the guarantees and warranties given. Of equal importance is to avail product for trial as sample for demonstration. Proper follow up is vital to address any concern that might arise during the documentation, delivery or actual application of the product. This would help to build the mutual trust and ensure continuity of future business.

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

The Agrochemical Industry in Kenya is changing more rapidly than ever before due to prevailing macro environmental factor such as low economic growth, competition from both external and internal firms, acquisitions and mergers of companies and strict requirement to protect and safeguard safety of the environment. As competition intensifies, the agrochemical organizations have realized that the strength of their brand names, corporate images, effective advertising, price, trademark, among others, are no longer sufficient to differentiate them from their competitors (Bakes 1993). Christopher et al (1997) observed that organization's survival would depend on moving closer to their customer and fully understand their needs and wants. In the same understanding, Dayle (1994) argued that for a business to succeed it should focus on satisfying customers' need more efficiently and effectively than competitors.

In the last 10 years, Kenyan economic growth rate has been on a steady decline. The GDP has decreased from 7.3% in mid- seventies to 1.3% in 2000 (Economic review, 2001). Some sectors that generated employment (such as coffee, cotton, sugar cane and cereals) have virtually collapsed (Economic Review, 2001). When demand is less than the supply, the firms tend to develop more effective and competitive strategies to win the customer and this may be realized by considering the marketing mix variables (Kibera, 1997).

The Multinational firms have developed products that are similar in package and content. For instance, the Pharmaceutical firms, Naikuni, (2001) observed that competing generic pharmaceutical products sold rely on the choice prescribed by the doctor. In Agrochemical industry, the multinationals have invested in developing products, which are pest specific and definite mode of action. This gives them an edge over the local competitors. Besides, they engage in the provisions of better and efficient

services that accompany the sale of the product. They prefer to deal directly with the users rather than going through the middlemen (HCDA, 2001).

In consumer products, Fatamatta, (1996) observed that little price difference would influence the purchase of petroleum product. However, pricing is a variable that could be matched by competitors (Aaker, 1992). Progressive price reduction might erode the operating margin of firms resulting to closure and winding up of the firm in the industry (Kotler, 1992). In Agrochemical industries, the suppliers tend to sell their products as a package. It is referred to as bundling. This cushions major price fluctuations and ensures some profits are generated in such deals (Lawhon, 1992).

Distribution of goods and service could be useful competitive tool (Odhiambo, 1990). Marketers use it to select and manage the trade channel through which products will reach the right market at the right time (Stanton, 1994). For agrochemical products, the channels of distribution are broad although they are regulated and licensed by Pesticides Chemicals Products Board. Large growers are served directly by the suppliers while small growers are directed to procure their goods from established retailers (Flowers council journal, 2000).

Promotion is used to draw attention to the firm's presence in the market. Personal selling, a promotional mix elements, is employed by major pharmaceutical firms to reach the customers (Naikuni, 2001). Promotions help to create wide-spread awareness and to enhance the image of the institution (Bii, 1992). Stanton (1991) saw promotion as the need to inform and persuade the market regarding a company's product. The promotion elements used in creating awareness include; Advertising, Sales Promotion, Publicity and Personal selling. Most agrochemical suppliers engage combination of promotional mix variables.

Personal selling is the most commonly used form of promotion of services for technical goods (Hakseves et al 2000) and this extend to the agrochemical industry where it is extensively used in the high value crops like Rose flowers. Sales visits by Sales

Representatives, Marketing Managers, Technical Managers and CEOs are a common feature. Sales success in agrochemicals largely depends on maintaining strong relationships with the end users to ensure repeat business. Problems have to be identified, solved quickly and effectively. Familiarity with customers and their organizations is of utmost importance. Futrell, (1992) recommended that sales of specialized products needed to be handled by a competent salesperson. That ensured high self-confidence, which is ideal to present the features and benefits of the products and prepare to handle potential customers' objections. Most suppliers have employed graduates with specialization bias in Horticultures or crop sciences (Horticultural review 1999). The salesperson is expected to identify, recruit, execute presentation and conclude with a sale. He is not only expected to make the sale but also maintain the customer satisfied for future repeat purchase (Futrell, 1992).

1.1 ROSE FLOWER GROWING FARMS

Structural and macroeconomic reforms, in addition to the introduction of a more liberal trading environment under WTO (World Trade Organization) arrangements provided a major boost to Kenya's horticultural sector. The sector ranks as one of the economy's fastest growing industries, the third largest exchange earner. That has been reflected on yearly expansion in fruit, vegetable and flower export, a trend which was forecasted to continue with total export predicted to rise by 31% from the level of 99000 tones to 130000 tones by year 2003. Top on the list include, cut-flowers, French beans, runner beans, snow peas, Asian vegetables, pineapples and mangoes. Kenya registered growth of cut-flowers export despite competition of Colombia, Ecuador, Israel, Zimbabwe, and the other East African Community countries.

In year 2000, floriculture growth was 3.6% to a record of 38000 tones. Rose flowers volume sales rose from 24.6 million kilograms to 28.4 million kilograms in 2001 (FPEAK, 2001). Out of Kshs 14 billion sales of Horticultural produce, 55% (Kshs 7.7 billion) was contributed by cut flowers, of which, rose flowers accounted for 80% (Ksh 6.2 billion).

Beans accounted for (Ksh 2billion, fruits Ksh 1.5 billion and others Kshs 2.8 billion (HCDA, 2000). Rose flower growing is labor intensive, employing 30,000 people directly (Flower journal 2000). However, it is a very expensive investment requiring Ksh 20 million to establish one hectare of roses (flower journal, 2000). Plant protection chemicals account for 40% of Rose flower cost of production. That demands for proper decision making on what type of product to purchase, when to purchase, safety of the product on the rose flower, effect on the environment and workers and continuity of supply (Horticultural review, 1999).

Rose growing calls for high involvement buying decision-making. To succeed, the sales person has to facilitate the buying process, which would result in faster decision-making and eventually get sales. This study would assist most suppliers to identify the key area of personal selling skills that need to be perfected through formal training and practice. Their scarce resources will be devoted to address the identified gap.

According to Reid (1981), sales people need to have a questionnaire detailing the personal selling process elements and should assess themselves after each sales visit to evaluate how well salesperson took the prospect through the buying process and collective measures that needed to be instituted to perfect the art. Lawhon (1995) observed that a successful salesman not only makes quick sales but also develops a closed business relationship that competitors find difficult to penetrate. Understanding the influence of the personal selling on the purchase decision would save large amount of money spent on training salesmen and developing convenient presentation sales aids that would hasten the buying decision. Most multinationals allocate 15% of the product cost on personal selling (Stevens. R.1994).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

According to Futrel (1992) personal selling is more vital than other promotional mix variables especially when dealing with high involving goods or products. This is because, it is the only one used to respond to counter argument and close the sales. Futrell (1992) argued that sales person had to go through several stages in selling

process so as to achieve greater sales. Naikuni, (2001) examined the role of promotion mix used by the multinationals in Pharmaceutical Industry and found out that the personal selling variable was dominant in influencing the Doctors to prescribe certain drugs. However, it would have been interesting to investigate further which aspects of personal selling process were fundamental. Bii, (1992) investigated the use of promotional mix elements among the Commercial banks in marketing their services in the face of the increasing competition and concluded that the branch managers overwhelmingly utilized personal selling. However, it also failed to isolate the aspects of personal selling that are vital to influence the sale. Both failed to determine the aspects of personal selling that are perceived to influence buying decision.

Dixon (1999) argued that personal selling cost accounts significantly in relation to other promotional mix variables; hence most firms concentrate on improving performance of sales representatives by targeting specific behaviors. Dixon (1999) documented that in financial services industries like life insurance, expenses associated with personal selling account for \$1.39 for every \$ 1.00 issued in new life premium. Stevens (1994) researched on those vast numbers of findings that relate sales performance to a variety of antecedents. The selling behaviors studied were orientation to customers, competitors, and profitability. Although many researchers have studied selling behaviors and the effect on performance (Weitz 1981; Churchill, Ford and Walker 1985), the research by Steven (1994), was the first to be documented to consider the account size in the research with the performance. The analysis provided support for many of the posited relationships.

McMurrian (1998) tried to explain the factors that are related to effective sales performance basing it on the Bandura's social cognitive theory. A central concept in social cognitive theory was that a person's level of self efficiency, self confidence they possess, the necessary ability to successfully perform a specific task, will have a direct influence on a person's expectancy, and thus a person's level of effort. Bandura also suggests that modeling the behaviors of sales representative is key in the development of a person's self-efficiency. He found that, a person's level of efficiency did have a

significant impact on expectancy and effort. Also, the self-efficacy was found to have an effect on the practice of adaptive selling skills by the responding salespeople. Green (1985) argued that similarity between customers and salesperson during the personal selling process produces "better" results than dissimilarity. That was in presentation styles and formats.

