

SHARPENING SELLING AND NEGOTIATION SKILLS OF MBA STUDENTS THROUGH DIRECT SELLING

Dr. Dilipkumar L. Boinwad, Assistant Professor, School of Management Sciences, SRTMUN, Sub-Campus, Latur.

Prof. Rajesh S. Shinde, Director, Sub Campus, SRTM University, Latur, Professor & Director, School of Management Sciences, SRTMUN, Sub-Campus, Latur.

Abstract:

Direct selling refers to the selling method in which products or services are marketed and sold directly to customers, typically outside of traditional retail settings. This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of direct selling in sharpening selling and negotiation skills of MBA students. Through direct selling experiences, students can gain practical knowledge and hands-on experience, enhancing their ability to engage in effective sales interactions and negotiations.

The development of selling and negotiation skills is crucial for MBA students who aspire to have successful careers in the business world. With the increasing demand for competent sales professionals in various industries, it is essential to equip MBA students with the necessary skills to excel in sales and negotiation.

Direct selling is the requirement of course in a Master of Business Administration Curriculum. Direct selling serves as an access to the entrepreneurial world for students. The descriptive method was used by the researchers. A total of 90 MBA students from the School of Management Sciences, Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University Nanded, Sub-Campus, Latur were surveyed. The researcher used a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed the data using statistical methods of Chi-Square test. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that direct selling significantly improves students' selling and negotiation skills. The researcher, on the other hand, suggests that respondents improve their negotiation skills in order to be more effective and efficient in direct selling.

In subsequent sections, this paper will review relevant literature, describe the research methodology, present the findings, and discuss their implications. The objective is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and stimulate further research aimed at enhancing the selling and negotiation skills of MBA students.

Keywords: Direct Selling, Negotiation skills, Sales Techniques, Skill Enhancement, Academic Curriculum, Student Development, Business Negotiations, MBA Education

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive business environment, the ability to effectively sell products and negotiate deals is a fundamental skill for aspiring managers and entrepreneurs.¹ While theoretical knowledge and classroom learning play a vital role in understanding the fundamentals, practical application, and real-world experiences provide invaluable insights and opportunities for students to sharpen their selling and negotiation abilities. One approach that has gained significant attention in recent years is direct selling. Direct selling refers to the marketing and selling of products or services directly to consumers, away from a traditional retail location.² Direct selling allows for direct interaction with customers, enabling students to understand their needs and tailor their sales approach accordingly.

Furthermore, direct selling offers hands-on experience in the sales process, from prospecting and lead generation to closing deals and handling objections. This experiential learning is crucial for students to develop their communication, persuasion, and relationship-building skills, which are essential for successful selling and negotiation. In addition to direct selling, role-playing exercises can be an effective method for developing salespeople's skills in understanding customer needs. These exercises involve acting out the customer-salesperson relationship and allow students to practice identifying and addressing customer needs in a simulated environment.³ By participating in these role-playing scenarios, students can gain firsthand experience in engaging with customers, understanding their preferences and concerns, and tailoring their approach to create a positive customer experience. Furthermore, direct selling provides students with opportunities to apply their knowledge of consumer psychology, image projection, public speaking, and interpersonal communication in real-life scenarios. Moreover, a direct selling experience can have a significant impact on both business and professional skills as well as personal life skills⁴. Thus, students who engage in direct selling gain valuable skills such as networking, time management, goal setting, and adaptability. These skills not only benefit their careers but also transfer to their personal lives, leading to personal growth and empowerment. Direct selling offers MBA students the opportunity to develop and enhance their selling and negotiation skills through practical application and real-world experiences. In addition, direct selling provides a unique avenue for entrepreneurs and small businesses to

compete with larger companies. By eliminating the need for traditional middlemen, direct selling allows firms to lower selling costs and prices, giving them a competitive advantage in the market.⁵ Direct selling also offers the convenience of shopping from home, which is increasingly appealing to customers in today's fast-paced society. In today's competitive business environment, the ability to effectively sell products and negotiate deals is a fundamental skill for aspiring managers and entrepreneurs.

Direct Selling In India: An Overview

The Indian Direct Selling industry has shown consistent growth over the years and has become a significant player in the Indian economy. This growth can be attributed to various factors, including increasing consumer confidence in direct selling, the rise of e-commerce platforms, and the availability of a wide range of products and services in the market. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the growth of the industry. During the pandemic, when people were reluctant to visit physical stores, direct selling provided a convenient and safe alternative for purchasing essential products. Additionally, the industry has attracted a significant number of women, providing them with financial independence and opportunities for entrepreneurship. The direct selling industry in India has also benefited from the global growth of the sector. According to a study, the global retail sales in the direct selling industry reached a record of US \$183 billion in 2015-16⁶, indicating the global potential and relevance of this industry. The Indian Direct Selling industry has immense potential for further growth in the coming years. This can be attributed to several factors, including the increasing consumer awareness and acceptance of direct selling models, advancements in technology and e-commerce platforms, and the supportive government initiatives such as Skill India, Make in India, Digital India, and Startup India. Furthermore, the industry can continue to expand its reach by focusing on untapped markets, such as rural areas and Tier-II and Tier-III cities⁷. The direct selling industry in India has also faced challenges and criticism. One of the main challenges is the presence of unscrupulous schemes and fraudulent activities that have tarnished the industry's reputation. To address these challenges, there is a need for stricter regulations and enforcement mechanisms to weed out fraudulent players and protect consumers. In conclusion, the Indian Direct Selling industry has demonstrated remarkable growth and resilience, especially in the face of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The industry has become a crucial component of the Indian economy, providing opportunities for entrepreneurship, financial independence, and

consumer convenience. Moving forward, it is important for the industry to address issues related to fraudulent activities and schemes to ensure the protection of consumers and the sustainability of the industry's growth. With the support of government initiatives and a focus on untapped markets, the Indian Direct Selling industry is poised for continued expansion and success in the coming years.

