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EMAIL VERSUS FACE-TO-FACE NEGOTIATIONS: PERSPECTIVES OF SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE EMPLOYEES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Abstract: *This research aims to identify the differences between email negotiation and face-to-face negotiation with respect to negotiation process, negotiation flexibility, face-saving, level of collaboration, and appropriateness for cross-cultural negotiation. The survey questionnaire was distributed to the sales and customer service employees in many business organizations located in different regions of the United States of America. Data from 519 respondents (including both males and females) were analyzed using the one-sample t-test, two sample t-test, and Pearson Correlation. The findings reveal that the characteristics of face-to-face negotiation assist in smoothing the negotiation process more than that of email negotiation. Participants also tend to cooperate more in face-to-face negotiation than in email negotiation. However, participants prefer using email negotiation because they find it more flexible. They also feel that a face-threatening act is less likely to occur in an email negotiation than in a face-to-face negotiation. The findings also show that email negotiation could be more appropriate than face-to-face negotiation for the purpose of cross-cultural negotiation. This is because communicating via email minimizes the influence of culture on the negotiation process. Age and gender do not have any influence on the perspectives of participants regarding email negotiation versus face-to-face negotiation. The findings have significant implications for both business and dispute resolution. They contrast the differences between face-to-face negotiation and email negotiation and identify the situations in which each of these types could be most appropriate.*

Key words: *Negotiation process; Face-to-face negotiation; Face-saving; Email negotiation; Cross-cultural negotiation.*

The JEL Classification*: M310, M100.*

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INTRODUCTION

Negotiation is a commonly used process in various aspects of life, such as conflict resolution, business deals, and even in everyday life. In times prior to the technological revolution, negotiation was mainly conducted in person. More recently, communication by means of modern technology has become commonplace. Negotiation can now be conducted via email, video conference, or other electronic means. Email negotiation, specifically, has become a communication bridge between organizations and nations, with the help of which economic and commercial exchanges are achieved. Email negotiation always occurs in international negotiations (Bülow, 2011).

Email allows organizations from different parts of the world to negotiate with each other and conclude business deals. Moreover, email allows customers to negotiate with companies domestically and internationally (business to consumer e-commerce). Around 85% of business negotiations are achieved via email (McCuien, 2020). Many organizations devote resources to contact customers and to respond to their concerns via email.

Practically, email negotiation could substitute face-to-face negotiation. Issues, deals, and even conflicts could be negotiated daily via email. However, the question that needs to be addressed is to what extent email negotiation would influence the characteristics of negotiation. This research evaluates email negotiation versus face-to-face negotiation with respect to the negotiation process, negotiation flexibility, face-saving, level of collaboration, and appropriateness for cross-cultural negotiation. The following hypotheses are to be tested:

H1: The process of negotiation may run more smoothly in face-to-face negotiation than in email negotiation.

H2: Email negotiation may be preferred over face-to-face negotiation.

H3: Parties are subject to face-threatening acts in face-to-face negotiation more than in email negotiation.

H4: Parties may adopt a more cooperative style in face-to-face negotiation than in email negotiation.

H5: Cross-cultural negotiation is better conducted via email than face-to-face.

There is insufficient research that definitively contrasts the differences between face-to-face negotiation and email negotiation with reference to the preceding aspects. This research surveys sales and customer service employees in various business organizations across the United States of America (USA) whose roles entail negotiating deals and resolving issues with clients. It provides greater understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of email negotiation; it also comprehensively explores whether specific demographic variables—namely, gender and age—influence the survey participants' perspectives of email versus face-to-face negotiation.