It was noted that, personal selling was investigated from the supplier point of view. No attempt had been made to narrow down the crucial elements in personal selling from the customers point of view that would be vital to influence organization decision on purchase of a certain product or service. This research project would try to determine the aspects of personal selling that are perceived to influence purchase from the customers' viewpoint. That was because the end-user as opposed to the sellers are the determinants of business success (Kotler, 2000).

Rose flower growing is an expensive investment and calls for high involving buying decision of agrochemical (Flower journal, 2001). To succeed in a competitive environment the sales person has to facilitate the buying process of agrochemical, which would result in faster decision-making and eventually get direct sales. This study would assist most suppliers to identify the key area of personal selling skills that need to be perfected through formal training and practice. Most agrochemicals firms allocate 20% of the product cost to product selling (Reid, 1981). The allocated funds could be devoted to address the identified gap.

Despite the investment in personal selling, no study has been done to determine how elements in personal selling process influence the decision to buy or not to buy the agrochemical by the rose flower growers. Besides, it would be important to determine the stages in the personal selling process, which are perceived critical in influencing the buying of agrochemical. This would enable agrochemical firms to focus more resources on those particular aspects in order to influence sale.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to determine the aspects in the personal selling process that are perceived as critical in the purchase decision of agrochemical products by rose flowers firms.

1.4 IMPORTANCE OF STUDY.

1. The multinationals could find this study vital to invest those elements of personal selling that would assist them to brand their product and establish a very close relationship that would create a barrier to competitors. This might result in cost saving.
2. Other scholars and research could pursue further this study in the same area of personal selling and documenting other approaches that would be vital in other marketing fields.
3. Marketing practitioners - will enhance their understanding of personal selling and may apply its results to improve their influence on the buying decision process. The result would be development of better promotional strategies, so as to be able to maintain or gain greater market share and also improved profitability.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Personal selling

Personal selling is the interpersonal arm of promotional mix. It involves two ways, personal communication between salespeople and individual customers-whether face to face, by telephone, through videoconferences, or other means (Kotler et al 1999). In more complex selling situations, Kotler et al (1999) argues that personal selling could be more effective because salespeople can probe customers to learn about their problems, adjust the marketing offer to fit the special needs of each customer and can negotiate terms of sales and build long term personal relationships with key decision makers.

Futrell (1992) argues that effective greetings compose of positive countenance, courtesy and politeness. They predetermine success or failure. To some extent, everyone reacts to another person on contact. This reaction will be positive or negative. What they can control is the cause of the reaction. Salespeople with a positive countenance when they come into contact with prospective customer will have an encouraging aspect of them; hence their positive countenance causes prospective customer to feel encouraged and confident Futrell (1992). All positive emotions are stirred up in the prospective customer. This forms a rapport for the sales person as well as the customer. Courtesy is a skill that can be perfected into a productive habit. Futrell (1992) suggested that the prospective customer sees salespersons without courtesy as unskilled, untrained, unskillful, offensive, crude, and unproductive. The lack of common courtesy in selling could cost you everything. Politeness is a productive skill. You have care for the opinion of others. Lawhon, (1995) states that, salespersons that greet prospective customer with courtesy, politeness and positive countenance make sales easily every time they approach a prospective customer.

2.11 Prospecting

There are many sources of listing potential prospects. They include, letters, telephone directory, referral lead, competitors, social contacts, magazines that include journals. The prospects should be qualified based on listed objectives (Reid, 1981)

Lawhon (1995) argued that sales people who call on prospective customer find it easier to make a sale than those that wait for the customer to call on them. This is necessitated by the fact that, before the sales person makes a call, he/she would have made effort to know the customer and mostly identify his need. Lawhon (1995) recommends that a successful salesman needs to make prior appointment and gather as much information about the customer as possible. Some of the information should have been gathered from the other departments. He should be aware of competitor's activity, supply issues, pricing and availability. seeking for an appointment, Lawhon (1995) explains that, the salesperson must identify himself, the product he intends to sell and the organization he works for. He should create a need and target to fulfill it with the product. He must relate the product features to the benefits and how they will fulfill the needs. Lawhon (1995) insists that even on the phone, the positive countenance must be upheld. He recommends that an appointment could be done through a letter, still highlighting their need. A convenient date to all parties could be suggested. Alternatively, a salesperson could use a satisfied customer as a link to contact the prospective customer.

2.12 Qualifying

Kotler et al (1999) argues that a salesman must know how to qualify the leads. This involves identifying the good ones and screen out the poor ones. Prospects can be qualified by looking at their financial ability, volume of business, special needs, location, possibility of growth, relevancy to the suppliers objectives and goals

2.13 Pre approach

It involves finding out all about the prospect prior to interview. The salesman should know the decision makers by name, title and group presentation, facts about the industry, the organization structure, correct name spellings, hobbies, whether private or public and the products they offer for sale (Reid, 1981). In the organization, the salesman should know the overall company operations, company purchase practices and personnel factors. In the company purchase practices, the salesman should be familiar with purchase system followed, whether they buy single or in multiples, lead time needed in purchasing decision, seasonal factors involved in buying decision and credit factors. On personnel factors, he should be aware whether done by individual or committee. Who is the head of purchase department, job, title, authority of purchasing officer and people that influence the decision. Appointment could be either by card, telephone or letter. Whichever means is used, it should be personalized, forceful, interesting, concise and proper tone. Cold calls should be avoided (Reid, 1981).

2.14 Approach

This is the encounter with the prospect-ready for the opening words of the presentation. Reid (1981) recommends the salesman to be tidy, on time as per the appointment. Unless extended an offer, he should not greet by hand nor smoke in the office. He should be composed, confident, alert, cheerful, look directly to the buyer and try to cultivate a friendly atmosphere. It is equally important to create a positive rapport with the gatekeepers. He should create a likeable impression on the customer mind. This will elicit a warm receptive mood and the customer might open up faster and be ready to be introduced to the new products. This is holding the prospects attention and interest so that they will willingly give you information.

2.15 Presentation

Lawhon, (1995) argues that, it is the fear that restricts the potential customer to make a decision to buy. They have silent need of being assured that the decision they are about to make is beneficial to them. This demands a confident salesperson to re

enforce confidence to the customer and hastens the buying decision and feels satisfied. Re-enforcement should be continued even after buying process to reduce customer buying dissonance (Kotler, 1992). This is achieved by continuity of communication through telephone calls, cards, products brochures or visits. The contact made must be in customer's interest.

Futrell, (1992) argued that successful presentation involves handling of emotions of prospective customers and identifying the influencers and decision makers of the product being sold. In addition, it helps to make the prospective customer to be in a more receptive mood and the visit is taken seriously. It creates an enabling environment to discuss business. Futrell (1992) explains that a successful salesperson should be convincing, impressive and thoroughly understand the features and benefits of his products and how they will meet the needs of the customer. Futrell(1992) suggests that, a salesperson must establish a customer profile to be in a position to make an attainable objective. He needs to understand who makes the decision to buy, his/her background, desired business terms, competitors in the industry, purchasing practices, promotions effects on the business, history of the customer as far as his trading. This helps to build a customer benefit plan. Futrell (1992) concludes that the aim of sales presentation is to obtain quickly the prospects full attention, develop interest in the product, create a desire to fulfill need, establish the prospects conviction that the product fulfill the need and finally promote action for the product purchase. Futrell (1992) recommends salesperson to be relaxed, concentrate on the discussion. He should maintain eye contact with the prospect, smiling and enthusiastic. He should be well organized, ambitious and sociable.

Futrell, (1992) argues that the salesperson should have persuasive factors that will cultivate trust, believability and excitement during presentation. Some of the factors include, logical reasoning, persuasive suggestions, sense of fun, personalized relationship, trust, body language, control presentation diplomacy which include retreat and remaining sober. He concludes by saying that a successful presentation must have

visualization, dramatization and demonstration. Presentation should be based on the following methods, namely, memorized, formula, need satisfaction and problem solving. Futrell (1992) recommends that a trial closing should be done after presentation to enable the prospective customer give his/her opinion. Lawhon, (1995) argues that the objective of presentation is to demonstrate the benefits of the features of the product sold and how it would meet the needs of the prospective customer. This is achieved by perfecting the productive skills. Lawhon (1995) recommends that the sales person should promise less before the order and deliver more after the order so that the customer feels more than satisfied. The presentation and demonstration should continue in a given sequence until the customer experiences ownership of the benefits and causes him to consent to buy. Presentation and demonstration is primarily used to capture and it includes as many sensory organs as possible.