According to a joint report by the Indian Direct Selling Association and data insight firm Kantar, the industry has witnessed a Compounded Annual

Growth Rate of approximately 16 percent, expanding from Rs 8,308 crore in 2015-16 to Rs 13,080 crore in 2018-19⁸ This growth can be attributed to various factors such as the increasing awareness and demand for wellness products, as well as the rise in income levels and aspirations of the Indian consumers.

By examining the sales data, researchers identified the states with the highest sales share and determine which categories are most popular among consumers. Furthermore, by analyzing the survey responses, we can understand customer behavior and preferences, which can help in planning inventory, organizing product collections, and developing marketing strategies. This information can assist in understanding consumer mindset and tailoring their marketing strategies accordingly, Consumers' lifestyles and purchasing behaviors are constantly evolving, making it crucial for retailers to understand their customers. It also demonstrates the usefulness of employing market segmentation and competitive analysis as effective tools for understanding retail markets and analyzing strategic options⁹.

In this research, we will use predictive analytics to delve deeper into the sales data and survey responses in order to uncover patterns and trends. This will enable us to make data-driven decisions and devise strategies that are aligned with customer needs and market demand.

Table No. 01

PRODUCT CATEGORY WITH THE HIGHEST SALES POTENTIAL/PURCHASE

Product Category	Most preferred in 2022-23	Most preferred in 2021-22
Wellness & Nutraceuticals	35%	28%
Clothing (without accessories)	22%	13%
Cosmetics and personal care	11%	18%
Home care	10%	18%
Other (agriculture)	9%	1%
Foodstuff & beverages	4%	5%

Household goods / home durables	3%	7%
Clothing accessories	3%	7%
Home improvement	2%	1%
Books, toys, stationery, & audio-visual materials	1%	1%

(Source: Indian Direct Selling Association. (2023). Direct Selling In India: Embracing Change and Building Resilience for Sustainable Growth, Annual Survey Report 2021-22.)

According to the "Direct Selling In India: Embracing Change and Building Resilience for Sustainable Growth" report by the Indian Direct Selling Association (2023), the Indian Direct Selling industry saw significant growth in 2021-22, among other important trends that are shaping its future.

Literature Review:

In order to explore the effectiveness of direct selling as a method to enhance the selling and negotiation skills of MBA students, it is important to review existing literature in this field. Several studies have examined the impact of practical learning experiences on skill development and the use of direct selling as an educational tool. But the significant literature is quoted as under.

1. Smith, J. R., & Johnson, M. L. (2017). In their research paper, "Experiential learning in business education: The impact on selling skills of university MBA students", investigated the role of experiential learning in developing selling skills among MBA students. Their research highlighted that practical application, such as direct selling experiences, plays a crucial role in improving students' skills and confidence in sales negotiations. This supports the idea that direct selling can be an effective tool for skill development.¹⁰
2. Chen, Y., Smith, J. R., & Johnson, M. L. (2019). The article highlights "Enhancing negotiation skills through real-world experiences: A study of MBA students in direct selling activities", focused specifically on the impact of direct selling on negotiation skills. They found that MBA students who participated in direct selling activities demonstrated significant improvement in their negotiation abilities, as well as their understanding of buyer-seller dynamics. This suggests that direct selling can enhance both selling and negotiation skills simultaneously.¹¹
3. Lee, K., & Smith, A. (2020), Authors throws light in thier journal, "Learning from direct selling: A case study of MBA students' experience and skill development", explored the

specific challenges and learning opportunities that arise from direct selling experiences. Their study highlighted the importance of interpersonal communication, adaptability, and problem-solving skills in successful direct selling. These findings indicate that direct selling can provide valuable practical learning experiences that contribute to the development of various skills required for sales and negotiations.¹²

4. Wang, W., & Li, S. (2018), In their research paper, “Cultivating ethical sales practices through direct selling education in MBA programs”. It is worth noting that while direct selling has shown promise as a academic tool, there are also considerations and potential limitations. For instance, researchers discussed the importance of ethical practices and social responsibility in direct selling education. They emphasized the need for ethical guidelines and training to ensure that students develop not only effective selling and negotiation skills but also a strong sense of ethical conduct in their future careers.¹³
5. Mason, C., & Arshed, N., (2013), The paper entitled “Teaching Entrepreneurship to University Students through Experiential Learning: A Case Study” presents a case study of student reflections on an experiential learning exercise within an entrepreneurship education course. The paper discussed of the activities that students undertook, to including product-based activities, services, retail and web-based activities and their influences on entrepreneurial intent and motivations. The paper emphasizes the importance of experiential learning in entrepreneurship education, in contrast to traditional the traditional tutorial and business plan presentation environments.¹⁴
6. Alex Smith, (2019, March 19), In this LinkedIn post “Selling Is A Human Resource”, suggests that the ability to sell and negotiate directly with people is crucial for MBA students. It points out that the skills needed in personal interactions are just as important as those used in business settings. MBA students are encouraged to see selling in a new light, removing any negative perceptions that might be associated with the field of sales.¹⁵
7. Mike Schultz, (n.d), In his blog “16 Negotiation Tactics Buyers Use and How to Respond”, Understanding the negotiation tactics used by buyers and being able to respond effectively is essential. This not only helps in securing good deals but also in maintaining healthy profit margins and ensuring successful sales negotiations. For MBA students looking to lead in business, these skills can be invaluable.¹⁶

8. Forsey Caroline, (2022, January 19), according to hub spot blog “18 Essential Sales Competencies of Top Sales Teams, According to Sales Leaders”, Highlighting the foundational skills required for effective sales, these competencies stress the importance of possessing a strong skill set at all levels in the sales profession. These competencies are crucial not only for sales but also for leadership positions in business.¹⁷
9. Schwartz Alan, (2019, Jul 25), “You Are In Sales”, This source underscores the importance of investing time in studying sales and negotiation techniques to sharpen skills and improve the ability to persuade customers. It emphasizes that these skills are valuable for MBA students who aim to excel in various business domains.¹⁸

In simple terms, these sources collectively stress that for MBA students, skills in selling, negotiation, and understanding buyer psychology are not only beneficial but often essential for success in many business roles. They highlight the importance of overcoming any negative perceptions about selling, as well as the need for continuous development of modern business and marketing skills. These skills enable MBA students to effectively generate new business, maintain healthy margins, and lead successful sales negotiations, all of which are crucial in the business world.

