

The influence of negotiation behavior on supplier satisfaction: a case study

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ABSTRACT

In the current business environment, suppliers became increasingly important due to their scarcity. It is therefore also important to keep a supplier's satisfaction in mind. In buyer-supplier relationships negotiations often take place where buyers and suppliers both negotiate to get the best deal for themselves in a win-lose situation, showing distributive negotiation behavior, or in a win-win situation, showing integrative negotiation behavior. In this research the main question will be how these negotiation behaviors affect a supplier satisfaction, with distributive negotiation behavior arguably affecting it negatively and integrative negotiation behavior positively. Qualitative data was collected from five firms in the Netherlands, operating on different levels in the market and in different sectors and analysed using case-oriented research and comparative analysis. Literature has shown integrative behavior to lead to more satisfactory outcomes and distributive to less, while a factor that increases a supplier's satisfaction is relational behavior and showing openness. Findings have shown that integrative behavior to affect a supplier's satisfaction positively, however distributive behavior does not seem to affect it negatively which reinforces recent studies which showed buyers to prefer distributive and competitive negotiation styles. Limitations were small sample size and overall general findings, where future studies should focus more per sector or more on one of the behaviors. Findings also reinforce the negotiation continuum where distributive and integrative negotiation is interplayed.

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Keywords

Negotiation, negotiation behavior, supplier satisfaction, buyer-supplier relationship, case study, comparative method

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1. INTRODUCTION

Negotiations are a wide and common practice among humankind, not only among individuals in business but also in an individual's daily life. Over the last decades, negotiation has been an important field of study within organizational behavior and management science (Brett and Thompson, 2015), mostly due to the importance of effective negotiation in a buyer-supplier relationship, looking at its potential to impact this relationship and thus the eventual outcomes (Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo, 2019). Negotiations can vary in importance and in effort, however, whether simple or complex, negotiations boil down to people, communication and influence (Narsimhan and Ungarala, 2016). Narrowing it down to a definition in the context of pure exchange, it can be argued negotiation is a process in which parties exchange goods or services and attempt to agree upon the exchange rate for them (Saeed, J. 2000). Tangpong et al. (2009) studied whether an agent's assertive and cooperative behavior could influence opportunism in the buyer-supplier relationship. An earlier study by Clopton (1984) saw evidence found that supplier's negotiation behavior affects the buyer's savings on the outcome of the negotiation. Moreover, a recent article by Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo (2019) also found results which claim that supplier negotiation behavior is a key determinant to another outcome of the negotiation, which is customer satisfaction. It is however still unclear whether certain behaviors applied by negotiating parties in these negotiations have an effect on supplier satisfaction. Supplier satisfaction is becoming more and more important in the buyer-supplier relationship, where suppliers are no longer competing for customers, but a new concept is being adapted where customers are actually competing for capable suppliers (Vos et al., 2016). Negotiation being of such intricate nature has led to many inconclusive models for depicting negotiation behaviors affecting the outcome of their relationships (Saorín-Iborra, Cubillo; 2019), where negotiation behavior is being explained as a dichotomy of either competitive or integrative behavior, however research concluded that it is needed to look at negotiation behavior through a wider range of options and branching out of the classic theory of dichotomy (Saorin-Iborra; 2008), ranging from *pure competitive* to *pure integrative*. In *Figure 1* this range is displayed. Connecting this new range of negotiation behaviors to the increasing importance of supplier satisfaction can thus lead to a greater understanding of the negotiation itself and reduce the immense complexity and help especially buyers to adapt their negotiation strategy to a more suitable approach towards their suppliers' preferences and thus eventually the influence on the performance of the buyer-supplier relationship. Reaching this new understanding will be done by interviewing suppliers and asking their perceptions of the negotiation process with their buyers.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Negotiation behavior

Negotiation has proven to be a necessary skill for business managers to acquire (Saeed, J., 2008). However, to apply such skills the negotiator would need to initiate a strategy. Such strategies would then be affected by the interests of the negotiators (Brett and Thompson, 2015). Regarding B2B negotiations, negotiators seem to search for long-term relationships where parties are satisfied and thus increase the success in a business relationship (Sigurdardottir et al., 2018). These interests could vary which eventually also leads to different negotiation strategies, styles, tactics and thus also behaviors. Part of the negotiation strategy applied is their negotiation style, thus which style the negotiator implements in his strategy with the opposing party. A well-known model by Thomas and Killmann (1974), also known as the TKI conflict

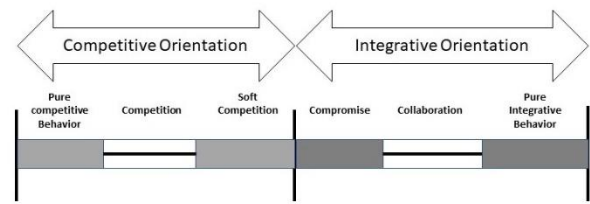


Figure 1 - Continuum of negotiation behavior (Saorín-Iborra, 2008)