Making a decision to purchase is an emotional experience that involves all the senses. Prospects objections (Futrell, 1992) indicate the need for more information about the product. Objections in sales show the prospects interest and assist in determining the stage the prospect has reached in the buying cycle. He points out that objection could be at any stage of the selling cycle and presentations should try to cover as much as possible the anticipated objections while still maintaining a positive, amicable environment. Futrell (1992) suggests that overcoming objections could be handled by giving guarantees, testimonials of independent third party findings, demonstration, giving out samples. Futrell, (1992) explains closing a sale as the process of presentation that make the prospective to buy and normally comes at the end of a convincing presentation. The salesperson should ask for the order and avoid interruptions. Such an approach exposes the potential customer to make a decision due to the pressure exerted on him .For a high involving or technical product, Futrell, (1992) recommends use of summary benefits which highlight key unique features, their benefits and how they meet the customer need. This is a ripe stage to close the sale by asking for an order. According to Lawhon (1995) high involving goods are those goods that have high

initial cost outlay, are durable, demand thorough search, often need more than one person to make a decision and once committed the reversal could be very expensive

2.16 Handling customer objections

Lawhon (1995) concludes that, the sales objections arise from the failure of salesperson knowing thoroughly the prospective customers needs or deficits in knowing their product features and benefits. He concludes by saying that there are two types of objections. That is, Valid and invalid. Invalid objection relates to the customer requesting for more information before he commits to buy. It is advisable to restate what the prospective customer said was the need. This makes the customer to be conscious of their needs. Valid objections cannot be fulfilled by presentation. Lawhon stresses that; the customer has no need for what is being sold. Lawhon (1995) advises that to avoid objection by the customer, especially in situations of invalid objections, the salesperson must be conversant with most of the product features, welcome objections, be positive, not evade, ignore or resent the objections. Common objections are based on price, lack of interest, company or source of supply, product stalling or procrastination. The objection could be real or hidden or an excuse to put you off. The best way to handle it is to anticipate, organize, and handle them. A carefully planned, prepared, presented in a logical, clear, understandable, convincing manner results in very few objections (Reid, 1981). Reid (1981) enlists the following objection principles as guidelines. Welcome the objection. Listen carefully. Rephrase and repeat the objections. Agree at least in part. Uncover hidden objections. Ask what and why questions. Make tact part of overall strategy. Some of the techniques for handling objection include; Yes-but, Boomerang (capitalization), offset, Direct denial (contradiction) and pass-over (pass-by).

2.17 Closing a sale

Closing a sale starts from the sales person mind and manner. To close is to end or terminate something one has set out to do. In sales, it means getting the prospect verbal or signed agreement to buy the product or service offered (Reid, 1981). All the

planning and hard work and careful presentation had a purpose to secure the prospects agreement. It involves logic, reason, emotions and impulse. The role of the salesman is to help prospect make their mind, convince them to take action now to acquire it (Reid, 1981). Confident attitude have positive effect but negative attitude, wavering, hesitation or lack of force in the verbal expression have negative effect. Positive attitude together with knowledge of the proper strategy, tactics, and techniques of closing helps overcome fear of asking for the order (Lawhon, 1995). Buying signals include, spoken word (price, request for details), Facial expression, physical actions (asking for agreement forms, examining presentation details). Trial closing could be done after major presentation, after handling objections or any time she/he indicates interest by word, facial expression or physical actions. Salesmen should avoid atmosphere of pressure or tension, handling the order form. He should preferably sit to the left of the prospect (Reid, 1981). Some of the techniques used for closing include, Asking for the order directly, Assumptive, Minor point, Continued affirmative, Narrowing the choice, Narrative (report-technique), Follow the leader, Summary, Questions (why-not), Surprise (new angle/hat trick), Emotional (appeal to pride), Boomerang (trap), Inducement, Standing room only.

2.18 Follow up

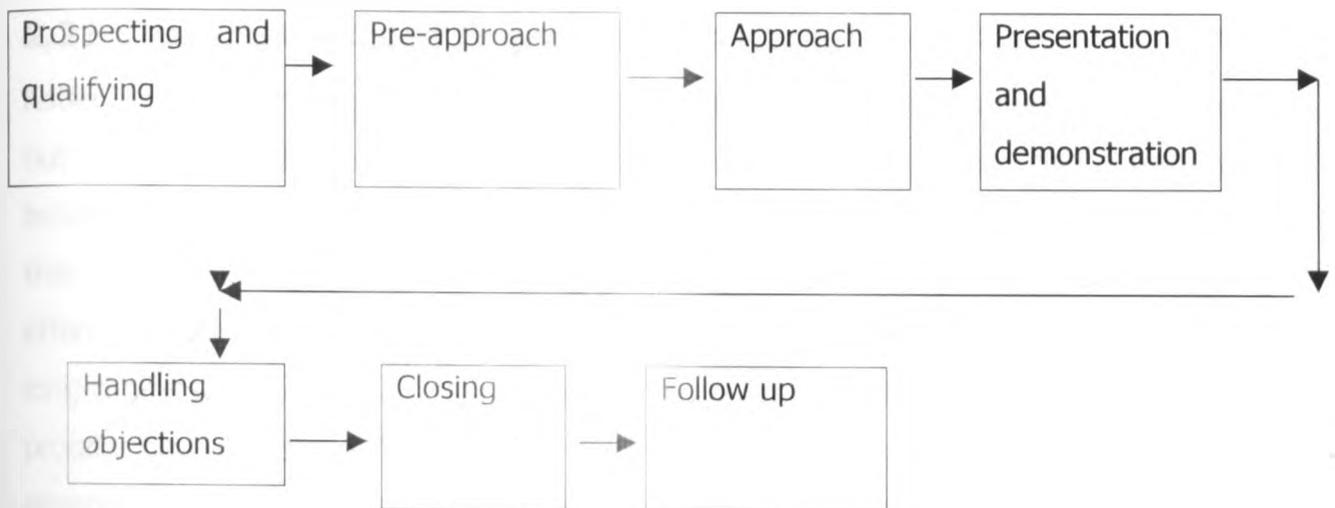
Follow up or follow-through is pursuing an initial effort through supplementary action. Proper follow up is important after making the sale since it is your obligation to ensure prompt delivery, installation or operation is satisfactory and ensure the customer is completely satisfied in every possible way. Reid (1981) recommends the following;

- Give a warm and sincere thank you appreciation after the sale, through post card, letter, or phone call.
- Check delivery-Use phone call. This shows caring attitude and issues raised are attended promptly.
- Check installation-Personal visit after delivery ensures the customer you care and dependable.

- Checking operation and training of operators forestalls potential complains. Impresses the trainee and gives favorable feedback.
- Order adjustment- can generate additional order.
- Ask for referrals. When the customer is satisfied, he is positive in giving referral leads.

This sets the stage for long-term relationship, which offers proof of firm reliability and lead to future business.

PERSONAL SELLING PROCESS



Major steps in effective selling (Adapted from: Kotler(1995) *Marketing Management, Analysis, Planning, implementation and control; Prentice Hall Int. 6th ed.*)

2.20 The Buying Decision Process

Marketing superior product is not an assurance of landing a sale. Human factors affect the choice of a product for purchase. Though the CEO might give consent to purchase a product, his decision will be influenced by its users, finance and other members of the organization (Kotler, 1999). Kotler (1999) recommends that, in buying decisions for organizations, the following questions needs to be considered by the seller of the product; who constitute the buying group? Who dominates? What priorities do individuals have? What are their needs? How do they make their buying decision? And what factors influence these decisions. In buying process, organization buyers

determine which product and service their organization need to purchase, find, evaluate and choose among alternatives suppliers and brands (Kotler.1999).

According to Lawhon (1995) high involving goods are goods that have the following characteristics. They have high initial outlay, they are durable, demands thorough search, often needs more than one person to make a decision and once committed the reversal could be very expensive.

2.21 Characteristics of Organizations Markets

Kotler, (1999) identifies the following as the features; business markets contain fewer but larger buyers, business customers are more geographically concentrate and business buyer demand is derived from final consumer demand. Futler (1996) stated that buying decision process in an organization involves more professional purchasing effort; it is complex, formal and both the buyer and seller work closely to build a close long-run relationship. Often, trained purchasing agents who spend time learning how to procure products cost-efficiently .The more complex the purchase, the more likely that several people will be involved in the buying decision making process. They could be technical experts and top managers of the organization. Kotler (1999) recommend the marketers to be well trained to deal with well-trained buyers. He observed that in the business buying process, buyers and sellers are often more dependent on each other. The marketers work closely with their customers during all stages of the buying process from helping the customer define the problem, finding solutions and supporting after sale operations. Lawhon (1995) stated that a successful marketer would employ the 4-Ps to induce the buyer to produce certain purchase responses that include, product service, supplier choice, order quantities, delivery, service and payment terms.