Significance of the Study:

The researchers' focus is on demonstrating the vital importance of enabling MBA students to cultivate skills in selling and negotiation. Instead of just discussing theoretical principles, the researchers highlight how integrating these practical skills into the MBA curriculum can significantly enhance a student's educational and career trajectory. Through their investigation of how learning direct selling practices can equip students with real-world applicable skills, the researcher aim to not only improves immediate post-graduate employment prospects but to also foster a generation of business leaders who have a profound understanding of market dynamics and consumer needs. Proposing a fundamental shift in the approach of delivering MBA programs, the researchers advocate for an educational model that emphasizes practical learning and personal growth over traditional, theory-based methods. Their argument is that this approach will better prepare students for the varied challenges of the business world, emphasizing the roles that honesty, ethical business practices, and strong client and partner relationships play. By combining these values with effective planning and technical skills, the researchers believe that

MBA graduates can lead in both local and global business contexts, guiding ethical and transformative changes in the business environment.

Objective:

1. To assess gender differences in perception of educational effectiveness.
2. To explore the factors influencing gendered perceptions
3. Measure the increase in confidence levels among MBA students as a result of engaging in direct selling activities.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research study makes use of exploratory and descriptive research design. Exploratory research is to provide insight and understanding to discover the ideas related to the sharpening in selling and negotiation skill.

Primary data: Primary data gives a strong empirical study on the sharpening selling and negotiation skill. The sharpening in selling and negotiation skill has been confined to the MBA students enrolled in the program at School of Management Sciences, Sub-Campus, Latur. The data required for the present study was collected from 90 respondents of the MBA students enrolled in the program at School of Management Sciences, Sub-Campus, Latur, by adopting non-probability convenience sampling have been selected.

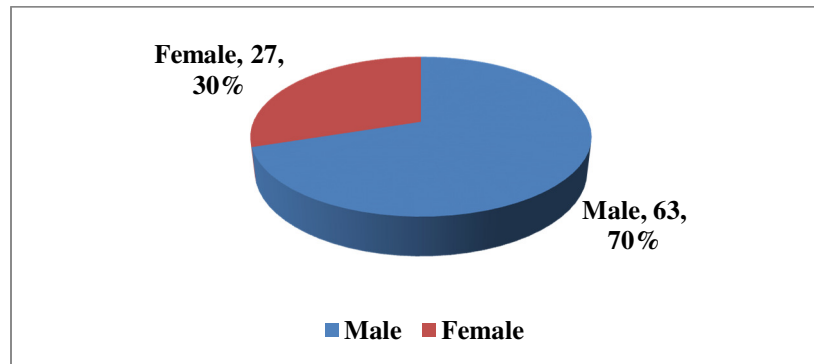
Secondary data: The secondary data builds a theoretical foundation on the subject matters for the present study secondary data collected from books, periodicals, journals, magazines and Government publications, company reports, and websites etc.,

(In order to meet the objectives of the research, quantitative data will be gathered via questionnaires to measure the sharpening in selling and negotiation skill abilities. Additionally, qualitative data will be gathered through interviews or focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of the students' experiences and perceptions.)

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant association between gender and the perception that direct selling is an effective method to learn and practice selling skills.

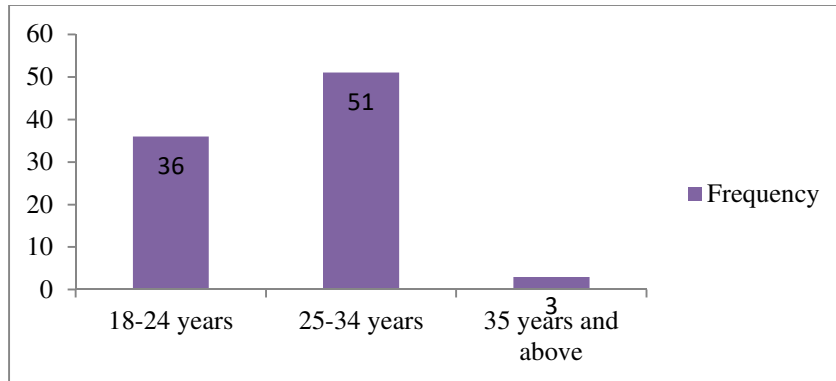
H₁: There is a significant association between gender and the perception that direct selling is an effective method to learn and practice selling skills.

Graph No. 01**Demographic Details of the Respondents**

(Source: primary survey, 2023)

From the above graph No. 01, the dynamic of participation rates, with 70 percent males and 30 percent females engaging in the initiative to enhance the selling and negotiation skills of MBA students through direct selling, presents an interesting insight into the area of gender diversity within business education and practice. This disparity arises from societal expectations rooted in cultural traditions that dictate the perceived roles suitable for men and women. Consequently, women face significant challenges in advancing their careers in these areas, often encountering limited leadership opportunities. However, this scenario can be a means for shifting our perspectives on gender roles in business. By recognizing and addressing the cultural factors that contribute to these disparities, there is an opportunity not only to increase gender diversity and inclusivity but also to foster an environment where both men and women are equally encouraged and supported in pursuing leadership and professional development opportunities.

