

The Effect of Selling Competence, Selling Experience, and Relationship Quality On Salesforce Performance (Empirical Study of the Honda Semarang Center in the Coastal Area of Semarang)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of selling experience, relationship quality, and selling competence to improve the performance of salespeople at PT. New Ratna Motor in the Coastal Area of Semarang. The object of this research is the Honda Semarang Center salesforce. The sample in this study were 139 respondents and the sampling technique used in this study was a census technique. The data analysis technique used is the structural equation model (SEM) technique from AMOS 22 software. The results show that selling competence and selling experience has a positive and significant effect on relationship quality. Selling experience and selling competence has a positive and significant effect on Salesforce performance. Relationship quality has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance.

Keywords : Selling experience; Selling competence; Coastal area of Semarang.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis pengaruh pengalaman penjualan, kualitas hubungan, dan kompetensi penjualan dalam meningkatkan kinerja tenaga penjual di PT. New Ratna Motor di wilayah pesisir Semarang. Objek penelitian ini adalah tenaga penjual Honda Semarang Center. Sampel dalam penelitian ini berjumlah 139 responden, dan teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan adalah teknik sensus. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah teknik model persamaan struktural (SEM) dengan menggunakan perangkat lunak AMOS 22. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kompetensi penjualan dan pengalaman penjualan memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kualitas hubungan. Pengalaman penjualan dan kompetensi penjualan juga memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja tenaga penjual. Kualitas hubungan memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kinerja tenaga penjual.

Kata Kunci : Pengalaman penjualan; Kualitas hubungan; Wilayah pesisir Semarang.

1. INTRODUCTION

The city of Semarang is considered one of the centers of production and development in the province of Central Java (Sumiati & Susilowati, 2015). Located on the east-north coast of the Java Sea, companies are required to innovate and more efforts are needed to improve quality and quantity in accordance with the use of the city of coastal area of Semarang which produces a lot of salt water which easily causes corrosion in existing vehicles in the city of Semarang (Sumiati, 2015). The rapid development and progress of technology has an impact on companies, so that they are required to always be able to compete in order to be at the forefront, fastest, and best in their field, as well as provide satisfying service to consumers. Competition that occurs is an inseparable part of the company, because the existence of this competition encourages companies to develop appropriate marketing strategies to be able to provide positive benefits in increasing sales volume and market share so as to win the competition in the market especially on coastal area. One strategy that can be used to support the success of the company is quality human resources.

The Salesforce is a company human resource that has quite a role in achieving company goals. Salesforce management is a crucial area in many companies, both because of the large number of people involved and because of the large amount of money spent (Salonen et al., 2021). It was further added that the main goal of managing salespeople is to make a profit, increase the number of sales and achieve sustainable product sales which in the end is to maintain long-term sales in accordance with the company's conditions. There is contradiction from previous research stated that selling experience affect sales performance (Chaichee, 2015) and while has shown that past selling experience does have an effect on sales performance (Singh & Das, 2013) (Kohli et al., 1998).

The significance of salesforce performance in the context of urban and regional planning cannot be overstated. In urban coastal areas like Semarang, sales activities and performance are influenced by regional economic conditions, urban infrastructure, and demographic trends. The economic vitality of a region, reflected in factors such as GDP growth and consumer spending, directly impacts the purchasing power of residents and the demand for products. Urban infrastructure, including transportation networks and technological advancements, facilitates efficient sales operations and enhances customer accessibility. Demographic trends, such as population growth and shifts in consumer preferences, shape the market dynamics and necessitate adaptive sales strategies.

In the Coastal Area of Semarang city area, the Honda Semarang Center has five branches or dealers, namely Gajah Mada, Kusuma, Cendrawasih Palace, Semarang Center and Mandalatama BSB. The graph of Honda's sales data is as follows:

Table 1. Honda Semarang Sales Data for 2018-2022.