Lawhon (1995) states that in an organization, the buying activity consists of two main parts; buying center that includes all people involved in the buying decision and buying decision process. Both are influenced by the internal organization factors, interpersonal

and individual factors as well as external environmental factors. He identified the following buying situations; straight re-buy (routine). Modified rebuy (require some search) and new tasks (require thorough search). Kotler (1999) stated that, a marketer should have different strategies for different situations. For straight re-buy, the marker ensures the buyer has adequate stock of his product. However, modified re-buy, the marketer might be forced to give better incentive to retain the business. In new task, the organization employs larger number of decision makers if the cost or risk involved is substantial. More information will be collected. This is the greatest challenge and opportunity for the marketers. The marketer tries to reach as many key buying influencers as possible besides helping providing the information.

Kotler, (1999) observed that many organizations prefer to buy complete package from suppliers. That is the organization should be assured of technical backup, product supply when needed at an agreed terms, prices and assurance of performance and warranty. The above is referred as the system selling and is a key marketing strategy for winning and holding accounts.

2.22 Buying Process Participants

Kotler (1999) identified the following members of the organization as having direct or indirect roles in the buying decision process in the buying center; users, influencers, buyers, decider people and gate keepers. Their main roles include;

Users- these are members of the organization who will use the product or service. They initiate the buying proposal and define product specifications. *Influencers*- they are people in the organization who will affect the buying decision. They provide information for evaluating alternatives. *Buyer*- this is the person who makes actual purchases. He also arranges terms for purchase. *Decider*- this is the person in the organization or buying center that has formal/informal power to select or approve the final suppliers. *Gate keepers*-People in the organization buying center who control the flow of the

information to others. They prevent marketers and salesmen from seeing deciders or users. Reid, (1991) described the organization buyers as people that would respond both to economic as well as personal factors. They react to both reason and emotions. When supplier's goods are similar, personal factors play a greater role in the decision-making.

2.23 Organization buying process

Reid, (1991) and Kotler (1999) identify various stages that an organization will go through especially in new task buying. The stages include, problem recognition, general need description, product specification, supplier search, proposal solicitation, supplier selection, order routine specification and performance review.

Problem recognition

Problem recognition could be internal or external. Internal recognition arises need to develop a new product, to satisfy an emerging need. Being exposed to the 4-Ps could arouse the external need. During visits, the marketer identifies the problem and recommends a solution from the products offered in the market place by the supplier

General need description

The buyer prepares a general need description that describes the characteristics and quantity of the needed item. For high involving products, the buyer works with users, technical staff and consultant to define the item. Ranking of the products in terms of reliability, effectiveness, safety and price may result. During this stage, the marketer could help the buyer define their needs and provide information about the value of different product characteristics.

Product specifications

This is a value analysis. The buying team decides on the best product characteristics and specifies them accordingly.

Suppliers search

The buyer conducts a supplier search to find the best vendor. The buyer compiles the list of qualified suppliers by reviewing trade directories, computer search and phoning other companies for recommendation. Marketers should be aware of buyer undertaking search.

Proposal solicitation

The buyer invites qualified suppliers to submit proposals. Marketers must be skilled in researching, writing and presenting proposals. The presentation should inspire confidence and make the company stand out from competitions.

Supplier selection

The buyer draw a list of the desired supplier attributes and their importance, fore instance, quality, service, on time delivery, ethical cooperate behavior, honest communication, competitive pricing, product backup, technical aid and advise, geographical location, performance history and reputation.

Order routine specification

The buyer prepares order-routine specification which includes final order with the chosen suppliers list items such as technical specifications, quality needed, expected time of delivery, return policies and warranty.

Performance review

The buyer reviews supplier's performance. He may contact users and ask them to rate their satisfaction. The performance review may lead the buyer to continue, modify or drop the arrangement with the supplier. In high-tech purchasing, which gives buyers access to new suppliers and lowers purchasing cost and hastens order processing and delivery, Kotler, (1999) observed that the marketers connect online to share marketing

information, sell products/service and provide customer support service and maintain an ongoing customer relationship.

2.24 Major influences on buying behavior

Kotler, (1999) identified the following key factors in influencing the buying behavior.

- Environmental factors (which include Economic, Technological, political/regulatory, competition and Cultural)
- Organizational factors (Objectives, Policies, Procedures, organization structure, System)
- Interpersonal factors. (Authority, Status, Empathy, Persuasiveness)
- Individual factors (Age, education, Job position, Personality, Risk attitude)

The marketers must know the organizational factors, people involved in the decision making process, their evaluation criteria and company policies and limits on its buyers.

Reid (1991) observed that marketer must understand the organizational factors so that he can draw a presentation that matches the organization expectation. The presentation should be seen to meet the objectives of the firm while at the same time is within the policies of the firm. Reid (1991) identified the importance of the organization structures in determining the key people to be invited in presentation and for future contact to enhance the buying process. Interpersonal factors are often subtle and marketers must try to understand these factors and design strategies that take them into consideration. Individuals have their own personal motives, perceptions, preferences and different buying styles (Reid 1981). Reid (1995) argues that individual factors could determine the success of a sale.

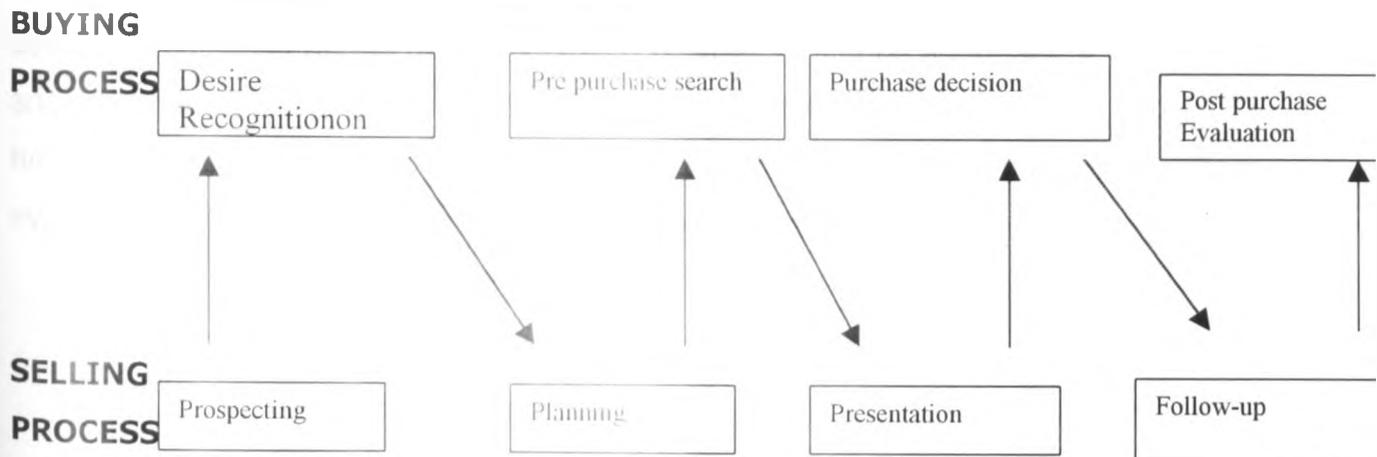
Thorough knowledge of individual factors is vital especially in the approach stage. Kotler (1995) observes that the salesperson will prepare well when he knows the age of the prospective as well as his preferences. It could also dictate the examples and jokes the salesperson might introduce. Reid (1991) observes that people of the same age establish a common positive countenance faster than different ages. Reid (1991) observes that successful marketers build their presentations around the environmental factors. They highlight the unique benefits of their products and how they will satisfy

the customer's need. The economic factors guide the salesperson to the pricing of the product and the type of sales terms that can be offered when closing the sale, relative to the competitors. Technological factors help the marketer to differentiate his product from competitors by branding. During presentations, the product will be identified by its brand name and this would be supplemented by visual aids of the branded product. Giving of samples at this stage is important. Intention would be to address product objections (Reid, 1991). Kotler (1995) argues that, organization culture influences their purchase. Salesmen utilize culture influence by giving point of references to customers that have used the product successfully. This could be in form of testimonials and it is used primarily to address objections or in closing the sale.

2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL SELLING PROCESS ON THE PURCHASE

Reid, (1981) stated that, personal selling is part of the buying process. The salesperson must move the buyer through the stages of the buying process, which include problem recognition, General need description, product specification, supplier search, proposal solicitation, supplier selection, order routine specification and performance review by tactfully employing the personal selling process. The salesperson develops greater insight into the psychological factors that influence the buyer behavior. The sales job is to determine, through questioning, listening and observing, what the prospect real motivations and needs are and build sales presentations around them.

Relating the buying process to the selling process



Adapted from, Reid (1981) modern applied selling, 3rd edition

During prospecting, the salesperson must identify the need that will be satisfied by his product. To understand his prospects and how his product will fulfill the potential need, the salesperson should have enough information to enable him understand prospect (Reid, 1981). In the planning stage, Reid (1981) argues that, sales person should develop details on himself, his product and the organization that supplies the product. The key features of the product should be translated into benefits that will address the needs of the prospect. This should match the ideal product that the prospect is searching for to satisfy his needs. It will also give credibility of the supplier. The salesman should be polite, interesting, well dressed and be prepared to create an enabling friendly environment that would induce the prospect to open up and be ready to listen to the presentation.