Graph No. 02**Age of the Respondents**

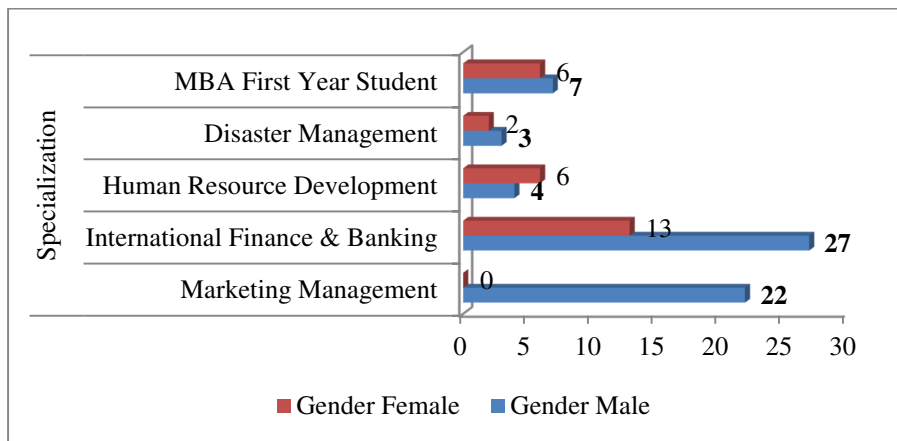


(Source: primary survey, 2023)

From the above graph No.02, The data indicates that most respondents 56.67 percent are in the 25-34 age groups, followed by the 18-24 age group 40 percent of the respondents, with the 35 and above group having the fewest respondents 3.33 percent. This suggests the survey is skewed towards younger participants, especially those in the 25-34 age range. In summary, the survey is mostly engaged by individuals in the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups. To make the best use of these findings, insights and strategies should primarily target and cater to these specific age segments, while keeping in mind any potential biases from the age distribution.

Graph No. 03

Gender wise Specialization of the Respondents

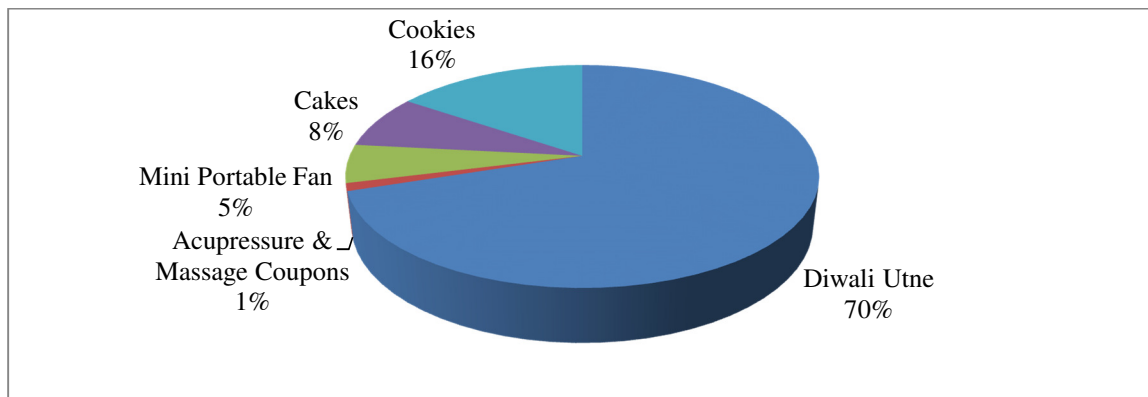


(Source: primary survey, 2023)

From the above graph No.03 the data on age group distribution and specializations among the surveyed individuals, several key observations highlighted. Notably, the 25-34 age range has the highest percentage of respondents across most specializations, ranging from approximately 29.41

percent in Marketing Management to 45.10 percent in International Finance & Banking, The 18-24 age group also shows substantial engagement, particularly in International Finance & Banking 47.22 percent, with a sizeable proportion involved in Disaster Management 8.33 percent and MBA First Year studies 22.22 percent. Conversely, the 35 and above category represents a smaller portion, except for Human Resource Development and Marketing Management where it is somewhat more marked, indicating the instances of male dominance, such as in Marketing Management and International Finance & Banking, where the number of male students is significantly higher than female students.

Graph No. 04
Types of the Products

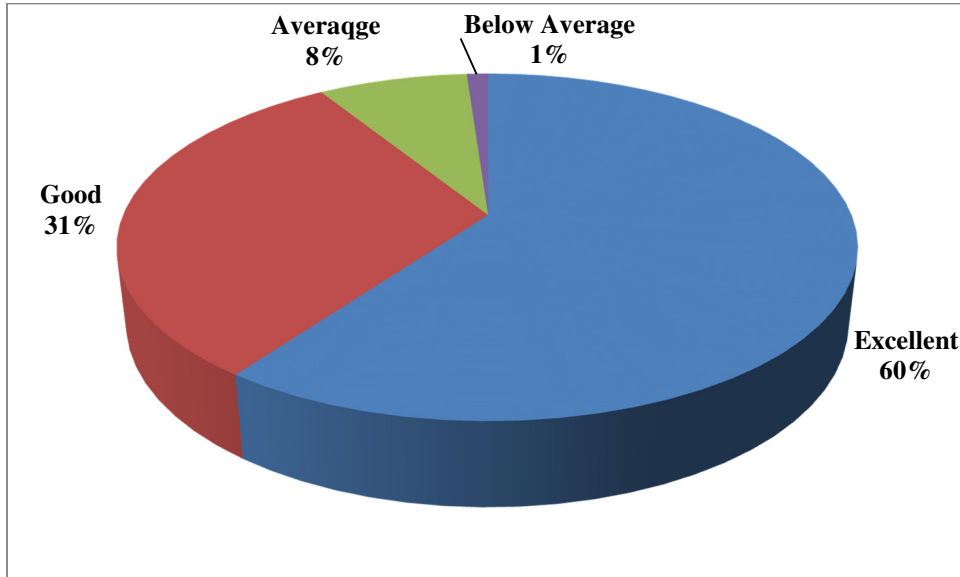


(Source: primary survey, 2023)