mode instrument, is often used to determine these styles. Styles range from competitive, where negotiator is mostly worried about own concern rather than the concern of the opposition, to accommodating, where the negotiator is highly concerned for the opposition's concern. These styles have been laid into two dimensions, assertiveness and cooperativeness, where assertiveness is the rate of concern for his own interests and outcome, while cooperativeness is the rate of concern for the other's interests outcome. These two dimensions in the model can be related to Walton and McKersie's (1965) behavioral theory, where they distinguish between distributive and integrative behavior. Distributive behavior is classified as the behavior of focusing on coming out on top in negotiation and thus attempting to maximize own outcome (Lax and Sebenius, 1986). Integrative behavior on the other hand is classified as the behavior of focusing on the interests of both sides and maximizing outcome for all sides and thus creating value (Lax and Sebenius, 1986) and thus attaining joint benefits in a win/win situation (Walton & McKersie, 1965). There should be mentioned that there is a distinction between strategy and behavior (Saorín-Iborra, 2008) where strategy involves the general game plan of a negotiator towards the negotiation (Yuan, 1998) and behaviors are usually what operationalises that plan. Typically, negotiation behavior can be distinguished by tactics used by the negotiator, where tactics are actual applications of a negotiator's behavior, specifically focusing on behaviors used overtly or covertly by negotiators to move negotiations toward their desired result (Weingart et al. 1990; Narsimhan and Ungarala, 2016; Sigurdardottir et al., 2019). Lewicki and Robinson (1998) applied tactics considered as competitive and made the distinction between ethical and unethical negotiation tactics. Example of an tactic considered ethical is 'making demands greater than hoped for by opponent' or 'hiding the real bottom line from your opponent', while an example of an unethical tactic is 'falsely threatening to harm your opponent' or 'making your opponent believe that he must deal with you'. Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo (2019) compiled a set of integrative tactics by Adair and Brett (2005), Bolman et al. (2000), Kim et al. (2005) and Saorín-Iborra (2008b) in their research to assess integrative negotiation behavior. An example of such a tactic is 'ensuring understanding of counterpart's needs' or 'seeking mutual satisfaction of negotiators'. All in all, these studies represent a view of theories related to negotiation behavior where in a context of B2B negotiations, negotiators seemed to be more satisfied with an integrative negotiation process (Fleming and Hawes, 2017) while negotiators use both integrative and distributive tactics or actions in their negotiations depending on where in the process they are exactly (Preuss and van der Wijst, 2017) and the factor of which industry sector the negotiation takes place in weighs on the tactics and actions used by the parties (Sigurdardottir et al., 2018) which can also be due to the differing identities of negotiators between sectors which come with that distinction (Burton, 1990).

2.2 Supplier satisfaction

In recent years, supplier satisfaction has received more and more attention by researchers (Wong, 2000; Benton and Maloni, 2005; Essig and Amann, 2009; Ghijssen et al., 2009; Schiele et al., 2012; Vos et al., 2016). The nature of the buyer-supplier relationship focusing on supplier satisfaction has been scarce (Benton and Maloni, 2005), however companies are perceiving a renewed experience of 'reverse marketing' (Leenders and Blenkhorn, 1988), where the firm no longer focuses on the customer, but the customer on the firm. This argumentation is justified since importance of suppliers in all industries is undeniable (Essig and Amann, 2009). Moreover, this trend of 'reverse marketing' can be connected to the increasing scarcity of qualified suppliers (Cordón & Vollmann, 2008). Recently, Schiele et al. (2012) introduced three dimensions which connect to this trend, being customer attractiveness as the first stage, leading to supplier satisfaction in turn leading to preferred customer status. It is argued by Schiele et al. (2012) that supplier satisfaction can be achieved if the outcomes from the buyer-supplier dyad outway the supplier's expectations. Thus, should these expectations be met, no matter the exact nature of them, satisfaction will be an outcome. Wong (2000) argues that buyers should consider supplier satisfaction, which may lead to possible joint or cooperative efforts, which in turn affects the satisfaction of the buyer's customers, thereby declaring the importance of integrating supplier satisfaction with customer satisfaction. Benton and Maloni (2005) reaffirm this in their research, which showed a significant positive result for the degree of relationship on supplier satisfaction, thus implying that a relationship driven supply chain strategy should be applied instead of a performance based one if supplier satisfaction is to be promoted. Another definition of supplier satisfaction by Essig and Amann (2009, p. 104) is 'a supplier's feeling of fairness with regard to buyer's incentives and supplier's contributions within an industrial buyer-seller relationships'. It has been argued as well that unsatisfied suppliers may influence the quality of the buyer's end products in turn affecting the buyer's profitability. As mentioned earlier, a cooperative nature of relationship favors the one-sided relationship, since suppliers are now known for their importance in achieving competitive advantage and the increasing scarcity, which force buyers to rethink their supplier relationships mostly characterized as transactional in the past (Ghijssen et al. 2009; Maloni and Benton, 2000). Ghijssen et al. (2009) studied what could be the right strategy to affect supplier satisfaction positively and thus rethink their relationships, differentiating between indirect influence strategies and direct strategies. Results have shown that buyers should apply more indirect influence strategies, being information exchange or recommendations, to 'stimulate' supplier satisfaction. The most recent study by Vos et al. (2016) the following dimensions of satisfactory relationships were identified being growth opportunity, relational behavior, operative excellence and profitability. These dimensions are argueably key antecedents to supplier satisfaction, however when buyers do not have the economic capabilities to satisfy their suppliers other key dimensions being for example relational behavior can lead to satisfaction.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, the main framework of assessing negotiation behavior will be done by using the existent framework compiled by Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo (2019). In their study they classified negotiation behavior in a multidimensional framework, which as mentioned earlier adds up to the traditional dichotomy. The 5 dimensions are; 1) pure competitive behavior