The salesman should know the decision makers, influencers and users and invite them to his presentation. The presentation should be creating interest and attention, since the benefits of the products will be targeted to meet the prospects need. This will address the pre purchase search and hasten the purchase decision. One of the avenues that the prospect could find product information is presentation. This is achieved by the presentation being precise, logical and convincing to hold interest and evoke strong feeling of want that could be satisfied by purchase (Lawhon, 1995). Reid. (1981) Recommends that, sales close should be tried as soon as convincing and acceptable signs have been noticed from the prospect. Convenient closing techniques should be used. Any objection during the presentation or after should be addressed if it is invalid and genuine. Concluding, Reid (1981) advised that follow-up to purchase should be timely and preferably during delivery or after delivery. This address the post purchase evaluation and establishes a long-term business relationship.

CHAPTER THREE:

3. METHODOLOGY

3.0 Nature of the study

This was a survey design aimed at determining the aspects of personal selling process that were perceived as critical in purchase of agrochemical products by rose growing in Kenya

3.1) Population

The population of interest in this study included all the rose flower growers in Kenya. There are 28 farms with more than 4 hectares and 32 farms with less than 4 hectares of land making a total of 60 rose flower farms. The farms are located in Thika, Naivasha, Nakuru , Eldoret, Limuru, and Nyeri (HCDA 2001). All the 60 farms were to be studied. In each of the farms, one respondent was surveyed. The respondent was a person vested with the responsibility for decision making as to which pesticides to be used.

3.2) Data collection:

Primary data was collected using questionnaire. Questions contained both open ended and closed ended. "Drop and pick later" method was used to collect the data from respondent. Research Assistants, who had been trained, were be used to deliver the questionnaires to the respondents. The questionnaire had been divided into sections. Section A aimed at getting general information about the farm. Section B was used to determine aspects of personal selling process that were perceived important in the purchase of agrochemical by the rose growers in Kenya.

Data Analysis

Section A

A percentage was used to determine the rate of responses from the two categories of farms and also the status proportion of different respondents.

Section B

Data in this study was analyzed using descriptive statistics. They included tables, proportion and mean scores. Mean scores were calculated from the responses which were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale had 1 taken as the perceived Lowest or least critical aspects and a 5 as the perceived most critical or important aspects of personal selling elements.

The mean score were calculated as follows;

$$\mu = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n X}{n}$$

Where ,

μ = Mean score

X = Score per question

n = Total number of companies

$$\sum_{i=1}^n X = \text{Absolute score}$$

4 CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, data has been analyzed using proportions, means and presented in table form. The study was to determine those aspects of personal selling process that are perceived to influence the purchase of agrochemicals by the rose flower firms in Kenya. The data was collected from 48 rose flower firms out of 56 active firms. Four firms have ceased growing the rose flowers from late 2002 and early 2003. Efforts to collect questionnaires from the other eight firms were fruitless. This chapter therefore, represents analysis and finding of the study using proportions and tables.

4.2 Overview of the flower firms

a) Size of the land.

The table reveals the size of land allocated to growing rose flowers and their proportion;

Table 1

Acreage	Percentage
Less than 4 ha	30%
More than 4 ha	70%

According to HCDA (2000), rose flower farms less than 4 hectares are grouped as small-scale farms and those more than 4 hectares are grouped as large. The size of the farm may determine the capital investments and purchase decision-making.

b) Location of the farm

Most rose farms are spread in many location and regions in the country. Analysis based on district was used. The table below summarizes the number of farms in terms of percentage found in each district growing roses.

Table 2

District	Percentage
Laikipia	3
Nakuru	32
Kajiado	5
Thika	20
Uasin Gishu	7
Trans Nzoia	3
Kiambu	30

Geographical locations of the rose flower farms may influence the salesperson on qualifying such potential prospectors.

c) The table 3 indicates the proportion of farms in each group. Each group represents the number of years farms have been growing rose flowers.

Table 3

Years	Percentage
Less than 2 years	8%
More than 2 years but less than 6 years	36%
More than 6 years	56%

According to HCDA (2000), the classification of rose growing based on the number of years it has been in operation could indicate the level of efficiency in operation and decision-making.

d) Departments in the farm included in the buying decision.

The study tried to determine the personnel that are involved in the buying decision by virtue of their responsibility and knowledge of the problem. The table below indicates the percentage of farms that involve particular personnel in their purchase of agrochemicals.

Table 4

Personnel	Percentage
Production Manager	87
Agronomist	31
Purchasing Manager	89
Technical Manager	97
Farm Manager	23
Spraying Manager	82
General Manager	30
Managing Director	40

Managing director and Technical Manager execute decision –making on the purchase of agrochemicals in those farms with less than 4 hectares. . That may be the case because the managing director may happens to be the owner of the farm. The table below indicates the percentage of decision –makers in each group of farm sizes.

Table 5

Farm size	Percentage	
Less than 4 hectares	Managing director	96%
	Technical Manager	100%
More than 4 hectares	Production Manager	93%
	Purchasing Manager	100%
	Technical Manager	100%
	General Manager	90%

4.3 Aspects perceived critical or important by the buyer.

In this section, a number of elements were used to determine those aspects of personal selling process that were perceived to influence the purchase of agrochemicals in rose flower growing firms. Each stage of the personal selling was analyzed separately.

4.3.1 Prospecting stage aspects

In this section, the clients were asked to rank in order of importance the various ways they would like to be contacted by the salesperson

(5-Highest rank and 1- lowest rank) . The table indicates the various means used to contact prospectors.

Table 6: Means of contacting client (Rated on Likert scale)

Contact method	Absolute score	Mean Score
Sending of letters	173	3.6
By telephone	221	4.6
Referral Lead	106	2.2
Social contact	163	3.4
Competitors	48	1.0
Magazines	48	1.0
Others	72	2.0

Use of telephone was ranked the highest with a mean of 4.6. This is due to the fact that most of the growers have telephone facilities. It is also flexible to reschedule the appointment at short notice. Use of mail services is rated less important due to delays in delivery .The rose flower growers acts as a club and that is why use of social contact is rated as less important. The growers tend to acknowledge what other members of the "club" are doing. This could explain why Marketers of agrochemicals use social gatherings of these farmers to establish a business rapport.

4.3.2 Qualifying stage aspects

The firms were requested to rank measures that they would like to be used for future business with suppliers of agrochemicals (5-Highest rank and 1- lowest rank). The table indicates those measures that could be used to qualify a prospector.

Table 7: Measure for qualifying a customer

Measures	Absolute score	Mean Score
Financial ability	72	1.5
Volume of business	72	1.5
Geographical location	132	2.7
Number of employees	178	3.7

From table 7, both financial ability and Volume of business ranked first with a mean score of 1.5 each. This conforms with sound business ethics that credit facilities are made available to those firms that have sound financial base (Shultz, 1999). Though, volume of business is equally rated, more information is needed. There are examples of firms that had high volume of business but went under liquidation. However, it is a good measure to consider when qualifying.

4.3.3 Pre approach stage aspects

The clients were asked to indicate how important knowledge of some clients' information by the salesperson would influence purchase of agrochemicals (5 - most important, 1- least important). The table below reveals the analysis of sales aspects that could influence the purchase of agrochemicals.

Table 8: Customer's buying aspects.

Sales aspects	Absolute score	mean score
Purchase practices	192	4
Lead time needed	202	4.2
Purchase decision making	178	3.7
Credit factors	226	4.7
Knowing purchasing team	120	2.5

Credit factors were considered very important. It had absolute score of 226 and mean score of 4.7. Most rose flower farms are looking for suppliers with favorable credit terms. Though the payment is effected immediately after flower auction (flower council, 2000), the growers tend to hold the money in their banks for 60 to 90 days to generate some interest, before withdrawing to pay for the services provided. This is the main reason they would prefer to deal with a supplier who would provide some long-term credit of two months or more. Lead-time was ranked as important due to the tight schedule the flower farms have in controlling the pests. Delay in supply could mean looking for alternative, which might take time. Purchase practices are viewed as important since it hastens the purchase process. The supplier would be aware of the purchaser's requirement. Every flower firm has its own procurement policies that they expect suppliers to be familiar with. It would enable suppliers to evaluate their capability to supply the agrochemicals on agreed terms and conditions of purchase. Knowing the purchasing team is least important because it could be misused at the disadvantage of the flower firms.

4.3.4 Approach stage aspects

The clients were asked to rank their expectation from the salesperson (5- Very important and 1- Least important). The table below reveals those expectations the prospector might have on a salesperson.