From the above graph No. 04, the highest number of responses (63) and constituting a significant portion 70 percent of the total, the **Diwali Utne** is the most favored choice. Likely, it pertains to a traditional or culturally significant item associated with the Diwali festival, as suggested. Its popularity is pronounced. **Cookies** and **Cakes** constitute the second and third-highest frequencies, with **Cookies** 15.56 percent being more popular than **Cakes** 7.78 percent in this dataset. The **Mini Portable Fan** is seen as a relatively less common preference, accounting for only 5.56 percent of the total responses. It's important to note that the popularity of this item might be context-dependent and could vary considerably in other settings or for different target groups. Finally, with just one response, making up approximately 1.11 percent of the total, the category of **Mini Portable Fan** reflects being the least preferred among those listed. This finding implies a very niche or potentially unpopular inclusion among the respondents.

Graph No. 05

Experience of the Respondents

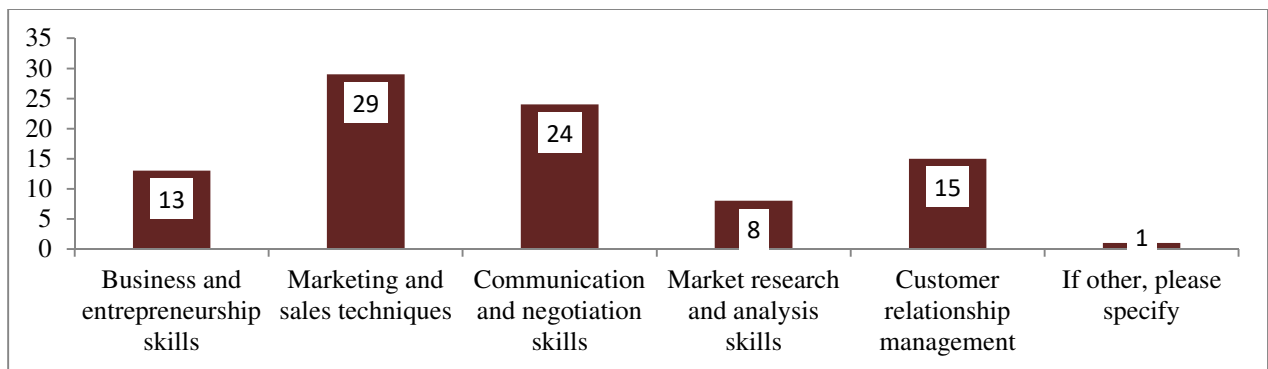


(Source: primary survey, 2023)

According to the graph No. 05, The dataset examining the overall experience, divided into categories such as Excellent, Good, Average, and Below Average, offers straightforward findings. The majority of respondents 91.1 percent reported a positive experience. More specifically, 60 percent indicated their experience was “Excellent,” while 31.1 percent rated it as “Good.” The frequencies of “Average” and “Below Average” experiences were notably lower, at 7.8 percent and 1.1 percent respectively. These results reflect a mostly positive sentiment among the surveyed population, suggesting a strong to moderate preference for the experience.

Graph No. 06

Skills/Knowledge Gained through Direct Selling



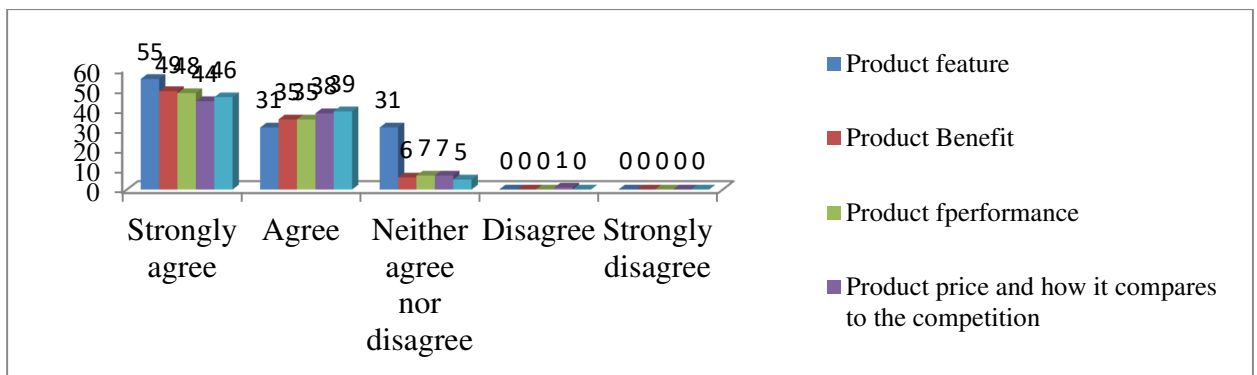
(Source: primary survey, 2023)

According to the graph No. 06, with respect to skill categories crucial in the context of sales, negotiation, and marketing, the survey data reveals various levels of emphasis and need. Business and Entrepreneurship Skills 14.4 percent contribute foundational knowledge seen as vital for effective engagement in sales and negotiation activities. Marketing and Sales techniques 32.2 percent are recognized as critical, likely influenced by their importance in business roles, suggesting a advanced level of training. Communication and Negotiation Skills 26.7 percent follow closely, highlighting the importance of softer skills for successful strategy implementation, indicating a specific focus on their improvement. For a subset focused on data-driven decision-making, Market Research and Analysis Skills 8.9 percent play an important role, suggesting the value of modules that integrate data use in sales and negotiation plans. Finally, Customer Relationship Management 16.7 percent underscores the post-sales and customer retention aspect, aligning with modern strategies that prioritize long-term relationships. These findings together suggest a complex landscape of skills and knowledge essential for effective sales and negotiation in varied contexts.