NO	YEARS	SALES TOTAL
1	2018	7.010
2	2019	8.214
3	2020	8.673
4	2021	7.895
5	2022	7.249

Source: Honda, 2023

Based on table 1.1, it can be obtained an illustration that the level of sales of Honda in the Coastal Area of Semarang cars has decreased significantly from 2021 to 2022. The decline in total sales was supported by the company's declining target achievement, which indicated that the Salesforce's performance was not optimal. It turned out that the realization of Honda Semarang sales from January 2018 to December 2018 had not been able to reach the sales target set by the company. In July 2018 the company lowered its sales target and actual sales were still below the sales target, then in August 2018 the company lowered its sales target again and realized sales targets were still below the sales target set by the company.

In conclusion, the performance of the salesforce in urban coastal areas like Semarang is essential for meeting sales targets and achieving sustainable growth. The influence of regional economic conditions, urban infrastructure, and demographic trends on sales activities underscores the need for companies to adopt innovative and adaptive strategies to enhance salesforce performance. The case of Honda Semarang Center highlights the critical role of effective salesforce management in navigating the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the coastal urban environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Selling Competence

Competence is the ability to deliver services in accordance with the needs of the customer through mastery of the necessary skills and information. The definition of competence according to (Kohli et al., 1998) that in certain jobs or situations and reference standards, perfect or effective performance and individual characteristics have a causal relationship. Competence

can be in the form of motivation, rights and possessions and abilities, self-reflection or description of social roles, or competence possessed by those who have knowledge. Selling competence is a special ability that should be possessed by salespeople, in order to be successful in marketing their products and achieve satisfactory performance. Salespeople are required to work professionally to achieve the targets charged by the company. Research by (Kohli et al., 1998) states that sales activities will be more effective if carried out by salespeople who have competence and experience. Hipotesis (H1) Selling competence has significant effect on Salesforce performance.

2.2. Relationship Quality

Building, sustaining, and improving connections with clients and other partners while making a profit is the goal of relationship marketing, which ensures that everyone's goals are achieved (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2014). The capacity to establish positive relationships will boost customers' commitment to purchasing goods, which will impact a rise in sales, earnings, and market share (Hendar et al., 2020). (Kohli et al., 1998) argues that understanding salesforce performance is important, but more important is understanding what is key in maintaining and developing good relationships with customers. Understanding and maintaining good relationships with customers is a very appropriate long-term decision. Their findings indicate that maintaining marketing relationships will provide many benefits for salespeople and the organization, not just profit. Relationship quality is critical to perhaps greater success in salesforce performance, because they too will see customers as potential partners rather than treating them in a transactional way. Establishing a strong CRM will facilitate the management of customer interactions, paving the way for the development of long-term marketing ties that could enhance marketing performance (M. A. Mulyana, 2022). Control systems are the capacity to create relationship structures and tactics that enable the development of relationships in line with each company's unique characteristics is known as relational capabilities (M. Mulyana et al., 2022). Network innovation agility have a significant effect on business performance (M. Mulyana & Hendar, 2020) and architectural marketing capability also has a significant effect on business performance (M. Mulyana et al., 2021). With Hipotesis (H2) Relationship quality has significant effect of Salesforce performance. Hipotesis (H3) Selling competence has significant effect on relationship quality

2.3. Selling Experience

A salesforce routinely carries out sales activities, according to (Siagian et al., 2020) routine activities that are usually carried out by the salesforce, for example: activities to fill in call reports (sales visits) periodically, make a certain number of calls during the week, spend a longtime specified time with customers, maintaining correspondence with customers, adhering to budgets, and so on. The more often a salesforce performs these activities, the more selling experience he has, which can be a failed or successful selling experience. The results of the research hypothesis by (Salonen et al., 2021) in terms of the role of selling experience, namely that although the orientation of monitoring the final results is suspected of increasing the learning orientation of all salespeople, the positive relationship is thought to be greater in the case of salespeople who already have work experience, it is easier to understand what is expected of them and can handle role conflict more effectively. Salesforce performance is a reflection that reflects the success or achievement of a salesforce in managing resources and combining them with the application of appropriate and fast strategies (Rianita, 2022). Salespeople play a very important role in achieving company goals and bridging the relationship between customers and companies. A construct known as "relationship quality" measures the general state of the relationships within the company (Rehme & Rennhak, 2011). With good salesforce performance, for the company it will also increase product sales and the company's image itself, so that the company can be remembered and remembered by consumers. With Hipotesis (H4) Selling experience has significant effect on relationship quality. Hipotesis (H5) Selling experience has significant effect on Salesforce performance.