Table 9: Aspects of preparedness

Expectations	Absolute score	Mean score
Arrival on time	235	4.9
Non-smoking	184	3.83
Greetings	193	4.03
Being composed	189	3.93
Cheerful	135	4.5
Respectful	146	4.5
Understanding product	235	4.9
Knowing customer name/title	168	3.5
Having samples and presentation aides	138	4.6

Both arrival on time and having understanding of the product are perceived to be very important with a mean score of almost 5. The reason behind this high scoring is that, there is no time wasted on waiting. It is common for the buyer to refuse to see the salesperson when he arrives late. Equally, good knowledge of the product convinces the buyer the salesperson understands the product and can assist when the need arises. Samples and presentation aids helps to attract the buyer's attention to the product and prepare the buyer for presentation. Reid (1996) emphasized that samples should be well packed and attractive. Personal traits like, being cheerful and respectful are perceived as very important. They are critical ingredients to establish a positive countenance. They influence the buyer to open up and be receptive to the meeting and new ideas. Greetings were perceived as important with a mean score of 4.03. Failure to greet a potential buyer might be portrayed as a sign of rudeness and might affect the purpose of the visit.

Being composed had a mean score of almost 4.0 meaning that it is perceived important. Composed salesman signifies confidence and knowledge of subject to be discussed. The salesperson could think rationally and present convincing presentation. However, personal attributes like smoking, knowing the title and the name of the buyer were not perceived as important. May be, they could be expressed as silent needs of the buyer but could not be expressed openly.

4.3.5 Presentation stage aspects

The clients were asked to rank in order of importance, those attributes displayed by the salesperson during presentation that would influence actual purchase of agrochemicals(5- Very important and 1- Least important). The table reveals those attributes exhibited by the salesperson that would enhance their decision to purchase agrochemicals.

Table 10: Presentation factors

Presentation factors	Absolute score	Mean score
Brief and convincing message	216	4.5
Aided by charts and brochures	205	4.27
Expresses confidence to himself & products	216	4.5
Allows buyers to contribute	195	4.07
Manages emotions	189	3.93
Cultivates enabling environment	208	4.33
Focuses on the subject without digression	192	4.0
Has sense of fun and controlled body language	181	3.77
Uses demonstration, visualization and samples	237	4.93
Presentation that is flowing and in sequence	184	3.83
Salesman who asks for an order directly	120	2.5

Values from table 10 indicate that demonstration, visualization and giving out sample materials was perceived as very important with a ranking of almost 5.0. This could be a learning period, which may address the fear the potential buyer would be undergoing of the unknown outcome and the opportunity cost for sacrificing the standard for the new product. A presentation that is brief, convincing by a confident salesman may be perceived as very important. The potential customer might be influenced by the confidence the salesman has for the product. The message should be brief to attract attention and hold the interest until the buying decision is made. Presentation aided by the charts and brochures, allowing the prospectors to contribute by cultivating an enabling environment for discussion were perceived as important with a mean of around 4.0. Whenever the salesperson is confident of himself and the product he is selling, he would welcome and handle challenges from the participants. This may hasten the process of owning the product by the prospectus, which is the aim of the salesman. Other aspects of presentation were not ranked important. Asking for the order had the least ranking value of 2.5 which means, more emphasis need to be put

on the other important aspects and purchasing will be assured. Asking for the order directly is rated lowly and should be the last action the salesman should take until they are completely sure the customer is fully convinced and ready to evoke the decision to buy.

4.3.6 Handling objections stage aspects

The clients were asked to rank those factors that encourage them to participate in a presentation and minimize their fear in purchasing and trying the new product. The table below reveals those factors that address potential fear that might inhibit the will to purchase.

Table 11: Means of handling objections

Factors	Absolute score	Mean score
Guarantee for product purchased	216	4.5
Testimonials from third parties	168	3.5
Willingness to address objections	211	4.4
Visual demonstration and its usage	232	4.83
Giving samples for trial purposes	206	4.8

From table 11, it is clear both the visual demonstration and availing samples for trial purposes were perceived to be very important. The growers would like to be sure they understood the handling and application of the product. Of equal importance, they would like to try the product on limited area to be convinced the product performs as expected without harm to the rose flower, users and the environment. This is the reason of giving out the samples for trial purposes. Giving warranties or guarantees (mean score of 4.5), ensures the growers have a backup safety redress in case the product fails to perform. This is perceived as important insurance against any loss or damage. Willingness to address objections is perceived important with a mean score of 4.4. Objections raised by the grower indicate the internal need to know more about the product and also the fear of uncertainty. It is the responsibility of the salesman to

address the objections to the satisfaction of the buyer. This is achieved by converting the objections to convictions. The respondents did not perceive testimonials from third parties and rephrasing of the objections important due to the general perception the rose flower growers have on confidentiality. Individual firms may feel they have the best farming practices and would not like to be seen as imitating other growers. They prefer the market prices offered for their flowers determine their efficiency.

4.3.7 Closing Sale stage aspects

The clients were asked to indicate how important the attributes of a salesperson assist them to make a decision to purchase a product. (5- Very important and 1- least important)

The table below analyses those attributes that assist the client to made a decision to buy

Table 12: Attributes of closing sale

Attributes	Absolute score	mean score
Assisting client make up his mind	209	4.33
Makes client place an order	178	3.7
Confident during his presentation	217	4.53
Forceful in verbal expression	115	2.4
Positive attitude during presentation	232	4.83
Quick in asking for an order	134	2.8

Positive attitude during presentation is perceived as very important., with a mean score of 4.83. It cultivates an enabling environment that would be critical in making decision to purchase. It is closely followed by presentation with confidence. This is in line with literature, Reid (1996) who classifies the two as convincing factors of sale. The buyers' fears are replaced with conviction and own the idea with ultimate goal of placing an order. Assisting the client make up his/her mind is perceived as important with a mean score of 4.33. The salesman clarifies and elaborates features of the product, which are

translated to benefits that are supposed to address the buyer's need. Both forceful expression and quick asking for the order are perceived least important. The buyer might take it as an intimidation and deliberately meant to conceal some undesirable features of the product or salesperson.

4.3.8 Follow up stage aspects

The respondents were asked to rank the actions that a salespersons ought to fulfill after making a sale(1- Highest rank, 6- Lowest rank). The table below indicates the ranking of activities that clients regard important after buying and delivery of the product.

Table 13: After sale actions

Follow up aspects	No of respondents	Rank
Sending an appreciation card	13	5
Telephone call to thank client	18	3
Ensuring delivery as agreed	34	1
Visit to ascertain proper application	26	2
Training users	14	4
Reference point to other users	4	6

Ensuring delivery as agreed was ranked highest with 1.0 by 34 respondent. Most rose flower farms have programmed field activities. Delay in delivery of the product as agreed could affect other operations like harvesting. Alternatively, the buyer would be compelled to look for alternative at a cost. Farm visits especially by the technical person is ranked second. The technical person would advise on any technical issue regarding the product usage. Sending appreciation card and training of the users ranks third. Most buyers' might not read the card. Some buyers claim they have trained people who could follow instruction and hence don't need the visit of technical people from suppliers. Rose flower farming is a competitive enterprise and everyone tries to outperform the other (Kenya flower council, 2000). This might be the reason they ranked reference point as lowest.

4.4.0 Steps of personal selling process

The table below is analysis of personal selling process steps by use of means to rank the importance of each steps of personal selling as perceived by the buyers of agrochemicals. (5- highest score and 1- Lowest score)

Table 14: Personal selling process steps

Personal selling process steps	mean score
Prospecting	2.8
Qualifying	2.4
Pre approach	3.8
Approach	4.4
Presentation	4.0
Handling Objections	4.3
Closing Sale	3.8
Follow up	4.4

Apart from Prospecting and qualifying, all other steps were perceived by the buyers as important with an average mean of around 4.0. Prospecting is rated low since the buyers may assume they could be contacted whenever there is a need. Equally, qualifying might be viewed as a sellers' problem. The buyers could get supply of the product so long as they could prove their capability to pay.

However, every stage is vital for the success of the other steps.. It is a chain that works best when all the links are firm, reliable and supportive of each other (Reid,1991).

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Discussions

The main objective of the study was to determine the aspects in the personal selling process that are perceived as critical in the purchase decision.

On prospecting, the studies revealed that use of telephone to make appointments for visit was regarded as very important. This finding is similar to what Smith (2000) observed in personal selling for the forest products industry. The decision makers could make changes at short notice at the convenience of the other person. However, rose flower did not perceive other elements like referral lead as important, though Smith (2000) found referral being important. The difference could be due to the level of trust of the groups under study. Smith (2002) study is located in developed nation and this study is for a developing nation. In Kenya, contacting the client by phone has been successful due to availability of mobile phones which allows the salesperson to contact the prospective any time, anywhere without passing through the handles of secretaries or other gate keepers. Smith (2000) found that use of specific magazines related to forest products industry or social contact were very important. However, this was in contrast with the findings of the study. They were perceived as unimportant.