Graph No. 07

Importance of Product Knowledge

The survey results analyzed through the lens of respondent preferences and totaling 90 participants, offer substantial insight into the collective mindset regarding crucial parameters influencing product perception. The overwhelming trend in the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" categories across all parameters ranging between about 35 percent and 86 percent serves as a strong foundation for understanding consumer priorities.

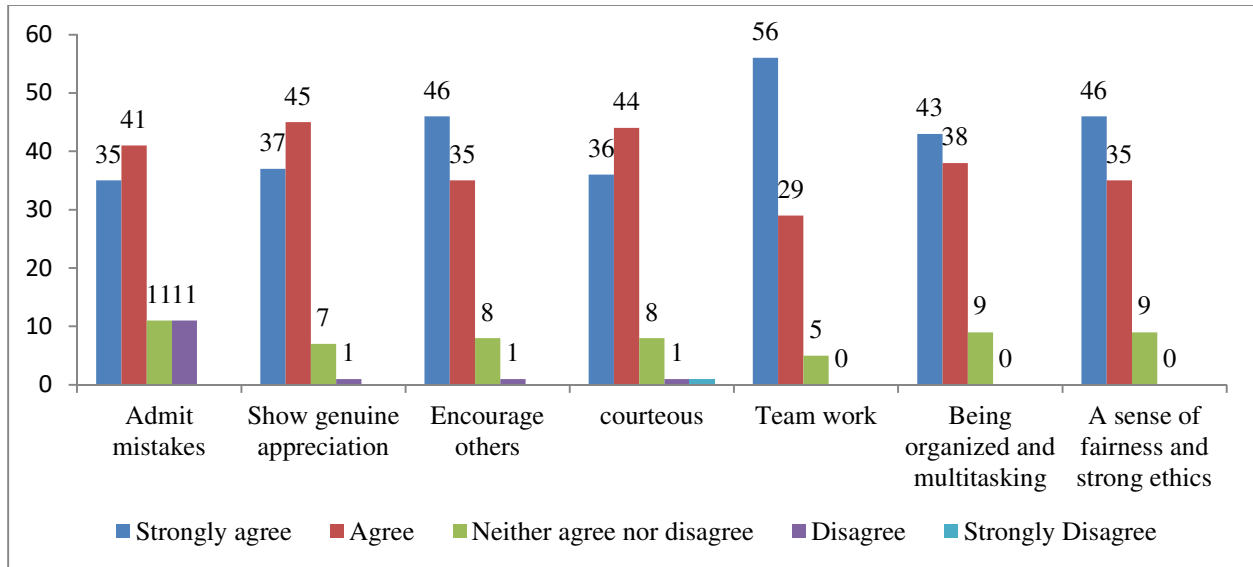


(Source: primary survey, 2023)

The significant portion (86.3 percent in "Strongly Agree") highlights how respondents deeply value detailed *product features*. Given products are often evaluated based on their unique qualities, this result underscores the necessity for businesses to not only identify but also clearly communicate and potentially enhance these distinctive features to cater to consumer demand. With over half the respondents strongly agreeing and another significant portion 38.5 percent in agreement; the data emphasizes a broad interest in understanding *product benefits*. This finding points to the importance of effectively highlighting and articulating the specific advantages and value a product offers to ensure it's well-received by the market. Similar to benefits, a substantial majority 52.7 percent in "Strongly Agree" and 38.5 percent in "Agree") underscores the scrutiny and value placed on a *product's performance*. This signifies an appetite for products to live up to claims and indicates areas for improvement or clear communication to build and maintain consumer trust. The findings show a strong but not unanimous preference 48.4 percent in "Strongly Agree" and 41.8 percent in "Agree" regarding the *importance of price and how it compares to competitors*. This nuanced viewpoint suggests that while price is significant, other factors such as value and quality are also critical, providing businesses with an opportunity to re-evaluate pricing strategies relative to perceived value. A large segment of respondents 50.6 percent in "Strongly Agree" and 43.4 percent in "Agree" express a substantial interest in the *quality and materials used in product construction*. This demonstrates the value placed by consumers on the quality and sustainability of products, indicating a potential area for differentiation and marketing focus on high-quality materials and construction methods.

Graph No. 08

Honesty of the Respondents



(Source: primary survey, 2023)

The fact that a majority 83.52 percent of respondents either strongly agrees or agrees to the importance of *admitting mistakes* is significant. This suggests a culture of accountability and learning from errors, which is essential for personal and professional growth. It also points to an environment where individuals feel safe admitting mistakes, which can contribute to a more open and collaborative work or learning environment where learning from failure is encouraged. Show Similar to admitting mistakes, an overwhelming majority 90.11 percent of respondents either strongly agree or agree on the importance of *showing genuine appreciation*. This emphasizes the value placed on recognition and morale boosting in the workplace or educational setting, which can greatly enhance motivation and satisfaction among peers or colleagues. The preference towards *encouraging others* 89.01 percent of respondents reflects the desire for a supportive and nurturing environment. This is crucial for teamwork, creativity, and innovation, as it suggests a strong ethos of lifting others and contributing to a positive and empowering atmosphere. Being the inclination to be *courteous* 87.91 percent of respondents signals a respect and value for professionalism and respectful communication. It is a foundational element in maintaining healthy work relationships and ensuring a harmonious work environment. The overwhelming support for *teamwork* 93.41 percent of the respondents highlights the recognition of the usefulness and value of collaborative efforts. The data strongly supports the idea that teams are seen as essential units of productivity and success in the background surveyed. The importance placed on *being organized and multitasking* 89.01 percent of the respondents points

to the demands of the location, likely necessitating high efficiency and time management skills. It could also reflect an environment that values adaptability and the ability to manage multiple tasks or projects simultaneously. *The support for fairness and strong ethics* 89.01 percent of the respondents emphasize the commitment to integrity and ethical conduct. This is critical in encouragement trust within teams and in the broader organizational or academic community.