The next part explains the literature review, including the rationale for each of the study's hypotheses. Thereafter, the methodology of the study is discussed. This is followed by a presentation and discussion of the study's results. The final section concludes the paper.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Fundamentally, there is no difference between email and face-to-face negotiations. The essential components of negotiation exist in both types: parties, issues, and communications. The principal difference lies in the medium of communication. Negotiation basically relies on multiple communications, (Nierenberg, 1981) (Sengupta, 2011). Parties deliver their interests and positions through messages, either verbally (such as conversation) or nonverbally (such as written in an email or letter) (Robbins & Judge, 2017). It is argued in the literature that the communication medium of email offers advantages in negotiation. For example, in email negotiation, communication is more pointed and direct, whereas communication in face-to-face negotiation offers the parties more scope to understand each other's perspectives (Carmel, Herniter, & Nunamaker, 1993). In addition, email can convey more useful information to the counterparty because negotiators can include attachments as well as express many thoughts and ideas in the email, (Bülow, 2011) (Geiger & Parlamis, 2014). Similarly, significant amounts of varied information can be exchanged through email negotiation, leading to a better understanding (Bhappu & Barsness, 2016). Finally, some messages can be better conveyed in email negotiation than face-to-face negotiation, especially those requiring privacy to facilitate a better communication between the parties (Hames, 2012).

In contrast, face-to-face communication is rich with both verbal and nonverbal cues. This is a great advantage for negotiators to understand each other's positi-

ons, interests, and reactions. Relying only on reading and interpreting written messages (like in email negotiation) may be subject to errors. Nonverbal cues play in delivering messages and conveying meaning beyond what is verbal (Hendon, Hendon, & Herbig, 1996) . Individuals rely on nonverbal cues to interpret and deliver messages for a better understanding (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2014). In addition, nonverbal cues assist in enforcing an understanding between parties (Galin, Gross, & Gosalker, 2007). Media Richness Theory similarly stresses that interpersonal communication assists in transmitting information clearly due to the presence of gestures and nonverbal cues (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Face-to-face communication provides parties with the opportunities to apply effective communication skills, active listening, and reflective listening in negotiation (Picard, 2002). Using communication skills effectively, assists in a better understanding among individuals (Katz & Lawyer, 1985). Parties can also convey their emotions through face-to-face negotiation. Emotions of individuals can be better understood in face-to-face negotiation than via email negotiation, (Byron, 2008) (Laubert & Parlamis, 2019). Emotion is an integral part of communication, and as such emotions assist parties to recognize each other's feelings (Bolton, 1986) (Spradlin, 2003).

Finally, face-to-face negotiations allow parties to build rapport. Rapport lays the groundwork for effective communication. Authors stress the significance of building rapport for resolving issues in negotiation such as, (Drolet & Morris, 2000). Unlike face-to-face negotiation, email negotiation is not suitable for parties who have not yet built rapport (Regina, 2000).

Based on what these studies have proposed, it could be inferred that despite the advantages of email negotiation as a communication medium, face-to-face negotiation may be better at facilitating an understanding between parties. Ultimately, this would be reflected on the smooth running of the negotiation process in face-to-face negotiation. The first hypothesis is stated as follows:

H1: The process of negotiation run more smoothly in face-to-face negotiation than in email negotiation.

Negotiation always requires coordination between parties and scheduling meetings forms a part of the preparation for negotiation. In the case of face-to-face negotiation, parties may schedule negotiation sessions in advance either via email or phone, for example. There has to be some flexibility for the parties to find a

mutually fitting time in their schedules. However, if the parties reside far apart, it may take longer to schedule and conduct the negotiation. In email negotiation, there is no specific time for start or end, such that parties can continue negotiation according to their availability. Scheduling and holding meetings via electronic communication is easier and overcomes many challenges arising from time zone differences (Singh, Marinova, & Singh, 2020) .

By its nature, negotiations, whether via email or face-to-face, trigger several pressures, stresses, tensions, and emotions, as each party tries to convince the other. In addition, obstacles, objections, and resistance arise when confronting critical issues. The negotiation process is generally characterized as stressful (Eunson, 2007) (Presman, 2016). However, the intensity of the stress varies according to the medium of communication. In e-communication, tensions may be lessened due to the absence of nonverbal cues which are present in interpersonal communications (Galin, Gross, & Gosalker, 2007).

Face-to-face negotiation provides opportunities for the parties to reflect before making decisions; for example, a party can request a break to consult with the team members. The parties can also agree to postpone negotiation to refer decisions to executive managers in their respective organizations (Hindle, 1998). Yet, email negotiation grants parties even more time to reflect and make decisions than face-to-face negotiation allows. In email negotiation, parties can carefully review messages before responding (Geiger & Parlamis, 2014). In addition, in email negotiation, a party can reply according to her or his availability and readiness (Regina, 2000).