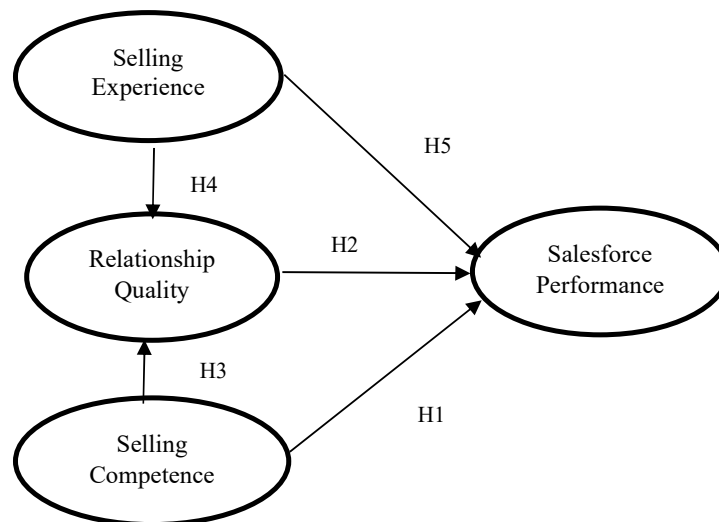


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework.*

Urban planning and regional development policies are critical determinants of business operations and salesforce performance. Infrastructure development, transportation networks, and urban growth strategies create a supportive environment for businesses to operate efficiently and effectively. The case of Semarang and the Honda Semarang Center illustrates how these policies can positively influence salesforce performance, highlighting the importance of strategic urban planning in fostering business success.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Type & Data Source

This study mostly uses primary data, namely data directly obtained from the object of research (Taherdoost, 2021). Data collection was carried out using a prepared questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study contains questions about how the competence of selling salespeople affects the quality of relationships with consumers, the level of experience of selling salespeople affects the quality of relationships with consumers, the level of experience of selling salespeople affects the performance of salespeople, the competence of selling salespeople affect the performance of salespeople, and ultimately the quality of relationships with consumers affect the performance of salespeople. The primary data intended in this study is data obtained directly from respondents in the form of answers or responses to questions and statements in the questionnaire. While secondary data is obtained from literature studies (journals, articles, company data, etc.) related to the research conducted.

3.2. Population & Sample

The population, which is the focus of a researcher's attention because it is viewed as a research universe, is an amalgam of all elements in the form of occasions, objects, or people with comparable qualities (Ferdinand, 2014). The population selected in this study were salespeople at the Honda Semarang Center in the Coastal Area of Semarang, totaling 139 people (Source: Honda, 2022).

The technique used in this research is census. The census technique is the selection of all previously known members of the population to be the sample. Currently, the number of Honda's Salesforce is 139 people. All of these salespeople will be the respondents.

3.3. Method of Collecting Data

Data was collected using a survey method by using a questionnaire as an auxiliary medium, by directly giving questions or questionnaires to the respondents. Data regarding the dimensions of the constructs being developed in this study were obtained using this

methodology. This questionnaire's questions are created on a scale from 0 to 10 in order to collect interval data, and each answer is assigned a score or value, using a scale of 0-10 (odd scale) to avoid respondents' answers which tend to choose answers in the middle, so that they will produce answers that are gather in the middle (gray area).

The object of this research is the Honda Semarang Center Salesforce in the Coastal Area of Semarang and acts as a respondent. In this study, the number of samples taken was 139 salespeople. Respondents' completed questionnaires are then compiled and processed to create research data. From the data that has been obtained, it is known that the amount of data on all indicators (X1 to X18) is complete and in accordance with the number of sample respondents. In answering closed questions on the questionnaire, respondents rated a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 10 on all indicators. The results of these answers are then used to obtain the tendency of respondents' answers regarding the condition of each research variable.

3.4. Process of Data Analysis and Research Model Testing

The process of data analysis and testing of the research model involves a structured approach to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. In this study, the analytical steps adopted are aligned with the seven-step SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) analysis process, which serves as a comprehensive framework for analyzing complex relationships between variables. These steps are crucial for understanding the direct and indirect effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, as well as for confirming the hypothesized model.