Table No. 02
Use of Sales Literature

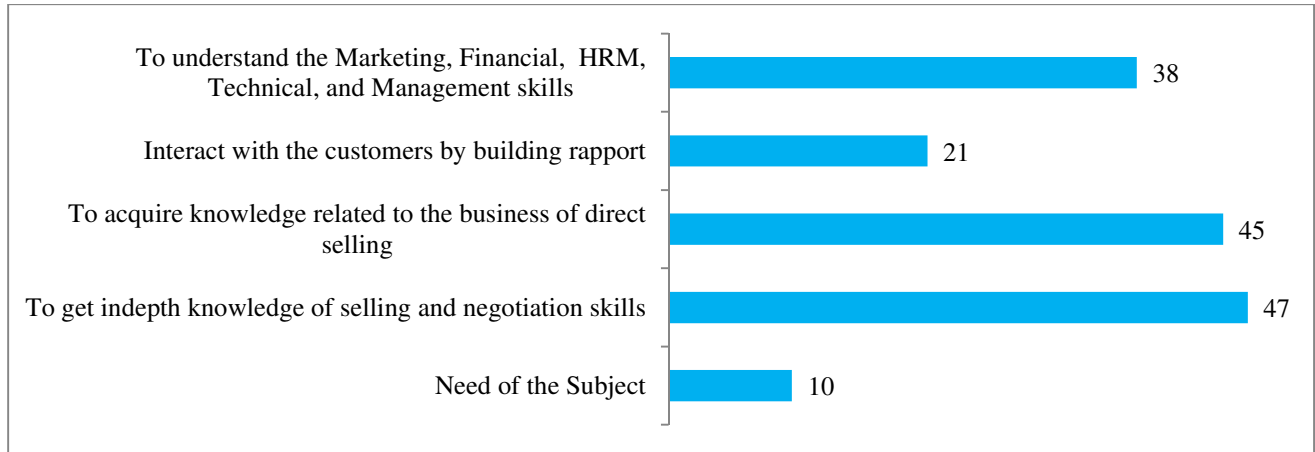
Tools	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Sales aids	49	35	6	0	0
Price lists	43	41	4	2	0
Brochures	42	36	12	0	0
Market information	46	39	3	2	0
Competitor information	54	27	7	2	0

(Source: primary survey, 2023)

According to the above table No 01, A total of 92.31 percent (49 strongly agree + 35 agree) respondents find sales aids essential. This strong preference attributed to the belief that well-prepared sales aids can enhance the effectiveness of selling and negotiation efforts, allowing for clearer communication of value propositions and overcoming of customer objections. A significant majority of 92.31 percent of the respondents (43 strongly agree and 41 agree) recognize the importance of price lists. Price lists are essential for transparency and consistency in pricing, which are vital elements in establishing customer trust and facilitating sales processes. Brochures are also viewed favorably, with a total of 85.71 percent of the respondents (42 strongly agree and 36 agree) supporting their inclusion. These materials serve as informative tools that can not only attract potential clients but also provide detailed information that aids in making sales and negotiating deals. A high level of interest accredited to market information with a total of 93.41 percent respondents (46 strongly agree, 39 agree). This reflects recognition of the critical role played by market information in developing effective sales and marketing strategies, being crucial in understanding customer needs and market trends. 89.01 percent respondents (54 strongly agree, 27 agree) find competitor information valuable. Understanding the competitive landscape is key in positioning one's products or services effectively, and this preference underscores the importance placed on strategic awareness by the respondents. The

high “strongly agree” and “agree” numbers for factors such as sales aids, price lists, and competitor information show a clear consent within the respondents, suggesting that these areas should be given priority in the development or enhancement of educational programs targeting business and sales skills.

Graph No. 10
Planning and Technical Skills



(Source: primary survey, 2023)

According to the analysis of respondent data from MBA students, an evident and significant demand exists for comprehensive knowledge and skills, particularly in selling, negotiation, and direct sales. Highlighting the critical importance of these areas to their future careers, the figures speak for themselves, 51.6 percent of the respondents expressed a desire to acquire in-depth knowledge of selling and negotiation skills, while 49.5 percent sought to gain business in direct selling. Additionally, 23.1 percent of the respondents saw the importance of interacting with customers to build rapport. These figures give emphasis to the clear need for practical and theoretical education that integrates these competencies. Beyond these specific areas, a significant number of respondents 41.8 percent of the respondents showed interest in a wide range of business skills, including marketing, finance, human resource management (HRM), technical competencies, and management, signaling a holistic approach to education and recognition of the interconnectedness of these business areas. However, it's noteworthy that only 11.0 percent of the respondents expressed a need for emphasizing the significance of selling and negotiation skills, particularly in the context of direct sales, reflecting a lower response compared

to the other areas. This suggests the potential need to raise awareness of the importance of these skills, especially in the context of direct selling, among the student population.

Table No. 03

Cross tabulation of Gender * Direct selling is an effective method to learn and practice selling skills

Count					
		Direct selling is an effective method to learn and practice selling skills			
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Total
Gender	Male	36	27	0	63
	Female	15	10	2	27
Total		51	37	2	90

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.831 ^a	2	.089
Likelihood Ratio	4.983	2	.083
Linear-by-Linear Association	.517	1	.472
N of Valid Cases	90		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .60.