Both face-to-face negotiation and email negotiation offer flexibility. However, email negotiation offers more flexibility in terms of arranging and conducting the negotiation and is subject to less stresses than face-to-face negotiation. This second hypothesis is stated as follows:

H2: Email negotiation is preferred over face-to-face negotiation.

Face-saving is one of the critical aspects of negotiation where each party tries to avoid losing face. Authors stress the importance of face-saving in negotiation, particularly when parties may be reluctant to change their positions to avoid losing face, such as, (Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2005) (Kendall, 2010). Politeness theory explains that there are positive and negative facets of face (Hassan, 2011). Negative face reflects that a party refuses to be dictated to by another,

while positive face reflects one's desire to be respected by others (Hassan, 2011). Both these types are critical in negotiation. However, negative face may concern parties more because it occurs frequently in negotiation when one party tries to impose solutions or restrictions on the other.

Parties in email negotiation may be hostile to some extent. Parties may use harsh words in email negotiation, whereas in face-to-face negotiation they have an immediate opportunity to apologize for and retract what has been said (Regina, 2000). Parties in email negotiations may more easily vent their negative emotions since there is no direct confrontation between the parties (Bhappu & Barsness, 2016). This might occur when parties do not have an already stable relationship and nor do they care about building strong relationships.

When considering the nature of negotiation via email, we expect to find that the probability for interactions in email negotiation is less than in face-to-face negotiation. Interactions could be a potential threat to negative face when communicating directly (McGlone & Giles, 2011). In addition, the influence of power in email negotiation may be less than in face-to-face negotiation. Power is distanced more in email negotiation than it is in face-to-face negotiation (Johnson & Cooper, 2009). The more equal power both parties have, the less likely it is for one party to impose solutions on the other (Jeong, 2000).

Furthermore, discussions in email negotiation might be less embarrassing for parties due to the lack of physical presence. On the other hand, face-to-face negotiation may be conducted between teams involving many members where the parties avoid being placed in embarrassing situations (Hindle, 1998). Style of negotiation via email might be more polite than in the case of face-to-face, though this depends also on the parties, their issues, and their relationship (Duthler, 2006).

There is no conclusive study in the reviewed literature indicating which type of negotiation facilitates face-saving. There are criticisms of both email and face-to-face negotiation in this regard, but by comparing their overall characteristics, it is probable that email negotiation lessens chances of a face-threatening act. This third hypothesis is stated as follows:

H3: Parties are subject to face-threatening acts in face-to-face negotiation more than in email negotiation.

There are two approaches are adopted in negotiation: competition and cooperation (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). Cooperation assists in satisfying the parties when it leads to win-win outcomes. Conversely, competition leads to disappointment in win-lose outcomes. The differences in the medium of communication could impact cooperation among parties in email versus face-to-face negotiation. Email negotiation allows the parties to read and review the whole conversation repeatedly, leading to a better mutual understanding (Bhappu & Barsness, 2016). In addition, email negotiation provides parties an opportunity to express their viewpoints concurrently when they are online, leading to cooperation (Lam & Schaubroeck, 2000). Moreover, neither party can control the conversation in email negotiation because of the equal opportunity of voicing perspectives, which also paves the way for greater cooperation and understanding (Nunamaker, Dennis, Valacich, & Vogel, 1991).

The negotiation process could be affected in an email negotiation due to the different characteristics of e-communications versus interpersonal communications in face-to-face negotiation (Johnson & Cooper, 2009). Face-to-face negotiation is more likely to provide more accurate and reliable information than email negotiation, (Daft & Lengel, 1986) (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2014). Interpreting nonverbal cues in negotiation assists in decoding and understanding messages clearly (Bhappu & Barsness, 2016). The more the negotiating parties obtain accurate information, the clearer is their vision of the issues at stake, helping them to take appropriate decisions, (Katz & Lawyer, 1985) (Alsharif & Alyousef, 2017).