2) competition 3) soft competition 4) compromise 5) collaboration 6) pure integrative behavior. Pure integrative behavior indicates that a negotiator applies integrative tactics, with low to no use of competitive actions, albeit not inappropriate. Collaboration entails a majority of integrative tactics being used with some competitive tactics, albeit not inappropriate. Compromise behavior involves frequent use of integrative tactics while moderately using competitive tactics, albeit not inappropriate. Soft competition entails use of integrative tactics but higher frequency of competitive tactics, included a few of which are considered inappropriate. Competition also entails use of integrative actions with even higher frequency of competitive tactics, included some which are considered inappropriate. Pure competitive behavior indicates that the negotiator is not using any integrative tactics, whereas he will utilize many competitive actions, both appropriate and inappropriate. Findings by Saorín and Cubillo (2019) indicate that there is a trend where suppliers apply more competitive than integrative behaviors, however it is not clear whether the same counts for buyer behavior. Ramsay (2004) mentions that the choice of a buyer to apply competitive behavior towards its suppliers in negotiations is understandable, which mostly has to do with the extent to which the buyer can exchange important information which in return may lead to suppliers obtaining more power in negotiation. However, with the development of the buyer-supplier relationship where the supplier is taking a more crucial role for buyers in some market sectors by showing selective behavior towards their buyers (Schiele, H., Calvi, R., Gibbert, M.; 2012), buyers may experience more pressure to share information with their suppliers. Schiele et al. (2012) also argue that it is important for a buyer to keep track of their supplier's satisfaction, mostly because suppliers always remain with the power to break the buyer-supplier relationship or may decrease its efforts towards it. A recent study by Vos et al. (2016) showed indications of relational behavior having a positive impact on this supplier satisfaction, where one of the aspects included in relational behavior is openness (Forker and Stannack; 2000). Thus, an indication can be made that suppliers prefer their buyers to show this openness in their negotiation behaviors, which strongly links with integrative behaviors where negotiators are open to their opposing parties with the goal of increasing both parties benefits (Walton and McKersie, 1965). This leads to one of the research questions being as followed;

RQ 1: Does integrative negotiation behavior by buyers positively affect a supplier's satisfaction?

In contrast, competitive or distributive behavior is often associated with negative outcomes. These outcomes do not necessarily only relate to profits and concessions made during the negotiation, but thus also the satisfaction or frustrations, so the emotional contrast (Ganesan, 1993). Furthermore, Ganesan (1993) also argued that competitive negotiation strategies complicate the conflict of negotiation instead of solving it. The basic measurement of distributive behavior can be determined as the situation when one of the parties has a higher concern for his or her own outcomes then for the opposing party (Walton and McKersie, 1965; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). As the indication earlier already mentioned, suppliers indicating that openness in the buyer-supplier relationship is of importance for their eventual satisfaction, the same could then be argued when the buyer does not show this openness and applies distributive or competitive negotiation behavior which leads to the other research question;

RQ 2: Does distributive negotiation behavior by buyers negatively affect a supplier's satisfaction?

Tabel 1 – Supplier characteristics

Firm	Year of establishment	Number of employees	Geographical scope	Market sector	Target market
A	1919	1200	Europe	Transport	Europe
B	2003	5	Worldwide	Wholesale	Benelux
C	2009	2	Europe	Wholesale	Europe
D	2003	8	Worldwide	Wholesale	Europe
E	2003	1	Netherlands	Services	Netherlands

4. METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

This research will be conducted by implementing qualitative multiple case research using the comparative method by Ragin (2014). This type of empirical analysis is applied because of two major aspects. The first aspect is that the goal of the research is to dive deeper into the topic of negotiation behavior. Quantitative analysis may limit the respondent’s capabilities of elaborating on their the behavioral process to an extent where it doesn’t reflect a real life situation anymore (Saorín-Iborra, 2008). It may help examining concepts in terms of frequency and amount, but does not examine concepts in terms of their meaning and interpretation in specific contexts (Ketokivi and Choi, 2014). However, to dive deeper into the negotiation behavior, this is a requirement. The second aspect is that this type of research allows the researcher to stay flexible while asking their questions in keeping a semi-structured in-depth style of interviewing with

the participant. Semi-structured interviews are used because it should contribute to the trustworthiness and reliability of the research (Kallio et al., 2016), while maintaining the ability to go in-depth when necessary. When the interview questions are responded to a satisfactory extent, the participant will be provided with two small questionnaire at the end. Reasoning for this, is that it can be checked whether the answers during the interview questions are in line with the outcome of the questionnaire and can thus help increase chances of data validity. Type of case research applied will be theory elaboration, since do not seek to test the current theory but rather elaborate it and expand the current empirical context (Ketokivi, Choi, 2014). This type of case research seems to suit the goals of the research mostly, due to complexity of behavior and in-depth execution of

analysis of it, also reasoned by Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo (2019). Decreasing that complexity is also done by adapting the comparative method by Ragin (2014) where results of the transcriptions are compared to each other in a table. Connecting the comparative method to multiple case study analysis allows the development of new possible insights which is thus based on comparison (Ragin, 2014; Miles et al., 2014) and leads to increased confidence in findings.

4.1 Unit of analysis and sample

In previous studies, such as the study by Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo (2018), the unit of analysis were buyers with a lot of expertise in negotiations, particularly from the supermarket sector. This research is mentioned because the framework from this research will be utilized, however in this research our unit of analysis will now be the supplier. It is chosen to not specifically focus on a specific sector of the market, since the goal of the research is to go in-depth into negotiation behavior overall. It is however required that the supplier has some experience with negotiations, preferably continuously. Suppliers are mostly labeled as sales managers, however it may also be the case that the supplier is labeled differently, which in this research could mostly be determined due to the size of the company, where small suppliers could give their responsibilities to other individuals in different positions in their company. The sample eventually was 5 participants of which all data could be used in this research. In **Table 1** an overview is given of characteristics of the suppliers interviewed.

