

A Review of the Role of Marketing Skills on Agricultural Produce Marketing

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Abstract: The study reviewed 49 articles systematically to designate the role of marketing skills in promoting agricultural produce. Thematic and manual content methods were used to analyze the studies. The review indicated that few scholars have analyzed the role of marketing skills in promoting agricultural produce. However, the studies do not assess marketing skills' role in the performance of major crops used for food and cash generation in developing countries, such as maize, beans, potatoes, and rice. The review further depicted that some studies equate marketing skills with other variables, such as entrepreneurship, marketing capabilities and salesperson skills. The study regards marketing skills as vital resources in the Resource Based View Theory. The findings of this empirical paper provide holistic recommendations to agricultural produce stakeholders, policymakers and the resource based view theory.

Keyword: Marketing skills; agricultural Produce; resource-based view theory.

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Introduction

Most developing countries, particularly in Africa, depend on agriculture for survival (Harris et al., 2024). For instance, in Tanzania, more than 70% of the population are peasants, who depend on agriculture (Sseguya et al., 2021). Agriculture fosters the economic development of many developing countries, particularly in Africa (Ochilov, 2024). Agricultural production improves food production and reduce poverty (Fuglie & Echeverria, 2024).

Marketing activities are essential from the farming stages of production planning, farm management, harvesting, warehousing management, grading and sorting, transportation and product distribution

(Kamble, 2019). Marketing skills are essential to marketing activities because they promote sales of the products and services and hence the profitability of firm (Middleton & Long, 1990). Marketing activities for smallholder farmers improve their well-being through increased income and food security (Nwike et al., 2019).

According to Middleton and Long (1990), marketing skills assess market needs and competitiveness of the agricultural produce. Ineffective marketing for agriculture products has been observed in different developing countries because of improper farmers' marketing skills (Ismail, 2024).

Poor marketing skills hinder farmers from optimizing agricultural produce's sales performance and profitability in Tanzania (Mpogole et al., 2023). In India, farmers' inadequacy of marketing skills restricted the proper marketing of Haryana produce (Singh, 2024).

The role of marketing skills in promotion of agricultural produce has been revealed by various scholars. For instance, Luge et al. (2021) demonstrated the role of marketing skills in Tanzanian SME export performance. McMahon (2001) demonstrated the role of marketing in promoting the sugar sector in Australia and Nwike et al. (2019) for garri crops in Nigeria. Melese (2022) affirmed that marketing skills promoted the horticulture production SMEs in Ethiopia. Furthermore, Rawwas and Iyer (2013) acknowledged how Japanese small wholesalers benefited from marketing skills by increasing their products' sales. Literature shows that a comprehensive study that links marketing skills and marketing of the agricultural produce is lacking. Hence, this systematic literature review sought to address this study gap.

Theoretical Framework

Penrose (1959) initially authored the Resource Based View (RBV) by asserting that efficient resource utilization promotes a firm's profitability. Wernerfelt (1984) declared that the firm's competitive advantage is gained when there are resource differences. Barney (1991) is considered the prominent author of the RBV theory because he is the one who sat the standard assertion and assumptions of the theory. According to Barney (1991), the resources and capabilities are responsible for building the firm's competitive advantages. The resources are categorized into tangible resources, such as assets, equipment and financial resources, and intangible resources, which comprise intellectual property rights, brand reputations and skills (Ndirangu et al., 2023). Organization and dynamic capabilities are essential for a firm's competitive advantage (Olutola et al., 2023). Barney (1991) suggested that resources need to be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable in order to contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage (Parboteeah & El-Farr, 2023). Therefore, marketing skills are an intangible resource that promotes the firm's competitive advantage.

Various scholars have used the RBV theory in marketing studies (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) regarded the capabilities as an essential resource to catalyze the firm's performance in London firms. Boso et al. (2019) linked the market mix strategies and capabilities in export marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Chatterjee et al. (2022) regarded customer relationship management as an essential resource in promoting the sales performance of Indian firms. Chatterjee et al. (2022) regarded customer relationship management as an essential resource in promoting the sales performance of Indian firms. Varadarajan (2020) considered customer information and market strategy as essential resources that catalyze a business's performance. Uloko and Ikwue (2022) interlinked the RBV with Nigerian SMEs' sales performance. Mahadewi and Suasana (2023) aligned RBV with the marketing performance of the Florist industry in Indonesia. The findings from the literature designate that none of the studies concentrated comprehensively on the role of marketing skills as a vital resource of the RBV theory.

This study used the RBV theory because of its strengths. It comprehensively analyses the diverse resources and capabilities that promote the firm's competitive advantage (Cooper et al., 2023). RBV is used to explain how marketing techniques promote the performance of firms (Uyanik, 2023). However, it is essential to note that some scholars challenged RBV by asserting that its assumptions fit well in developed countries (Kruesi & Bazelmans, 2023). It is also sometimes challenging to quantify how intangible resources promote the firm's strategic competitive advantage (Kruesi & Bazelmans, 2023). However, despite such weaknesses, RBV theory has been used in the current study to explain how marketing skills can be an eminent resource to promote marketing of agricultural produce. The marketing skills help the farmers to increase sales and profitability of the farming produce (Mpogole et al., 2023). The literature review analysis aimed to establish the role of marketing skills in promoting the marketing of the agricultural produce and to describe the conceptualization of the marketing skills in the literature.