The process of negotiating face-to-face is generally faster than via email, and this advantage facilitates greater understanding in face-to-face negotiation (Galin, Gross, & Gosalker, 2007). The longer a negotiation drags on without justification, the lesser enthusiasm the two parties might have to resolve their differences. Each party's opinions may even change over time, or new issues may arise altering the course of the negotiation. A delay in responding via email by one party may be interpreted by the other party as procrastination or a tactic to gain time, thereby generating negative sentiments toward the counterparty.

Face-to-face negotiation allows parties to build stronger relationships than they could via electronic negotiations (Kumar, 2018). Building relationships encourages trust, which is essential for reaching mutual understanding in negotiation. Trust between parties assists in driving the negotiation toward settlement, (Fisher & Brown, 1989) (Kriesberg, 2007). Milestones might be more easily reached in

face-to-face negotiation than via electronic negotiation (Stuhlmacher & Citera, 2005).

These studies indicate that there is an argument about which type of negotiation fosters greater cooperation. Even so, by evaluating the characteristics of both types, it might be presumed that face-to-face negotiation leads to closer cooperation than email negotiation. This fourth hypothesis is thus stated as follows:

H4: Parties adopt a more cooperative style in face-to-face negotiation than in email negotiation.

Cross-cultural negotiations take place on a daily basis. This type of negotiation is delicate, as parties from different cultures have diverse negotiation styles (Potter & Balthazard, 2000). The diversity ranges across various aspects: communication styles, emotions, nonverbal cues, and time orientation. Individuals in low-context cultures versus high-context cultures deliver and interpret messages in divergent ways (Hendon, Hendon, & Herbig, 1996). Low-context cultures focus on direct speech, while high-context cultures emphasize implied speech (Augsburger, 1992). This stark difference in communication styles may lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding, particularly if the parties are unfamiliar with each other's styles, (Wellein, 2008) (Dreachslin, Gilbert, & Malone, 2013).

People from different cultures express and view emotions differently. Anger in the American culture is expressed less explosively than, say, in Mediterranean cultures (Augsburger, 1992). Cultures show different sensitivities to dealing with and expressing emotions, a matter that may cause misunderstandings (LeBaron, 2003). Besides this, in cross-cultural negotiation, parties approach time differently. In monochronic cultures (e.g., the Nordic countries), individuals focus on a single object or task at a time; conversely, in polychronic cultures (e.g., South American countries), individuals attend to multiple objects and tasks concurrently (LeBaron, 2003) .

Differences in the medium of face-to-face communication and email communication might indicate which type could be more suitable for cross-cultural negotiation. We noted earlier that communication via email is not as easily corrected as in face-to-face communication and might affect the negotiation process, (Daft & Lengel, 1986) (Galin, Gross, & Gosalker, 2007). Written messages in email negotiation can be misinterpreted, and correcting this extends the time it takes to reach an agreement. Conversely, in cross-cultural negotiation, a lack of

interaction between the parties via email negotiation decreases the possibilities for misunderstanding, especially if the parties are not familiar with each other's negotiation styles. The more individuals interact with each other, the more likely are they to encounter miscommunication, and vice versa (Walesh, 2012). Otherwise, the absence of nonverbal cues and emotions is considered an advantage in email negotiation, even though both these aspects are important for delivering messages successfully, (Spradlin, 2003) (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2014). Nonverbal communication could be a source of misunderstanding in cross-cultural negotiation. As such, the email medium could be more suitable for international negotiation (Ambrose, Marshall, & Lynch, 2008).

To conclude, there are no specific studies that show decisively which of email negotiation or face-to-face negotiation is more appropriate for cross-cultural negotiation. Both are used in international negotiation frequently, and in many cases, both types lead to resolution of issues. However, based on the preceding review, it might be presumed that email negotiation could assist in reducing cultural barriers due to its characteristic lack of physical and verbal interactions. Thus, the fifth and final hypothesis is stated as follows:

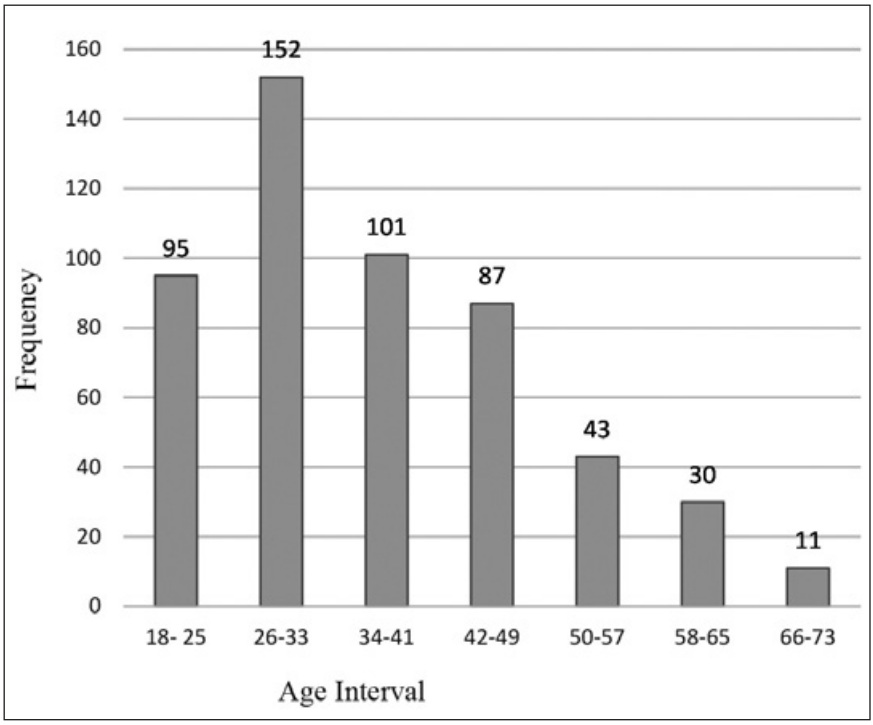
H5: Cross-cultural negotiation is better conducted via email than face-to-face.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A survey was sent to 700 randomly-selected sales and customer service employees in the USA via Amazon Mechanical Turk and SurveyMonkey panels (and also hosted by SurveyMonkey). The two panels have been used frequently in academic researches, (Riordan & Kreuz, 2010), (Wiebe, Littman, & Kaczorowski, 2015), (Elhai, Levine, Dvorak, & Hall, 2016), (Minton, Leary, & Upadhyaya, 2018), (Riggs & Due, 2018), (Weeks & Stenstrom, 2020). The final number of survey respondents is 519 (with 52% of these being collected via the SurveyMonkey panel, and the remaining 48% collected via Amazon Mechanical Turk panel). The percentage of male participants is 49%, and that of female participants is 51%. Figure 1 as well as Table 1 summarize relevant demographic information, specifically, age and residency, respectively.

Figure 1. Frequency distribution of participants according to age intervals



Source: Author's survey

Table 1. Frequency distribution and percentage of participants according to their geographic residency in the USA

REGION	Frequency	Percentage
Northeast	142	27.4%
Midwest	92	17.7%
Southeast	142	27.4%
West	79	15.2%
Southwest	64	12.3%
Total	519	100.0%

Source: Author's survey

Instrument

The survey has 29 questions, requesting participants to respond according to the issues and disputes that they resolved, and the deals that they negotiated with clients and customers via email and face-to-face. Four questions relate to the de-

mographic factors of gender, age, and region. The remainder of the survey sections evaluate different aspects of negotiation: negotiation process (six questions); collaboration process (six questions), flexibility of negotiation (five questions), politeness (four questions), and cross-cultural negotiation (five questions). The internal consistency reliability for these survey sections has been measured (the number of participants included in this test being 118 males and females working in sales and customer service roles in the USA); and the results show that the survey is reliable as reflected in Table 2. Note that a Cronbach's Alpha value is acceptable if it is 0.7 or above, (Leung, 2001) (Connor, 2020).