4.2 Data collection

As mentioned earlier, data is mostly collected through interviewing of participants. The interview consists of three

Tabel 2 - Negotiation tactics/actions

Type	Action		
Inappropriate competitive	Misrepresentation Intentionally misrepresent factual information to your opponent when you know that he/she has already done this to you. Intentionally misrepresent factual information to your opponent in order to support your negotiating arguments or position.		
	Bluffing Led the other negotiator to believe that they can only get what they want by negotiating with you, when in fact they could go elsewhere and Promise that good things will happen to your opponent if he/she gives you what you want, even if you know that you can’t (or won’t) deliver those good things when the other’s cooperation is obtained. Threaten to harm your opponent if he/she doesn’t give you what you want, even if you know you will never follow through to carry out that threat.		
	Misrepresentation to opponent’s network Talk directly to the people who your opponent reports to, or is accountable to, and try to encourage them to defect your side. Threaten to make your opponent look weak or foolish in front of a boss or others to whom he/she is accountable. Talk directly to the people who your opponent reports to, or is accountable to, and tell them things that will undermine their confidence in your opponent as negotiator.		
	Inappropriate information collection Gain information about an opponent’s negotiating position by paying friends, associates, and contacts to get this information for you. Gain information about an opponent’s negotiating position by cultivating his/her friendship through expensive gifts, entertaining, or “personal favors”		
	Appropriate competitive	Traditional competitive bargaining Gain information about an opponent’s negotiating position and strategy by “asking around” in a network of your friends, associates, and contacts. Make an opening demand that is far greater than what one really hopes to settle for. Hide your real bottom line from your opponent. Convey a false impression that you are in absolutely no hurry to come to a negotiation agreement, thereby trying to put more time pressure on your opponent to concede quickly. Make an opening offer or demand so high (or low) that it seriously undermines your opponent’s confidence in his/her own ability to negotiate a satisfactory settlement.	
		Integrative	Integrative actions Ensure understanding of counterpart’s needs. Seek mutual satisfaction of negotiators. Ensure positive and productive personal relationship. Free flow of information among negotiators. Trust the position and information of other negotiators. Participation of all parties in the decision making process. Questions (statement in which source asks the target to reveal information about itself) Explanations (statement in which the source reveals information about any point required by the target) Self-disclosures (statement in which the source reveals information about itself)

parts; the main questions of the interview guide which you can find in **Appendix A**, adopted by Saorin-Iborra and Cubillo (2019), the second part being a questionnaire where participant is asked to fill in his or her perception regarding the use of negotiation tactics by the buyer, also adopted by Saorin-Iborra and Cubillo (2019), which can be found in **Appendix B**. The third part being a questionnaire where participant is asked to fill in his or her satisfaction towards the buyer discussed during the interviews measured in five dimensions of supplier satisfaction adopted by Vos et al. (2016) found in **Appendix C**.

In the main questions we asked the overall thoughts of the participants on how negotiators should behave, how their ideal negotiation looks like and what factors influence the outcome and the process. After the participant was asked to focus on a recent negotiation done with one of his or her buyers, where specific questions entailing that negotiation were asked. Examples of questions are why the participants thinks the buyer choose the participant as his or her potential or continuing supplier and what the end goal was for this specific negotiation.

The second questionnaire consists of appropriate and inappropriate competitive actions (Lewicki and Robinson, 1998) as well as integrative actions (Adair and Brett, 2005; Bolman et al., 2000; Kim et al. 2005; Saorin-Iborra, 2008). The results of this questionnaire were used to show means in figures which will aid in displaying results. In **Table 2** an overview is given of all tactics.

The third questionnaire consists of five dimensions of supplier satisfaction mentioned earlier, being growth potential, reliability of customer, relational behavior of customer, economical performance and overall customer satisfaction (Vos et al. 2016). It was decided to expand the scope compared to solely one dimension adopted by Saorin-Iborra and Cubillo (2019) towards customer satisfaction. The results will again be used to display figures and show some means.

5. FINDINGS

Findings are structured as followed, firstly the different negotiation behaviors applied by the buyers towards the suppliers are identified, then the satisfaction per supplier in the different dimensions are identified and last the behaviors and satisfaction are compared. First of all, Saorin-Iborra and Cubillo (2019) argued in their studies that negotiation behavior involves use of both competitive and integrative actions on the basis of a continuum where actions can be combined and be complementary, balancing it. Firm A mentioned for example:

“You have to get to know each other and you don’t want to show all your cards but during the process when the confidence in each other grows, then it is easier and also better for the process to put your card, so not all of them, but to have more openness and transparency.”

Firm A thereby argues that along the process of negotiating, use of actions evolve as well, where at the beginning you act carefully and further inwards open up to your counterpart. From this, it can be interpreted that negotiators start with distributive behavior and later on start showing more integrative behavior by opening up. This step-by-step process is also mentioned by Firm E:

“You make it very clear to each other with an open story, with questions I have asked in the period of time, how those questions are answered and how to answer again to the customer regarding his questions towards our products. You should answer well, make good arguments to show that you know what you are talking about, go into details about specifics and then the customer has the total picture and the feeling with it and that is how you get that trust back. Step by step you open up to each other.”

However it could also be the other way around, according to Firm B:

“In the beginning, it is all friendly because you really want that order but in the end it is take it or leave it. Over time you just want to earn something. I can do a lot of things to please

someone, but at some point you come to the point of ‘take it or leave it.’”