The SEM process typically begins with model specification, where the theoretical model is clearly defined based on existing literature and research objectives. This is followed by model identification, ensuring that the model has enough data points to estimate the required parameters. Next, the data preparation step involves checking for any missing data, outliers, and ensuring that the data meets the assumptions necessary for SEM analysis, such as normality and linearity.

Once the data is prepared, the estimation of parameters takes place, often using methods such as maximum likelihood estimation (MLE). This step is critical for determining the strength and significance of relationships between variables. Following estimation, model evaluation is conducted using various fit indices, such as the Chi-square test, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), and CFI (Comparative Fit Index), to assess how well the model fits the observed data.

In case the initial model does not fit well, the model modification step allows for adjustments by adding or removing paths based on theoretical justification and modification indices. Finally, the last step, model validation, ensures that the final model is robust and generalizable, often involving cross-validation with a different dataset or sample.

By following these seven steps, the research ensures a rigorous and systematic approach to data analysis, allowing for accurate conclusions regarding the influence of the independent variables on salesforce performance in this study. This process, as outlined by leading scholars in SEM methodology, provides a solid foundation for interpreting complex relationships in the data.

3.5. Data Analysis Technique

The analysis technique used in this study is the Structural Equation Model (SEM) which is operated through the AMOS 21 program. The reason for using SEM is because SEM is used to test the suitability of a model as well as the causality relationship between factors that are built or observed and test the suitability or accuracy of a model based on empirical data studied (Ferdinand, 2014). Modeling research through SEM allows testing a series of relative relationships simultaneously c. This study uses two kinds of analysis techniques, namely:

a) Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The most prevalent factors in a set of variables are verified using confirmatory factor analysis in structural equation modeling. The indicators that comprised the research variables in this study selling competence, relationship quality, selling experience, and salesforce performance—were tested using confirmatory factor analysis.

b) Regression Weights

Regression weight in SEM, weight is used to assess the degree of influence that each variable has. In this study Regression Weight is used to test the hypothesis. When applying structural equation modeling, or SEM modeling, there are seven steps that need to be followed. A measurement model and a structural model are the two main components of a full SEM model. The purpose of the measurement model, also called the measurement model, is to validate the dimensions derived from a factor. A structural model explains how relationships between factors form or explain their causality.

4. Research Data Analysis

4.1. Descriptive Statistics – Respondent Characteristics

The research descriptive data is presented so that the profile of the research data and the relationships that exist between the variables used in the research can be seen. This section will explain the descriptive data that was collected from the respondents. Descriptive analysis was carried out to get a descriptive picture of the respondents' answers for each of the research variables used. This analysis was carried out using index analysis techniques, to describe the respondents' perceptions of the question items posed in the questionnaire.

The scoring technique used in this study is a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 10. The number of respondents' answers starts from 0 to 10, so the resulting index will rank from 10 to 100 with a range of 100. A range of 100 divided by three will yield a range of 33.3 when using the three-box criterion (Three-box Method), and this range will be the foundation for interpreting the index value in the manner that follows:

$$10.00 - 33.33 = \text{Low}$$

$$33.34 - 66.67 = \text{Moderate}$$

$$66.68 - 100 = \text{High}$$

On this basis, the researcher determined the respondent's perception index of the variables used in this study. The index calculation results use the following formula:

Index Value

$$\text{Index value} = ((\%F_0 \times 0) + (\%F_1 \times 1) + (\%F_2 \times 2) + (\%F_3 \times 3) + (\%F_4 \times 4) + (\%F_5 \times 5) + (\%F_6 \times 6) + (\%F_7 \times 7) + (\%F_8 \times 8) + (\%F_9 \times 9) + (\%F_{10} \times 10)) / 11$$

Where:

F₀ is the frequency of respondents who answered 0

F₁ is the frequency of respondents who answered 1

F₂ is the frequency of respondents who answered 2

So on to F₁₀ to answer 10 of the scores used in the list of questions

4.2. Selling Competence

The Selling Competency variable is measured using 5 (five) indicators by Houtian & Co (2022) namely product specialty knowledge (X1), ability to describe complete product knowledge according to needs (X2), adaptability in each sale (X3), ability to sell creatively regarding product superiority (X4), and the ability to provide solutions to customer questions

(X5). The assessment of each of these indicators is calculated from the answers to closed questions on the questionnaire.