Methodology

This study reviewed literature on the role of marketing skills in marketing agricultural produce. The systematic literature review is the methodology acknowledged by most scholars because it allows

researchers to extract prominent articles through literature (Brignardello-Petersen & Guyatt, 2024). Roman et al. (2017) asserted that systematic review facilitates gaps identification easily. Google Scholar, for instance, is easy to use and does not require credentials to access the articles (Zientek et al., 2018). Therefore, the search in this study was conducted in the Google Scholar platform because most scholars recommend it for having diverse articles (Gupta & Sharma, 2023).

Based on the suggestions from Voigt et al. (2018), articles were extracted only from the first four pages of the Google Scholar database. The search keywords were "marketing skills" and "agriculture produce," "marketing skills" and "agribusiness produce" and "Agricultural produce" and "marketing skills." The term "produce" was replaced by-products to avoid skipping essential articles. Similarly, the term "agriculture" was replaced with "agribusiness." The first search of the article generated 1,190 results. In the second round, after excluding the internet-based articles, theses and dissertations, books and book chapters and articles that were not written in English, only 139 articles remained. In the third round, the authors maintained the article with the terms "marketing skills" and "agricultural produce," or "product" in the title, which maintained only 49 articles.

Results and Discussion

This section summarizes and interprets the findings of the systematic literature review.

Marketing Skills and Marketing of Agricultural Produce

The reviewed literature indicates that most studies (33%) recognized the role of marketing skills in promoting the marketing of agricultural produce. The studies were done in different crops and related sectors. For instance, Luge et al. (2021) unveiled the role of marketing skills in facilitating the export performance of the Tanzanian medium and small-scale. McMahon (2001) recognized the role of marketing skills in promoting the Australian sugar sector. Melese (2022) acknowledged the role of marketing skills in enhancing the sustainability and growth of horticulture production SMEs in Ethiopia. Okeme et al. (2014) assessed the way marketing skills promoted the cocoa production viability in Nigeria. Dauda et al. (2023) exposed the role of marketing skills on catalyzing the Nigerian small and medium Plastics manufacturers' growth. Ogana and Zimoghen (2020) revealed the role of marketing

skills in sharpening the skills of undergraduate students' fingerling production. Ikwuakam et al. (2023) disclosed the way the marketing skills promoted the sesame *farmers performance in Nigeria*. Khan and Khan (2021) recognized the role of marketing skills on increasing the Pakistan's export firm performance. Manan et al. (2023) asserted that digital marketing skills were a panacea for improving the sales performance of the agricultural produce performance of Nglarangan Village farmers in Indonesia. Essien et al. (2024) revealed that marketing and preservation skills were vital in promoting fish enterprise farming and food security in Nigeria. Ekong et al. (2023) asserted that promotional practices and distribution system skills promoted SMEs' business performance in Nigeria.

The findings further show that 10% of the studies attested that lack of marketing skills is a barrier to promoting agricultural produce. The studies include Nwike et al. (2019) who revealed the role of marketing skills in promoting garri production in Nigeria. Rawwas and Iyer (2013) found that marketing skills promoted the Japanese small wholesalers' businesses. Imita (2013) disclosed that the Kenyan mango supply chain effectiveness was made possible because of the marketing skills.

The review ascertains that previous studies did not align the role of marketing skills and performance of major crops that are used for food and cash generation, such as maize, beans, potato, and rice. Furthermore, no detailed study evaluated the role of marketing skills in the marketing of agricultural produce.

Equating Marketing Skills with other Skills

The review indicates that some studies used marketing skills and entrepreneurship skills interchangeably. Nwike et al. (2019) related the marketing, planning and marketing skills with entrepreneurship skills. Ikwuakam et al. (2023) regarded fertilizer and pesticides application, customers' services, negotiating and sorting as marketing skills. The reviewed studies referred to entrepreneurship or marketing skills as a combination of the skills. Such studies include Nwike et al. (2019), who integrated entrepreneurship skills with planning and processing skills. Melese (2022) regarded financial resources, networking, marketing, opportunity seeking and environmental awareness as entrepreneurship skills. Ogana and Zimoghen (2020) viewed the entrepreneurship skill in the context of planning and

breeding of fingerling produce. Rawwas and Iyer (2013) combined entrepreneurship skills with buyer and supplier services. Imita (2013) considered pricing, product and promotion knowledge as entrepreneurship skills. The analysis indicates that combining marketing skills with other skills prevents a deeper explanation of the marketing skills promotion of agricultural produce performance. It is essential to explain the concept of marketing skills widely because some scholars use the concept interchangeably. Therefore, the findings from the literature review depicts the wide explanation of the marketing skills concept.

The review further exposed that some scholars linked marketing skills with salesperson skills. Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) associated marketing skills with marketing capabilities and firm performance. Martin et al. (2020) linked market skills with new international ventures' marketing capabilities and performance. However, the analysis of sales personal studies and marketing capabilities' role in the promotion of agricultural produce marketing is beyond the scope of this study. Hence, previous studies did not adequately explore the role of marketing skills in marketing of agricultural produce.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study reveals that most scholars acknowledged that marketing skills have the power to promote the marketing of agricultural produce. However, the studies that assess marketing skills' role in the performance of major food and cash-generation crops in developing countries, such as maize, beans, potatoes and rice are scanty. The review revealed that some studies equate marketing skills with other variables, such as entrepreneurship, marketing capabilities and salesperson skills. The study considered marketing skills as a resource to promote the marketing of agricultural produce and, hence, contribute to the Resource Based View theory.

The study recommends empirical studies to assess the role of marketing skills in the agricultural marketing of produce in a broader perspective, such as inclusion of a moderator, mediator or other variables. Such studies will generalize and rationalize the benefit of marketing skills to agriculture sector stakeholders, policymakers and to the RBV theory.

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