Here it can be interpreted that you start with integrative behavior but at the end when you reach the bottom-line you adopt more distributive behavior to close the deal. Literature stated that integrative behavior is related to more satisfactory negotiations. In the findings of this study however, it has shown that it not necessarily only integrative behavior affecting a supplier’s satisfaction, since buyers also applied some competitive behavior as can be seen in the table. Firm A mentioned for example the word “cherry-picking” at the end of their negotiation, where once the big topics are negotiated, the smaller aspects were put to attention and that it’s important to always keep the helicopter view. Even though participants mentioned that buyers are mostly price-oriented, they did mention the importance of long-term buyer-supplier relationships. Firm D argued:

Table 3 – Negotiation behaviors identified per supplier

Negotiation	Integrative actions (frequency)	Acceptable competitive actions (frequency)	Inappropriate competitive actions (frequency)	Buyer negotiation behavior
A	Medium-high	Medium	Never	Collaboration
B	Medium-high	Medium-high	Low	Soft competition
C	Medium-high	Medium-high	Never	Compromise
D	Medium-low	Medium	Low	Soft competition
E	Medium	Medium-low	Never	Collaboration

“Sales for us are long-term, we make deals and it is important to have good partners. You need to have a win-win situation where it’s interesting for both parties and you need to have the same vision. I come across a lot of different people and everyone has a different vision. Some of them come for a good price, but those are not good partners with whom we can focus on the long-term.”

This is reaffirmed by Firm E firstly and Firm B secondly:

“Important behavior for a negotiator should be thinking in long-term.”

“Always go for long-term. One order is easy to score, same as starting a new firm. In the first year you will make a nice amount of money, but then you should think in long-term in life in general. You can think you have scored that one order amazingly, you can think you went really deep and that you overcharged your counterpart, but in the long-term it will turn against you. You must grant each other something, else it won’t mean anything.”

5.1 Identifying negotiation behavior

Out of the six negotiation behaviors mentioned in the framework only 3 were found in the results; collaboration, compromise and soft competition. In **Table 3**, an overview can be found per case which negotiation behavior was identified, results were based on interview answers and results of questionnaires.

Compromise

In the interview with Firm C, the participant mentioned the importance of having ‘no special tactics’.

“I believe strongly that you should have an open relationship in this case that you should come together to get the best results. I don’t believe in special tactics to manipulate your counterpart. My counterpart thought the same and showed the same behavior. I don’t need to go for specific tactics in the case of this company.”

In **Figure 2**, the results of the questionnaire show the same findings however, appropriate competitive actions do show significance while the participant didn’t mention it in the interview, thus classifying the behavior as ‘compromise’.

Collaboration

In the interview with Firm E mentioned the strong relationship with the buyer in this specific case and the immediate trust between them.

“Yes, I did consider that I can trust them, it is mostly because when I go to the negotiation table then there must be trust between us and that will come when you are open to each other and share all information with each other. That person did that too, even though he didn’t know me. That feeling must be made stronger, by doing your job optimally and well.”

In **Figure 2**, the results of the questionnaire show the same findings, with integrative actions being the main significance while some traditional competitive bargaining has also proven to have played a role. Supplier mentioned no specific inappropriate reactions or tactics used by buyer, thus classifying behavior as ‘collaboration’.

Firm A mentioned that ‘they had to get to know each other and didn’t want to show all their cards’ thus showing competitive actions at first while opening up with integrative actions later. He also mentioned that he didn’t perceive any inappropriate tactics:

“So far the figures they have presented are real and they match with what we see in practice.”

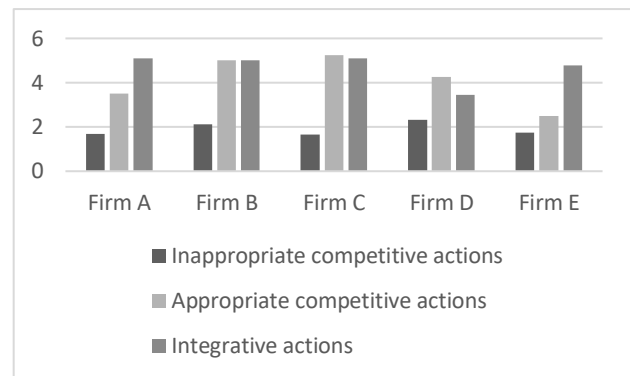


Figure 2 – Level of negotiation actions used per firm

However, the findings of the questionnaire show less significance for use of appropriate competitive actions which can be seen in **Figure 2**.

Soft competition

In negotiation B, Firm B mentioned that it was mostly about the price, while there were no conflictive issues or any unexpected reactions or actions by counterpart. However, when describing the communication Firm B mentioned the following:

“It was very short, very friendly and it was mostly about price. If we did not get an arrangement on the price, then we started talking about amounts, packaging or delivery times. So other possibilities to get to the wished-price level. We are talking about business communication.”

This shows that even though Firm B values integrative actions, the negotiation was still mostly price-oriented and thus competitive actions were used. In **Figure 2** this is reaffirmed by high significance for use of appropriate competitive actions while there is a small significance for inappropriate competitive tactics.

While performing negotiation D, firm D mentioned that he doesn’t believe in tactics and that he does not use any specific tactics, furthermore mentioning the importance of not using ‘smart tricks’:

“You just tell your story, your pitch which should look clear and good and should give information about the product. It should be interesting for everyone. We have a straight-forward policy so this it and what you see is what you get so it is very transparent. If you have smart tricks and stuff, that will only backfire to you. I understand what you mean because some companies use you to press prices of their current suppliers and then you are played against each other. But this didn’t happen.”

However, **Figure 2** shows higher significance for appropriate competitive actions than integrative actions, with some significance for inappropriate actions as well, meaning buyer adopted a ‘soft competition’ behavior.