The range of index values is 10-100, the average total variable index of Selling Competence can be categorized as high, namely 88.0%. The table also shows that the product specialty knowledge indicator (X1) has the highest value compared to the other indicators in the Selling Competency variable, which is equal to 90.5%. Then followed by the indicator Ability to describe complete product knowledge according to needs (X2) of 88.4%, Ability to provide solutions to customer questions (X5) of 87.5%, Adaptability in each sale (X3) of 87.3 % and the indicator of the ability to sell creatively regarding product superiority (X4) has the smallest index value of 86.3%. This shows that the five indicators in the Selling Competency variable can be used as benchmarks in this study.

Based on the index value, the views/opinions of the respondents regarding what was asked in the questionnaire (open questions) can be accommodated as findings in research, to accommodate the views or opinions of respondents on open questions can be summarized by combining them in one representative sentence, if they cannot be summarized or combined, it is presented as a separate point.

4.3. Relationship Quality

The variable Quality of Relationships is measured using 4 (four) indicators by (Ghzaiei & Akrou, 2012), namely mutual sharing of information (X6), mutual need (X7), mutual trust (X8), and maintaining close relationships (X9). The assessment of each of these indicators is calculated from the answers to closed questions on the questionnaire. The value of each indicator is the result of descriptive statistics using index number measurement techniques. The index value range is 10-100, the average total index variable Quality of Relationships can be categorized as high, which is equal to 90.1%. In table 4.4 it also shows that the indicator Maintaining the closeness of the relationship (X9) has the highest value compared to the other indicators in the Relationship Quality variable, which is equal to 92.9%. Then followed by the indicator of mutual sharing of information (X6) of 89.7%, mutual trust (X8) of 88.8%, and the indicator of mutual need (X7) has the smallest index value of 88.7%. This shows that the four indicators in the Quality of Relationship variable can be used as benchmarks in this study.

Based on the index value, the views/opinions of the respondents regarding what was asked in the questionnaire (open questions) can be accommodated as findings in research, to accommodate the views or opinions of respondents on open questions can be summarized by

combining them in if it can't be condensed or summarized into a single example sentence, each is presented as a distinct point.

4.4. Selling Experience

The selling experience variable is measured using 4 (four) indicators by Donassolo & De Matos (2014), namely experience in selling various product variants (X10), experience selling to various customer classes (X11), experience in dealing with competitors (X12), and experience in adjusting to customers (X13). The assessment of each of these indicators is calculated from the answers to closed questions on the questionnaire.

The index value range is 10-100, the average total index of the Selling Experience variable can be categorized as high, namely 86.8%. Table 4.6 also shows that the Experienced indicator in adapting to customers (X13) has the highest value compared to the other indicators in the Selling Experience variable, which is equal to 88.5%. Then followed by the Experienced selling indicators to various customer classes (X11) and experienced selling a variety of product variants (X10) has a relatively similar value of 86.5%, and the Experienced indicator in dealing with competitors (X12) has the smallest index value of 85.7%. This shows that the four indicators in the Selling Experience variable can be used as benchmarks in this study.

Based on the index value, the views/opinions of the respondents regarding what was asked in the questionnaire (open questions) can be accommodated as findings in research, to accommodate the views or opinions of respondents on open questions can be summarized by combining them in one representative sentence, if they cannot be summarized or combined, it is presented as a separate point.

4.5. Salesforce Performance

The Salesforce Performance variable is measured using 5 (five) indicators by Purwantini et al., (2020), namely sales target achievement (X14), sales volume (X15), rupiah growth in the number of sales (X16), growth in the number of customers (X17), and selling beyond the target of other sales (X18). The assessment of each of these indicators is calculated from the answers to closed questions on the questionnaire. The range of index values is 10-100, the average total index of the Salesforce Performance variable can be categorized as high, namely 80.3%. Table 4.8 also shows that the growth indicator for the number of subscribers (X17) has the highest value compared to other indicators in the Salesforce Performance variable, which is 81.9%. Then followed by the indicator Rupiah growth in the number of sales (X16) of 81.3%, Sales

volume (X15) of 80.7%, Achievement of sales targets (X14) of 80.6% and the indicator Selling exceeds the target of other sales (X18) of 76.8%. This shows that the four indicators in the Salesforce Performance variable can be used as benchmarks in this study. Based on the index value, the views/opinions of the respondents regarding what was asked in the questionnaire (open questions) can be accommodated as findings in research, to accommodate the views or opinions of respondents on open questions can be summarized by combining them in one representative sentence, if they cannot be summarized or combined, it is presented as a separate point.