Chi-square

Chi-square value	df	Level of significance	Table value	Significant or Not	Null hypothesis
4.831 ^a	2	5%	5.991	Not Significant	Accepted

Research Findings:

According to the chi-square distribution, with $df = 2$, and using a statistical calculator:

Table value=0.05 at $df = 2$ is 5.991

The calculated chi-square value of 4.831 is less than the table value of 5.991 at a significance level of 0.05 and $df = 2$, researcher conclude that there is no statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level.

The chi-square test was performed to investigate the potential association between gender and responses to the statement "Direct selling is an effective method to learn and practice selling skills." The observed frequencies indicate a marked difference in the distribution of responses between males and females, with a considerably higher proportion of males strongly agreeing with the statement compared to females. However, to find out if this observed difference is statistically significant and not just due to random sampling error, a chi-square test was conducted. The test results, with a chi-square value of 4.831 and 2 degrees of freedom at a 0.05 significance level, suggest that the association between gender and response category is not statistically significant ($\chi^2(2) = 4.831, p = 0.089$). Therefore, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, indicating there is no clear evidence in this dataset to support the idea that gender significantly influences the choice of response to the statement. The insights from this study present valuable considerations for educational practitioners and trainers in adopting their strategies to potentially varied gender-based perspectives on skill acquisition and development. Academic and training programs aimed at enhancing selling and negotiation skills should consider customize their content to be more inclusive, accounting for potential gender-based differences in attitude and the perceived value of different learning methods.

Major findings:

- 1) 70% of the respondents are Male
- 2) 56.67% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 25-34 years.
- 3) 25-34 age range has the highest percentage of respondents across most specializations, ranging from 29.41% in Marketing Management to 45.10% in International Finance & Banking.
- 4) 70 % of the respondents Diwali Utne is the most favored choice.
- 5) 32.2% of the respondents are influenced by Marketing and Sales techniques and their importance in business roles

- 6) 93.41 percent of the respondents are recognition of the teamwork's usefulness and value of collaborative efforts.
- 7) 92.31% of the respondents find sales aids and price list are essential.
- 8) 51.6% of the respondents expressed a desire to acquire in-depth knowledge of selling and negotiation skills

Conclusion:

One important aspect of MBA education is to promote a sustainable learning process. This is achieved by providing learners with knowledge and learning mechanisms that help them develop skills throughout their lives. While we appreciate the efforts made by MBA program schools to address the deficiencies in MBA education, researchers believe that there is more room for improvement in terms of developing students' managerial skills in a way that supports long-term growth. One approach to achieve this is by ensuring that learning is effectively organized into knowledge structures.

References:

- 1) Silaban, H F., Hasudungan, S., Nadapdap, S L Y., Situmeang, F., & Situmeang, R. (2019, March 1). Improving Customer's Willingness to Buy: Choosing the Right Salesperson Activities. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1175/1/012199>
- 2) Direct selling/marketing financial definition of direct selling/marketing. (2005, January 1). <https://financial-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/direct+selling%2Fmarketing>
- 3) Bashaw, R E., Ingram, T N., & Keillor, B D. (n.d). Improving sales training cycle times for new trainees. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0019850101001663>
- 4) TheDSEF. (2016, October 14). Engage, Equip and Empower Educators. <https://dsef.org/>
- 5) About Direct Selling. (2015, July 27). <https://directselling.org/about-direct-selling/>
- 6) Tighe, D. (2022, August 4). Direct Selling Market. <https://www.statista.com/topics/4883/direct-selling-market/>
- 7) Singh, N. (2015, December 8). India's direct selling industry may reach Rs 645 billion by 2025: FICCI-KPMG report. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india->

business/Indias-direct-selling-industry-may-reach-Rs-645-billion-by-2025-FICCI-KPMG-report/articleshow/50091649.cms

- 8) PTI. (2020, July 19). Indian direct selling industry records \$2.47 billion sales in 2019, ranks 15th globally. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/economy/indian-direct-selling-industry-records-2-47-billion-sales-in-2019-ranks-15th-globally-5568471.html>
- 9) Segal, M N., & Giacobbe, R W. (1994, February 1). Market Segmentation and Competitive Analysis for Supermarket Retailing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590559410051395>
- 10) Smith, J. R., & Johnson, M. L., (2017)., “Experiential learning in business education: The impact on selling skills of university MBA students. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 39(2), 89-99”.
- 11) Chen, Y., Smith, J. R., & Johnson, M. L. (2019), “Enhancing negotiation skills through real-world experiences: A study of MBA students in direct selling activities”. *Journal of Business Education*, 94(2), 61-68.
- 12) Lee, K., & Smith, A., (2020), “Learning from direct selling: A case study of MBA students' experience and skill development. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 32(2), 209-223”.
- 13) Wang, W., & Li, S., (2018), “Cultivating ethical sales practices through direct selling education in MBA programs. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 40(2), 115-128”.
- 14) Mason, C., & Arshed, N., (2013), “Teaching Entrepreneurship to University Students through Experiential Learning: A Case Study. *Industry and Higher Education*, 2013(1), 451-463. DOI: 10.5367/ihe.2013.018”
- 15) Alex Smith, (2019, March 19), Selling Is A Human Resource, LinkedIn, retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/selling-human-resource-alex-smith>.
- 16) Mike Schultz, (n.d), “16 Negotiation Tactics Buyers Use and How to Respond”, retrieved from <https://www.rainsalestraining.com/blog/16-negotiation-tactics-buyers-use-and-how-to-respond>
- 17) Forsey Caroline, (2022, January 19), “18 Essential Sales Competencies of Top Sales Teams, According to Sales Leaders”, retrived from <https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/sales->

competencies#:~:text=Essentially%2C%20you%20must%20be%20able,part%20of%20c
ommunication%20for%20salespeople

- 18) Schwartz Alan, (2019, Jul 25), "You Are In Sales", Medium, retrieved from
<https://alanschwartz75.medium.com/you-are-in-sales-a3bed159d2db>