5.2 Identifying supplier satisfaction

All participants managed to reach an agreement and mentioned that they were satisfied, however Firm A and Firm B mentioned there is room for improvement or that they reached a consensus.

“There is always room for improvement but you learn from every process and negotiation and also from this one, we learned a few lessons again.”

“I’m satisfied now. I didn’t get what I wanted but they also did not, so we reached consensus and I’m satisfied with that.”

The results of the questionnaire can be found in **Figure 3**, where all dimensions of satisfaction are given per firm. All participants showed a significant satisfaction in the dimension ‘satisfaction with customer’, which is the dimension displaying the overall satisfaction. Dimension which showed lower significance compared to other dimensions is economic performance. Firm B mentioned the reached consensus, which could have affected his perception of profitability in the relationship, but overall being satisfied with the buyer and the relationship, which also shows in the other dimensions. Firm E continuously mentioned the relevance of the openness in relationship and having the relationship in general which also shows in the results, displaying high satisfaction for reliability and relational behavior compared to other firms but showing lower satisfaction towards profitability of the buyer.

5.3 Connection negotiation behavior to supplier satisfaction

In **Table 4**, the findings are compared case by case. Findings show most negotiations entailed use of integrative actions combined with appropriate competitive actions with majority of the firms showing satisfaction in four of the five dimensions except Firm B. One integrative action all suppliers experienced



Figure 3 - Supplier satisfaction per supplier

was ensuring a positive and productive personal relationship. Firm B explained why this action or behavior is important:

“Behavior of the buyer is important because when I like you, the chances of giving you a better price is bigger. We need to like each other and friendly behavior and honouring existing

Tabel 4 – Negotiation behavior and supplier satisfaction compared

Tactics	Firm A	Firm B	Firm C	Firm D	Firm E
Distributive negotiation behavior					
Misrepresentation		X			
Traditional competitive bargaining	X	X	X	X	
Bluffing				X	
Misrepresentation to opponent’s network					
Inappropriate information collection					
Integrative behavior					
Ensure understanding of counterpart’s needs	X		X	X	X
Seek mutual satisfaction of negotiators		X		X	X
Ensure a positive and productive personal relationship	X	X	X	X	X
Free flow of information among negotiators	X	X	X	X	X
Trust position and information of other negotiators	X		X		X
Participation of all parties in the decision making process	X				X
Questions	X	X	X		X
Explanations	X	X	X		
Self-disclosures	X	X	X		X
Supplier satisfaction					
Growth potential for your company	X	X		X	X
Trustability of the customer	X		X		X
Relational behavior of customer	X		X	X	X
Profitability	X		X	X	
Satisfaction with customer	X	X	X	X	X

commitments helps a lot. Those are the basic points, but no pleasing. The person who comes on time, asks you if you want coffee, answers all your questions if you have them and also give a seller something to work with, just normal human-like behavior.”

While Firm B mentions the importance of this and showed high satisfaction with growth potential and with the buyer, they are the only firm having experienced inappropriate competitive actions being misrepresentation, with showing lower significance in trustability and relational behavior of buyer. Another significant integrative tactic used was ensuring your counterpart's needs, used by three of five buying firms. Firm C, being one of the three, emphasized in his recommendations:

“You should be very honest in what you expect and want from the counterpart and that you are clear in terms of intentions with each other. I think you come to the best results then.”

In line with this, the three firms, being Firm A and C and E, showed satisfaction for the trustability and the reliability of the buyer.

Other integrative actions were the trust between negotiators and the information shared between them. Connected to these actions can be questions, explanations and disclosures which have to do with sharing information between negotiators. Four out of five negotiations involved having this actions, with Firm A and Firm E and Firm C showing satisfaction with trustability and relational behavior of buyer and Firm B only having experienced information sharing. Firm E explained why trust between negotiators and sharing information should actually follow up after each other:

“When I go to the negotiation table, there must be trust between me and the buyer and that will come when you are open to each other and share all information with each other. That person did it too, even though he didn't know me.”

An action which was not used often was the participation of both parties in decision making process. A reason for not having the participation of both parties could be that most of the negotiations involved selling of a ready product or a one-time order, with the exception of negotiation A. Firm E had a ready product, however ensured that not only the buyer was involved in the process but also the people eventually using the product in the buyer's firm. As for competitive actions, as can be seen in the table, four out of five companies have experienced traditional competitive bargaining with the exception of Firm E, while their satisfaction with the buyer remains. Only Firm B and Firm D have experienced inappropriate competitive actions, while also scoring the lowest satisfaction compared to other firms in the dimensions of trustability, reliability and satisfaction with buyer, but not to a level where there is dissatisfaction with the buyer.

6. DISCUSSION

Previous evidence by Al Khatib et al. (2007) argue that traditional competitive bargaining seems to be most used group of actions in retail and wholesale. 3 out of 5 of the participants being Firm B, Firm C and Firm D, are active in these sectors. As found, all buyers have used integrative actions in their negotiations with the suppliers, however, findings in this study have shown however that most buyers used a combination of traditional competitive bargaining and integrative actions, which leads again to the indication of interplay between distributive and integrative behavior. This finding is in line with a recent study where findings have shown that negotiators increased the willingness of working together and finding solutions beneficial for both parties in the later stages of the negotiations (Sigurdardottir et al, 2019). Other firms from different market sectors such as Firm A showed that same combination, while the