4.6. Data Analysis and Research Model Testing

Data analysis and research hypothesis testing used the Structural Equation Models (SEM) approach. The model testing results were declared Fit, as recommended by Ferdinand, (2014a). The results of hypothesis testing are shown in table 2. Based on the results of data processing, it shows that all the hypotheses proposed (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5) are accepted.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

Variabels	Standardized β	p-value	CR	Results
Selling competence -> Salesforce performance	0.50	0.00	3.45	H1 accepted
Relationship quality -> Salesforce performance	0.34	0.02	2.12	H2 accepted
Selling competence -> Relationship quality	0.77	0.00	4.67	H3 accepted
Selling experience -> Relationship quality	0.32	0.03	2.27	H4 accepted
Selling experience -> Salesforce performance	0.26	0.02	2.87	H5 accepted

4.7. Discussion

Due to times and technology have changed, companies must pay attention to product differentiation to set their products apart from those of their competitors. Selling experience is also thought to have a significant impact. Additional studies Mutari (2016a) and Singh & Das (2013), an experienced salesforce will have useful experience. A salesforce with experience will have a favorable impact on his performance benefiting his performance results through his selling ability, according to other research Mutari (2016b) and Singh & Das (2013) through the ability to sell it. In order to elicit emotions and sentiments that influence marketing, particularly sales, customer service representatives can furnish clients with information and chances to encounter the advantages of the merchandise or service. A salesforce that has a selling

experience has an impact on marketing, especially sales, can help differentiate a product from competitors' products, build a company's identity and image, drive innovation, and encourage trial, purchase. As a result, it will increase selling competence, salesforce performance and goal achievement. On the other hand, having a selling experience influence a good relationship quality with customer because long-term relationship needs a long-term maintenance and factors to make a loyal consumption.

Selling competence is one of the factors that can increase relationship quality. Selling is not only about increasing profit, but to make a customer value by having the ability to have a product specialty knowledge, ability to describe complete product knowledge according to needs, adaptability in each sale, ability to sell creatively regarding product superiority, and the ability to provide solutions to customer questions. By having all of the competence and behavior, a salesforce that has a direct interact with potential customers which can ultimately maximize the value of their build a strong relationship quality. Besides a good sales competence can influence salesforce performance because selling also needs a good impression to make a customer willing to buy our products.

The findings of this study align closely with several urban planning theories, particularly those emphasizing the role of infrastructure, transportation networks, and urban growth strategies in enhancing business operations and salesforce performance. Theories such as the Central Place Theory and the Growth Pole Theory highlight the importance of strategic location and infrastructure development in facilitating economic activities and improving accessibility. The study's results demonstrate how these theories manifest in real-world scenarios, particularly in the coastal urban area of Semarang.

The Central Place Theory, which posits that cities function as central points for the distribution of goods and services, is evident in how Semarang's strategic location on the Java Sea coast supports its role as a production and development hub. The Growth Pole Theory, which suggests that economic development is concentrated around certain key areas or "poles," is reflected in the development of infrastructure and transportation networks in Semarang, driving business activities and salesforce performance.

The study's findings offer valuable insights for urban planning practices and policies, particularly in reducing disaster risk in coastal areas. Urban planners and policymakers can leverage these insights to develop strategies that enhance the resilience of coastal urban areas to environmental and economic challenges.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been done, so that the performance of the Salesforce can be increased, it can be done through some factors. Where the selling experience on the quality of the relationship and the competence of selling on the salesforce performance affects it this is because a salesforce who has the competence to sell is necessarily good at selling because selling also requires art or is called the art of selling. From the description given above, it is clear that selling experience and relationship quality can improve salesforce performance. Policymakers should encourage economic diversification to reduce dependency on a single industry, thereby enhancing overall economic resilience.

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