Prospectors doubt the accuracy of those publications and honest of some social contacts.

On qualifying, the study showed that most clients would like to be considered for credit facility based on both financial ability and volume of business. This concurred with Smith (2000) study that also found that clients dealing with forest products rank the two highly. The rose flower firms know that the suppliers must be assured of payment for goods and services provided as a priority of financial credit commitment. Though

salesperson considers the location and number of employees as an indicator of potential prospector, they are not considered as a preference for credit (Lichtenhal et al.1990).

On pre-approach, knowing the purchase practices of the firm, lead time needed and availability of credit facilities were perceived as important. The rose flower farming is very intensive farming requiring timely deliveries of farming inputs and flexibility of payment of bills. Any knowledge of procurements reduces the lead-time needed to deliver the product and gives the firm ample time to organize their payments for goods supplied. However, Smith (2000) documents knowledge of procurement and lead-time as critical. The main reason was that the study was carried in developed country where everything is programmed to fit in a system. Credit facility was not considered as important to influence the decision to buy forest products.

Approach; The survey showed the following aspects perceived as very important by the clients. They include; being tidy and clean when meeting the prospects, arriving on time as per the appointment, having thorough knowledge of the product, and availing sample for demonstration purposes. Tidiness was perceived important since it creates an impression of what the salesperson is. Positive countenance hastens acceptance by the clients and opens up faster discussion. This was the same observation made by Smith (2000) that documented that a salesperson that is clean, has warm eye contact, a warm smile, helps the prospect relax. He compares a salesperson that knows the products well like a consultant who understands the clients need and strives to fulfill the need with the product. He concluded that such salesperson had a better chance to make a sale and were successful salespeople in the forest products industry.

On presentation, one of the aspects that was perceived very important was actual demonstration and availing of samples. Convincing, easy to understand demonstration, helps the clients to understand the product better and reduces the risks of the unknown. The client's state of mind starts owning the product. Owen (1990) in his research on the value added on the sales of computers in USA found that salesperson

who had better demonstration and convincing presentation had higher chances of making a sale, because the client owns the idea faster. In rose flower farming, damage arising from use of phytotoxic product could run in million of dollars, hence the necessity to try the product in a very small area to see the effect by themselves before they place an order. Smith (2000) in his study observed that the sales person who used sales literature, free samples and customer testimonials and maintained a two sided communication had a higher success rate to win a customer than those without in wood products industry. In this study, a salesperson that cultivates an enabling environment for discussion was perceived as important. Many clients ask questions to clear the doubt they have and prepare them to manage any risk that might arise.

Trial closing during presentation demonstrated by asking for an order was not perceived important in this studies but Smith (2002) found it important. This could be explained by the differences of the two cultures

On handling the customers' objections, this study identified the following aspects as viewed very important; giving guarantees for products purchased, willingness by the salesperson to address the objections, demonstration of usage of the products. This gives the client an allowance to try a new product and promised an avenue for redress in case of unforeseen loss. For an established industry like the wood industry in USA, Smith (2000) identifies, rephrasing the questions and avoiding arguing with the prospect as vital in winning the customer.

Having positive attitude during presentation was perceived as very important during the closure of a sale. It forms the foundation of a sale .The client opens up for discussion and prepared psychologically to receive positively the new product. Owen (1990) observed that, Salespersons that had positive attitude presentation made higher sales to new customers in electronic industry. Assisting the client to make a decision and being confident during presentation were perceived to be important. It is the confidences of the salesperson on knowledge of products that will reduce the resistance the client has and move his desire to own the product and be ready to place an order (Reid 1996). Smith (2000) documented that asking for an order after presentation is

taken positively by client. However, this study showed that rose flower farmers will not commit to procurement just because the salesperson has asked for an order. The main reason being the nature of industry they are in.

All clients agreed that the suppliers of agrochemical make some follow up after supply of the inputs. They ranked as a priority the need for the salesperson to ensure the product has been delivered on time. This is in line with most rose firms to have the agrochemicals delivered on time to avoid panic and unnecessary costs. In this study, technical follow-ups were ranked second. In timber industry, Smith (2000) also ranked delivery as agreed as very important and technical visits as second. This is important because any failure to deliver as agreed results in misunderstanding and might ruin any future business. Use of clients as reference point was ranked poorly, with the reason that each firm would like to perform better in the market. This is not the case in the wood industry who were willing to be used as reference point (Smith 2000)

From the study data, all stages were viewed as important apart from the prospecting, qualifying and closing a sale. These are steps that do not appear to have direct benefit to the clients hence the low rating.

5.2 Conclusion

The analysis revealed that not all the elements of personal selling are viewed as important by the rose flower firms. On prospecting, contacting the client by telephone was perceived as very important. This means, the firms have to train their salespeople on verbal communication that will hold and create interest to the client. Contact by other means like letters, cold calls are deplored.

Though salespeople qualify their prospects on basis of finance, volume of business, number of employees and geographical locations, the study indicates only the first two are ranked as important. This is in line with today's business trend where the clients would like to purchase only what they can afford to pay. This is a good direction to

avoid over supply with no guaranteed payment. In pre approach, the survey indicated that the clients rank credit provision highly. Which means, a supplier willing to be flexible with payment terms stand a better chance to make a sale. Of equal importance is knowledge of lead-time to supply to avoid surprises.

It should be noted that personal appearance which includes cleanliness is of equal importance to punctuality and thorough knowledge of the product. The salesperson should strive to act as the true link between client and his employer. A positive impression would invite and encourage the client to participate in the discussion. The salesperson should know and understand all the features and benefits of the products he is selling.

Presentation is a crucial stage of personal selling process. The salesperson should be fluent and simple in the presentation, which should be aided by visual aides like, charts, sales product leaflets and samples. Creating an enabling conducive environment for discussion and demonstration is paramount. During presentations, the salesperson should address all concerns raised by the clients to exhaustion. It is critical for salesperson to demonstrate how the product works and be prepared to give samples for the client to try on their own. Besides, clients should be given guarantees or warranty for the product they purchase.

Closing a sale is a mental process of conviction based on positive presentation attitude, confident presentation and assisting the client to make up their mind by highlighting the features of the product which translates to benefits meant to meet the needs of the salesperson.

Repeated ordering is the aim of every sales person. The salespeople are viewed as the primary contact person in the company. It is their responsibility to ensure the products are delivered as agreed and arrange a technical visit to ascertain proper product usage and address any issue that would arise from usage of the product. Making a telephone

call to the client thanking for the business is vital and the one could take that occasion to prospect for more business.

In summary, the personal selling process steps are all very important since each step lays foundation for the next stage and success of a salesperson will depend on how effective the aspects perceived important by the client are employed.

5.3 Recommendation

Rose flowers firms perceive certain elements in the personal selling process important and could influence them in procurement of their agrochemicals. They include;

- i) Contact for the appointment should be done through telephone and letters.
- ii) Financial ability and volume of business should be criteria for qualifying prospectors.
- iii) Being aware of purchase practices for instance lead time needed and availing credit.
- iv) Punctual for the appointment, clean and tidy, courteous greetings and full understanding the product
- v) A concise, easy to understand presentation, confident presentation and cultivating a conducive environment for prospectors to participate besides use of charts, product leaflets and samples for demonstration.
- vi) Giving guarantees/warranties and samples for trial purposes reduces objections.
- vii) Assist client to decide by a convincing, concise and easy to understand presentation.
- viii) Sending an appreciation card after the sale and ensuring the delivery conforms to the ordering schedules. Technical visit to train the users is recommended.

Days are long gone for salespeople to act as order getters (Reid, 1996). However, each personal selling process step is equally important as it forms a base for the following

steps. If one step is disregarded, then the whole process fails and chances of getting an order are reduced.

5.4 Limitations of the study

The researcher intended to collect all the data from the sixty firms forming the population of interest by use of "drop and pick-later" method. Four firms wound up their farming activities and the other eight-failed to fill the questionnaires. The result would have been more conclusive had the data from all the firms been acquired.

5.5 Suggestion for further Research

Due to importance of personal selling in the sector of rose flower growing, a behavioral research should be done to identify to identify those factors that significantly impact on a salesperson's performance and understand their relationship to successful selling. The factors may be used to determine the right people to hire for sales jobs and also the type of training needed to increase their efficiency and success in winning customers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Letter to the respondents

University of Nairobi
Faculty of commerce
Dept. of Business Administration
P.O BOX 30197,
NAIROBI.
10TH April 2002.