Table 2. Internal reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha

NEGOTIATION ASPECTS	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of survey questions
Negotiation	0.76	6
Collaboration	0.78	6
Flexibility	0.71	5
Politeness	0.70	4
Cross-cultural	0.73	5

Source: Author's survey

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is argued in the literature that email negotiations are more informative than face-to-face negotiation and that this facilitates the process of communication, (Bülow, 2011) (Hames, 2012). However, majority of participants in the current research favor face-to-face negotiations over email negotiations, viewing the following aspects of face-to-face negotiations positively: understanding among parties, the focus on negotiation, genuine communication, directness of intentions, productivity of the discussion, and meaningful conversation. The results show that participants' average points (Mean) for the questions relating to the negotiation process is 3.8362, which is significantly more than 3 (refer to Table 3), and thus the first hypothesis could not be rejected. Face-to-face negotiation enjoy advantages over email negotiation when it comes to the accuracy of information, using nonverbal cues, the meaningfulness of messages, and enabling the parties to build relationships (Drolet & Morris, 2000).

The results prove that majority of participants prefer negotiating via email over face-to-face negotiation. The participants' average points (Mean) for the questions relating to flexibility is 3.3961, which is significantly more than 3 (refer

to Table 3); thus we fail to reject the second hypothesis. Participants feel that email negotiation is less stressful than face-to-face negotiation. In addition, participants believe that email negotiation is more flexible regarding decision-making, and the informal nature of its procedure. Studies in the literature reviewed above explain that email negotiation exhibits some preferred characteristics over face-to-face negotiation regarding the ease of conducting the negotiation (Singh, Marinova, & Singh, 2020) and providing an opportunity for one party to reply to the other party (Regina, 2000) .

Some studies argue that face-threatening acts have more potential to arise in email negotiation than face-to-face negotiation. Parties can vent their emotions in email negotiation easily, taking advantage of the lack of personal interaction between the parties (Regina, 2000). However, the results of this research show that email negotiation may assist in face-saving more than in face-to-face negotiation. The participants' average points (Mean) for politeness is 3.4374, which is significantly more than 3 (refer to Table 3), thus the third hypothesis could not be rejected. The majority of participants regard email negotiation more positively with respect to avoiding to place the other party in a weak position, avoiding to criticize the other party, avoiding to blame the other party for negotiation deadlock, and using accommodating words in negotiation. These findings support the studies reviewed in the literature that suggest characteristics of email negotiation may assist in making the style of negotiation politer.

The fourth hypothesis seeks to compare the level of cooperation between email and face-to-face negotiations. The results indicate that we fail to reject the hypothesis. The participants' average points (Mean) is 3.8597, which is significantly more than 3 (refer to Table 3). The majority of participants regard face-to-face negotiation more positively than email negotiation with respect to the following aspects: understanding the other party's concerns and interests, separating the other party from the issue, tending to compromise, and dispensing with an intervention by a third party. There are no specific studies that compare the two types of the negotiation with regard to this matter. However, there are some studies indicating that the characteristics of face-to-face negotiation might lead to cooperation more than email negotiation does. For example, face-to-face negotiation paves the way for parties to build relationships (Kumar, 2018), and positively affects the process of communication (Johnson & Cooper, 2009).

Regarding the cross-cultural negotiation hypothesis, the results show that email negotiation is more preferred in a cross-cultural negotiation context than in

a face-to-face negotiation. The participants' average points (Mean) is 3.4524, which is significantly more than 3 (refer to Table 3), thus the fifth hypothesis too could not be rejected. The participants regard email negotiation in a cross-cultural context more positively than face-to-face negotiation with respect to the following aspects: communication flexibility, politeness, impact of variation in negotiation styles, outcomes of negotiation, and differences in time orientation. Parties from different cultures may face difficulty negotiating due to their varied communication and negotiation styles (Wellein, 2008) (Dreachslin, Gilbert, & Malone, 2013). Yet, using email (whenever possible) in negotiation may help to avoid such obstacles.