buyer of Firm E seemed to have applied integrative behavior mostly. All in all, to summarise, this leads to the indication that integrative behavior does influence supplier satisfaction positively, however, distributive behavior does not seem to influence supplier satisfaction negatively, where suppliers still show satisfaction, even though their buyers use competitive tactics. Regarding customer or buyer satisfaction, Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo (2019) showed the same result where distributive or competitive actions were used by the supplier but customers or buyers still showed high satisfaction with the buyer-supplier relationship. In this study, it thus seems to be parallel for the feeling of satisfaction of suppliers towards buyers' behavior not negatively influencing the satisfaction towards the buyer-supplier relationship, therefore contradicting Fleming and Hawes (2017) finding that negotiators are more satisfied with an integrative negotiation process. Also a recent study discovered that buyers and sellers perceive B2B negotiations more as distributive than integrative where it has been found buyers to be using more distributive behavior and preferring a more competitive style towards their negotiations (Sigurdardottir et al, 2019), which is in line with the finding in this study where buyers used competitive actions frequently. Comparing Firm B and Firm D where the buyer used some inappropriate tactics to the other firms where the buyer did not use these tactics the overall satisfaction is lower, however the firms still seem to be satisfied with the buyer. This result is surprising, since most of the firms mentioned the importance of having the relationship with your counterpart where it is important to also consider your behavior to be open, the reciprocity of that openness and focusing on the long-term which are all connected to integrative behavior. The importance of that openness (Forker and Stannack, 2000) and relational behavior (Vos et al., 2016) and seeking for long-term relationships (Sigurdardottir et al., 2018) is thus significant, however in terms of negotiation behavior there seems to be room for competitive behavior and not only cooperative behavior to still have satisfaction as an outcome. Furthermore, the statement that competitive negotiation strategies further increase conflict (Ganesan, 1998) in negotiation is not the case in our findings, where interviewees mentioned that negotiation processes were mostly done correctly and there were no specific conflictive issues while there was clear significance that competitive negotiation tactics were used. Even though buyers may feel reluctance towards sharing information at first and thus show competitive behavior (Ramsay, 2004), suppliers do value information sharing since sharing information has been found to increase the level of trust between negotiators, which is again connected to the openness preferred by suppliers.

7. CONCLUSION

This work focuses on highlighting the effect of negotiation behavior on supplier satisfaction, where three contributions can be made. First, the typology of Saorín-Iborra (2008) is reinforced, showing the existence of a continuum in negotiation behavior instead of a dichotomy. The majority of the firms in our cases studies have experienced both competitive actions and integrative during their negotiations, thus balancing overall behavior. Second, there is an indication made that integrative negotiation behavior influences supplier satisfaction positively. The majority of the firms in our case studies mentioned the importance of the long-term buyer-supplier relationship, the openness from buyers and trust between negotiators. Third, there is no indication that distributive negotiation behavior negatively affects supplier satisfaction, even though in B2B negotiation there has been evidence that negotiators are generally more satisfied with an integrative negotiation process (Fleming and Hawes, 2017). This is in line with recent findings by Saorín-Iborra and Cubillo (2018), where findings have also shown that

competitive actions don't necessarily lead to dissatisfaction with the competitive actions but rather seem to balance out the integrative actions. Reasons for this could be the fact many organisations may be reluctant or sceptic to commit to long-term relationships (Ramsay, 2004), also mentioned by Firm B, due to the market they are active in or the risks involved with that market. Using distributive behavior could also then be risk control where a negotiator is not necessarily skeptical towards a long-term relationship but more towards the loss of power in the negotiation or risk of exploitation by the counterpart (Ramsay, 2004), mentioned by Firm A.

8. LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of this study is the small sample size and the characteristics of the firms interviewed. The majority of the participants were small firms while a combination of larger firms and smaller firms. Future studies should combine a more varying sample base to come to a more reliable findings and to get a significant relationship. Another limitation was the overall general view over behavior on satisfaction, while future studies should focus more per market sector since different sectors also involve different negotiation situations, where for retail the product was in most cases a ready product and the only factor to negotiate still was the price, while in the industry sector for example more factors can be negotiated which could be contracts or machines for example. Another limitation could have been self-reported bias, since participants of the interview had to explain from their point of view how the negotiation went which could mean the participant was expected to tell exactly how he or she experienced the behavior. Another limitation was the timeframe for this study to be composed, where more time could have also lead to more participants and could have also avoided the other limitations mentioned. Moreover, the whole interview process could have been improved accordingly to feedback of the first participants while now due to time limits was not possible. A limitation more related to the study itself is the fact that other factors could have also influenced the satisfaction of the supplier or maybe the eventual outcome of the negotiation weighted more than how the negotiation process evolved, thus for future studies it could be relevant to go further in specific regarding one dimension of supplier satisfaction or focusing just on distributive or integrative behavior. In regard to this research, a more concrete study regarding distributive negotiation behavior affecting supplier satisfaction could be relevant, where it would be more clear whether distributive behavior is not affecting the satisfaction negatively, as was the indication in this study. Future studies could also expand the number of dimensions of supplier satisfaction, since for this study only five dimensions were chosen and supplier satisfaction could be expanded to more relevant dimensions.