Dear Respondent,

RE: COLLECTION OF SURVEY DATA BY WARUINGI S. M

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Nairobi, at the faculty of commerce. In order to fulfill the degree requirement; I am undertaking a management research project of marketing practices followed by Agrochemical companies in Kenya. The study is titled;

" A survey of the aspects of personal selling process perceived to influence the buying of Agrochemical product of rose flowers in Kenya

Your organization, which falls within the population of interest, has been selected to form part of this study. This therefore, is to kindly request you to assist me collect the data by filling out the accompanying questionnaire, which I will collect from your premises.

The information provided will be used exclusively for academic purposes. My supervisor and I assure you that the information you give will be treated with strict confidence. At no time will your organization appear in my report. A copy of the research project with suggestion will be made available to your organization upon request.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated

Yours faithfully,

Sammy M. Waruingi
Student

M. Ombok
Lecturer/ Supervisor.

SECTION B

Q 1 Below are some ways agrochemical firms contact their clients. Please rank in order of importance the way you would like to be contacted.

	Most important			Least important	
	5	4	3	2	1
Sending of letters	()	()	()	()	()
By telephone	()	()	()	()	()
Use of referral lead	()	()	()	()	()
Through social contact	()	()	()	()	()
Through competitors	()	()	()	()	()
Through magazines	()	()	()	()	()
Others.....	()	()	()	()	()

Q 2 Kindly rank the measure that you think suppliers should use in qualifying a customer on future business suppliers of agrochemical. 1 representing the highest rank.

Financial ability	{ }
Volume of business	{ }
Geographical location	{ }
Number of employees	{ }
Others (please specify)	{ }

Q 3 How important would a sales person who knows the following aspects influence your purchase decision on agrochemical.

	Most Important			Least Important	
	5	4	3	2	1
	Purchase practices	()	()	()	()
Lead-time needed	()	()	()	()	()
Purchase decision	()	()	()	()	()
Credit factors	()	()	()	()	()
Members of the buying center	()	()	()	()	()

Q 4 It is important for a sales person to create a positive first impression when approaching a client. Indicate how important the following aspects of sales person will influence your image of sales person by ticking the appropriate.

	Very Important				Least Important
	5	4	3	2	1
	Being on time	()	()	()	()
Non- smoking	()	()	()	()	()
Greetings	()	()	()	()	()
Being composed	()	()	()	()	()
Being alert	()	()	()	()	()
Being cheerful	()	()	()	()	()
Being respectful	()	()	()	()	()

Q 5 For a salesperson to be effective when meeting a client, he should be adequately prepared before hand. Indicate by ticking the appropriate aspects of preparedness that is critical of the sales person that may influence your actual purchase.

	Most critical				Least critical
	5	4	3	2	1
Being clean and tidy	()	()	()	()	()
Punctual for appointment	()	()	()	()	()
Understanding the product	()	()	()	()	()
Knowing the name of the customer	()	()	()	()	()
Knowing the title of the customer	()	()	()	()	()
Carrying Of samples and presentation materials	()	()	()	()	()

Q 6 For a client to purchase agrochemical product, he must fully understand the product and its benefits. One way of getting the information is during product presentation session. Kindly indicate by ticking the important aspects that would influence your actual purchase of agrochemical products.

	Very Important			Least Important	
	5	4	3	2	1
A salesperson who presents a brief and convincing message about the product.	()	()	()	()	()
presentation that is aided by charts and brochures	()	()	()	()	()
Salesman who expresses confidence to himself and products being sold	()	()	()	()	()
A salesman who allows the prospectors to contribute during presentation	()	()	()	()	()
A salesman who manages emotions from all the invitees.	()	()	()	()	()
A salesman who cultivates an enabling environment for discussion	()	()	()	()	()
A salesman who focuses on the subject without much digression	()	()	()	()	()

- A salesman who has sense of fun and controlled body language during presentation () () () () ()
- Use of demonstration, visualization and issuing of sample materials. () () () () ()
- Present that is flowing and in sequence () () () () ()
- A salesman who asks for an order () () () () ()

Q 7 During sales presentation of agrochemical products by the salesman, the client is encouraged to ask questions so that he can understand the product and its benefits and contribute in reducing the fear of the unknown by making the wrong choice. Kindly indicate how critical the following aspects influence you in actual purchase.

	Most Critical					Least Critic				
	5	4	3	2	1					
Giving guarantees for product purchased	()	()	()	()	()					
Availability of testimonials of third party findings	()	()	()	()	()					
Sale person willing to address the objections	()	()	()	()	()					
Addressing the clients objections without evading	()	()	()	()	()					
Rephrasing the questions for the client to understand	()	()	()	()	()					
Visual demonstration of the product and its usage	()	()	()	()	()					
Giving samples for trial purposes	()	()	()	()	()					

Q 8 When a client understands fully the benefits of a product and terms of sales, he makes decision to buy. Kindly indicate how important the following aspects of a salesperson influence your actual purchase

	Very Important			Least Important	
	5	4	3	2	1
Assists client make up his mind	()	()	()	()	()
Makes the client place an order	()	()	()	()	()
Confident during his presentation	()	()	()	()	()
A salesman who is forceful in his verbal expression	()	()	()	()	()
Has positive attitude during presentation	()	()	()	()	()
Quick in asking for an order	()	()	()	()	()

Q 9 Does the sales person do the follow up after

You have purchased?

{ } YES

{ } NO

If YES, kindly rank the following aspects in order of importance what the sales person should do after the sale.

Sending an appreciation card after the sale	{ }
Telephone call to thank the client after sale	{ }
Ensuring the product has been delivered as agreed	{ }
personal visit to ascertain proper application	{ }
Arranging for training of the users	{ }
Used as a reference point to other users	{ }

I sincerely thank you for the time you have taken to complete the questionnaire

APPENDIX 3 LIST OF FARMS GROWING ROSE FLOWERS

CUSTOMER NAME	ADDRESS
AFRICAN HIGHLANDS	BOX 1966 KERICHO
ANTON VERBEEK KENYA LTD	58238 NRB
AURA FLOWERS	62559 NRB
ANDERSON ORCHARDS	BOX 124
ARABEL LTD	BOX 11770
BATIAN FLOWERS LTD	BOX 266
BAWAN ROSES LTD	BOX 46037
BEKYA FLOWERS	BOX 46826
BEVERLY FLOWERS	BOX53826
SIMBI ROSES	BOX
KARIA ROSES	
KIJABE ROSES	
P J DAVE	
NGONG ROSES	
NINI LTD	BOX 569 NAIVA SHA
NORTH LAKE NURSERIES	260 NAIVASHA
ORJORWA LTD	18156 NAIROBI
OSERIAN DEVELOPMENT LTD	209 NAIVASHA
LONGONOT HORTICULTURE	1271 NAIVASHA
LUKENYA FLOWERS	BOX 76542
MAGANA FLOWERS	BOX 14618
MOSI LTD	BOX70594 NAIROBI
MWEIGA BLOOMS LTD	BOX 72632NRB
MT.ELGON ORCHARDS	BOX 124 KITALE
MT.KENYA ROSES	BOX 60873 NRB
SERADIC ROSES	BOX 1739 THIKA
SHER AGENCIES	BOX 729 NAIVA SHA
SIAN AGRIFLORA LTD	BOX 15139 NAIROBI
SINCLAIR FLOWERS	BOX73524 NB1
SOPHIA ROSES	BOX 4904 THIKA
SOTE FLOWERS	BOX 6027 ELDORET
STONI ARTHI	BOX 47011 NRB

SUBATI LTD	BOX 45480
SUERA FLOWERS	BOX 62599 NRB
SULMAC COM.LTD	BOX 42011NRB
SUNROSE NURSERIES	BOX 64190
TAMBUZI ROSES LTD	BOX1148 NANYUKI
PANOCAL INTERNATIONAL	BOX 982 KITALE
PENTA FLOWERS	BOX 40452
PLANET FLOWERS	BOX 63802 NRB
QUALITY FLOWERS	BOX 64495 NRB
RED LAND ROSES	BOX 10 RUIRU
RED HILL GARDENS	BOX 40789 NRB
RED HILL FLOWERS	BOX47261NRB
TANU ROSES (K) LTD	BOX 63543 NRB
THIKA NURSERIES LTD	BOX 30103 NRB
TORITO ROSES	BOX 48349 NRB
VALENTINE GROWERS	BOX 18755 NRB
WANJAO ESTATE	BOX 25252 NRB
WARIDI LTD	BOX 19294 NRB
FARMFRESH	BOX 60776 NRB
FOURTEEN FALLS FLOWERS	BOX 3452 THIKA
GATOKA LTD	BOX 404 THIKA
GILFRO LTD	BOX 62 FUIRU
KIBUBUTI FLOWERS	BOX 742 KARURI
ENKASITI FLOWERS LTD	BOX 50315NRB
HARVEST LTD	BOX 60158 NRB
HOMEGROWN (K) LTD	BOX 10222 NRB
KAREN ROSES	BOX 68010 NRB
ZENA ROSES	BOX 53164 NRB