Table 3. One-Sample t-test (testing the five hypotheses)

HYPOTHESIS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Negotiation	519	3.8362	.68456	27.829	518	.000*
Flexibility	519	3.3961	.75110	12.015	518	.000*
Politeness	519	3.4374	.77729	12.819	518	.000*
Collaboration	519	3.8597	.68746	28.488	518	.000*
Cross-cultural	519	3.4524	.77531	13.293	518	.000*

*Significant at the level of confidence 95 %, and α: 0.05

Source: Author's calculations

Table 4. Summary of the hypotheses

HYPOTHESIS	Support	Finding
H1	Yes	The negotiation process in face-to-face negotiation is smoother than email negotiation.
H2	Yes	Email negotiation is preferred over face-to-face negotiation.
H3	Yes	Email negotiation lessens face-threatening more than face-to-face negotiation.
H4	Yes	Collaboration is more prevalent in face-to-face negotiation than in email negotiation.
H5	Yes	Email negotiation is more appropriate for cross-cultural negotiation than face-to-face negotiation.

Source: Author's calculations

This research also explores whether gender and age influence the perspective of participants regarding the dimensions measured in this research, namely, negotiation process, negotiation flexibility, face-saving, level of collaboration, and appropriateness for cross-cultural negotiation. The literature has not touched

upon the influence of age and gender on these dimensions. Thus, it is important to explore whether these factors influence the perspectives of the negotiators. The results show that age and gender do not have an influence on any of these dimensions (refer to Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5. The relationship between age and the five dimensions measured in this research using Pearson Correlation

DIMENSION		**Age (in years)**
Negotiation process	Pearson Correlation	.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.064
	N	519
Collaboration section	Pearson Correlation	.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.189
	N	519
Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	-.086-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.053
	N	519
Politeness	Pearson Correlation	-.177-**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	513
Cross-cultural	Pearson Correlation	-.094-*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033
	N	519

Source: Author's calculations

Table 6. Two-sample t-test to measure the difference between males and females regarding the five dimensions

	Gender:	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Negotiation process	Male	254	3.8701	.71219	1.103	.270**
	Female	265	3.8038	.65670		
Collaboration section	Male	254	3.8924	.71284	1.062	.289**
	Female	265	3.8283	.66205		
Flexibility	Male	254	3.3488	.81821	-1.401	.160**
	Female	265	3.4415	.67908		
Politeness	Male	254	3.4596	.81524	.639	.523**
	Female	265	3.4160	.74001		
Cross-cultural	Male	254	3.4472	.79363	-.148	.882**
	Female	265	3.4574	.75881		

** Not significant at 95 % confidence level, and α: 0.05

Source: Author's calculations

The findings of this research have practical implications for the field of negotiation, whether business negotiation or conflict resolution. They demonstrate that there are cases in which email negotiations may be more appropriate than face-to-face negotiation. In the case of cross-cultural negotiations, communicating via email assists parties in avoiding obstacles resulting from cultural differences. Moreover, the flexibility offered by email communication is generally an excellent option to facilitate negotiations between organizations or individuals residing far apart. This is essential in the light of globalization whereby communications between people and companies from different parts of the world have increased. Conversely, the findings also reveal that there are some cases in which face-to-face negotiation is more appropriate than email negotiation. Critical issues, whether in business negotiation or conflict resolution, which require a smooth negotiating process and improved cooperation, are negotiated better face-to-face than via email.

CONCLUSION

After reviewing and analyzing relevant literature, this study proposed several hypotheses for contrasting email negotiation against face-to-face negotiation. The findings supporting the hypotheses reveal the suitability of each of the negotiation types for different cases. While the field of electronic negotiations is still

being investigated, this comparative study enhances and contributes to the research by focusing on various aspects of negotiation—namely, the negotiation process, flexibility of negotiation, face-saving, level of cooperation, and appropriateness for cross-cultural negotiation. Although much of this research is significant, the cultural factor has not been adequately addressed. The sample was limited to ethnicities existing in the USA, and is thus not sufficiently culturally diverse in a global context, particularly due to the limitation of access to other populations in other cultures. Including culture as a factor in the comparative analysis would reveal differences between email negotiation and face-to-face negotiation from other perspectives. Culture is one of the significant factors influencing negotiation process and style (Brett, 2013). Finally, it would be useful to conduct future studies contrasting face-to-face negotiation with other types of negotiation, such as negotiation by phone. Such research will improve our understanding of the advantages or disadvantages of other types of virtual negotiations relative to face-to-face negotiation.

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