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10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix A

First part interview

- (1) Characteristics and general aims of the interviewed firm -
 - Date the firm was established and source of the capital -
 - N° of stores and the store format -
 - N° of employees -
 - Geographical scope and target market -
 - Business strategy
 - Firm's objectives
- (2) With regard to business negotiations, what is your opinion on: -
 - The importance of negotiation processes on the formulation and implementation of agreements (strategic nature)
 - What can be considered as a successful outcome in business negotiations? -
 - The key factors that influence the development of negotiations and their outcomes
 - The importance of the attitude or behavior adopted by negotiators in order to achieve a desired outcome in these negotiations
- (3) Taking a closer look at the negotiations carried out with firm "S", tell me a little about how they were carried out.
 - Which was your goal in this negotiation? And which was the goal of the buyer?
 - Why do you think that the buyer choose you (for negotiation) rather than any other?
 - How long did the process last? Was this time scale long enough to negotiate? How was the time available managed?
 - Who took part in the negotiations? Did these people actively participate in developing them?
 - Did you know your counterpart (buyer)? In case of previous business experience with them, for how long is it? Do you consider that you could trust each other during the negotiation?
 - How would you describe communication between the negotiating parties?
 - Were there any conflictive issues? Any unexpected and / or inappropriate reactions or actions? How were they resolved?
 - Does your negotiation behavior evolve along the process? Why? Did the buyer's behavior influence yours?
 - What kind of tactics do you consider appropriate to negotiate successfully in a buyer/supplier relationship?
 - During the negotiation, from your point of view, does the buyer use tactics such as misrepresentation of information, bluffing, mis- representation to opponent's network, inappropriate information collection ...?
 - What is your assessment of the agreement reached if any?
 - Do you feel satisfied with the process and / or agreement? And your counterpart (opinion)?
 - In your opinion, what factors played a greater or lesser role in the outcome?
 - From your personal experience, what recommendations would you make when carrying out this type of negotiations?

10.2 Appendix B

Tactics	Frequency with which buyer used the tactic						
	Ne ve r	L o w	Mediu m-low	Me diu m	Mediu m- high	Hi g h	Very high
[2a1] Intentionally misrepresent factual information to your opponent when you. that he/she has already done this to you							
[2a2] Intentionally misrepresent factual information to your opponent in order to support your negotiating arguments or position.							
[2b1] Gain information about an opponent's negotiating position and strategy by 'asking around' in a network of your friends, associates and contacts.							
[2b2] Make an opening demand that is far greater than what one really hopes to settle for.							
[2b3] Hide your real bottom line from your opponent.							
[2b4] Convey a false impression that you are in absolutely no hurry to come to a negotiation agreement, thereby trying to put more time pressure on your opponent to concede quickly							
[2b5] Make an opening offer or demand so high (or low) that it seriously undermines your opponent's confidence in his/her own ability to negotiate a satisfactory settlement.							
[2c1] Lead the other negotiator to believe that they can only get what they want by negotiating with you, when in fact they could go elsewhere and get what they want cheaper or faster.							
[2c2] Promise that good things will happen to your opponent if he/she gives you what you want, even if you know that you can't (or won't) deliver those good things when the other's cooperation is obtained.							
[2c3] Threaten to harm your opponent if he/she doesn't give you what you want, even if you know you will never follow through to carry out that threat.							
[2d1] Talk directly to the people who your opponent reports to, or is accountable to, and try to encourage them to defect your side.							
[2d2] Threaten to make your opponent look weak or foolish in front of a boss or others to whom he/she is accountable.							
[2d3] Talk directly to the people who your opponent reports to, or is accountable to, and tell them things that will undermine their confidence in your opponent as negotiator.							
[2e1] Gain information about an opponent's negotiating position by paying friends, associates and contacts to get this information for you.							
[2e2] Gain information about an opponent's negotiating position by cultivating his/her friendship through expensive gifts, entertaining or personal favors							
[2f1] Ensure understanding of counterpart's needs.							
[2f2] Seek mutual satisfaction of negotiators.							
[2f3] Ensure positive and productive personal relationship.							
[2f4] Free flow of information among negotiators.							
[2f5] Trust the position and information of other negotiators.							
[2f6] Participation of all parties in the decision making process.							
[2f7] Questions (statement in which the source asks the target to reveal information about itself)							
[2f8] Explanations (statement in which the source reveals information about any point required by the target)							
[2f9] Self-disclosures (statement in which the source reveals information about itself)							

10.3 Appendix C

	Level of satisfaction						
	Dissatisfa ction	Lo w	Medium -low	Medi um	Medium- high	Hi gh	Very high
Growth potential for your company							
The relationship with BuyingFirmX...							
... provides us with a dominant market position in our sales area.							
... is very important for us with respect to growth rates.							
... enables to us attract other customers.							
... enables us to exploit new market opportunities.							
Trustability of the customer							
In working with our company, BuyingFirmX...							
... provided a completely truthful picture when negotiating.							

... always negotiated from a good faith bargaining perspective.							
... never breached formal or informal agreement to benefit themselves.							
... never altered facts in order to meet its own goals and benefits.							
Relational behavior of the customer							
Problems that arise in the course of the relationship are treated by BuyingFirm X as joint rather than individual responsibilities							
BuyingFirm X is committed to improvements that may benefit our relationship as a whole and not only themselves							
We each benefit and earn in proportion to the efforts we put in							
Our firm usually gets at least a fair share of the rewards and cost savings from our relationship with BuyingFirmX							
BuyingFirmX would willingly make adjustments to help us out if special problems/needs arise.							
BuyingFirmX is flexible when dealing with our firm.							
Profitability							
The relationship with BuyingFirmX...							
... provides us with large sales volumes.							
... helps us to achieve good profits.							
... allows us to gain high margins.							
... has a positive influence on the profitability of our firm.							
... enables us to raise our profitability together.							
Satisfaction with customer							
Our firm is very satisfied with the overall relationship to BuyingFirmX.							
Generally, our firm is very pleased to have BuyingFirmX as our business partner.							
If we had to do it all over again, we would still choose to use BuyingFirmX.							
Our firm does not regret the decision to do business with BuyingFirmX.							