

Managing Remote Negotiation Strategies

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Abstract: In more recent times, many business relationships have moved online and many companies are taking advantage of the opportunity to talk online with their business partners. This paper attempts to answer the question of how this fact affects business relationships. A survey method was used with 47 companies in Poland that conduct remote negotiations or remote business talks. The respondents were company managers who participate in both traditional and remote negotiations. The conceptual framework for the study was the model of negotiation as recurring events in the history of a relationship (Thomas, Manrodt, Eastman, 2015). The limitations of the study derived from the specificity of the research group: the respondents were from Poland, and the perspective of small and medium-sized companies was taken into account, whereas perhaps the perspective of large companies would have been different. The conclusion outlines the potential of remote negotiation compared to traditional negotiation and implications of conducting remote negotiations.

Keywords: Negotiations, Remote negotiations, Interorganisational relationships

1. Introduction

Negotiation is an essential part of business relationships and at the same time a frequent and relevant part of management tasks. (Saorín-iborra, M. C., & Cubillo, G., 2019) Negotiation is a key interaction in the buyer-seller and supply chain relationships (Zachariassen, 2008) and every business project - and every business relationship - is related to negotiation. Thus, it becomes apparent that negotiation is central to the relationship. If one assumes this to be the case, then it is important to establish what factors influence negotiation.

The recent years have seen an increasing number of business meetings taking place via modern technologies, in particular video conferencing. This is due to the possibilities that these technologies offer and the benefits that this brings, such as saving time, financial resources that would be spent on travel, but above all the belief that remote negotiations can successfully replace traditional face-to-face (f2f) meetings. From the point of view of interorganisational relations, this phenomenon is highly interesting and raises a number of questions about the impact of such negotiations on interorganisational relations and the nature of this type of negotiation itself, particularly in comparison to traditional negotiations.

This paper attempts to answer a number of questions that arise with regard to business relationships that are initiated and sustained by means of remote negotiation: how the fact that negotiations take place by means of videoconferencing affects the attitudes of the participants in the negotiations: their expectations and plans, and how the negotiation situation and the outcome of remote negotiations affect the business relationship.

2. An overview of the Literature

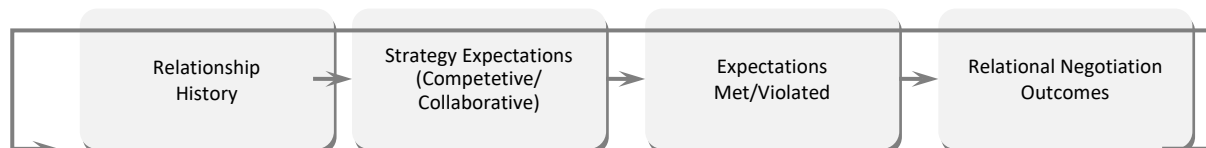
Negotiation and relationships in the academic literature are discussed from many different angles. The literature on negotiation and relationships is very rich and multifaceted. Negotiation is seen as a way of resolving conflicts, including cultural conflicts (Biesaga-Słomczewska, 2011). Cross-cultural negotiation is addressed extensively (Peleckis, 2014), but so is negotiation in specific situations such as selling real estate (Wang, Zions, 2008) or negotiating salaries (Säve-Söderbergh, 2019). There is also a rich psychosocial current in the negotiation literature, analysing negotiators' behaviour and its socio-psychological background, e.g. face-threat-sensitivity (Miles, Schatten, Chapman, 2020), gender differences in negotiations (Mazei, Zeres, Hüffmeier, 2021; Lee, Pitesa, Pillutla, Thau, 2017), or styles and negotiations behaviours (Ma, 2007). There is also a current dedicated to negotiation tactics and techniques and their typology (Martin-Raugh et al., 2020).

Among these currents, there has also emerged one dedicated to the study of online negotiations also known as remote negotiations or e-negotiations. These are defined as 'any long-distance negotiation process, without physical contact and using audiovisual communication tools, mainly connected to the Internet, which allow immediate and technically fluent communication, but with certain limitations and differences with face-to-face negotiations' (Hernandez, Monne, Sein-Echaluce, 2022). Thus, for example, the role of humour in remote negotiation (Kurtzberg, Naquin, Belkin, 2009), advantages and disadvantages of online negotiation (Yuan, 2003) and non-verbal behaviours in online negotiations (Kazemitabar et al 2022; Holland, Taylor, 2016) have been explored. The differences between remote negotiations and traditional negotiations have also been explored.

The fact that negotiations take place online is among a large group of factors that can influence the course and outcome of negotiations. Among these, BATNA, or the best alternative to a negotiated agreement, is also considered (Fisher and Ury, 1981). There is well-known research on the relationship of BATNA with the negotiation strategy adopted by negotiators (Patton et. al, 2010; Habib et. al, 2015) and on the outcome of negotiations (McAlister et. al, 1986; Roloff, and Dailey, 1987). Other factors influencing negotiators' attitudes include cultural intelligence (Caputo et. al, 2019), psychological factors including cognitions and biases, personality, motivation, emotions and inclination to trust (Brett, Thompson, 2016), emotional intelligence (Kelly, Kaminskiene, 2016), creativity of the negotiator (De Pauw et al. 2010), need for closure, i.e. a construct that describes a motivational tendency to quickly select and prioritize information in the environment (Pietrzak et. Al, 2014) and social-environmental factors including reputation and relationship, gender, power and status, and culture (Brett, Thompson, 2016). Negotiators' attitudes may also be influenced by their religious beliefs (Richardson, Rammal, 2018), history, in particular protracted feuds that developed as a result of conflicting interpretations and invocations of history (Dezső et al. 2015), but also expectations about others' ethics (Mason, et. al., 2018) as well as the language used during negotiations (Alvarez et. al., 2017) or the way the negotiating partner speaks (Swab et al., 2011). The question raised about the differences in how the fact that negotiations take place remotely affects negotiations can hardly be found in the literature. Galin, Gross, Gosalker (2007) found that the negotiation media, as well as the negotiation sequence, barely affects the negotiation outcomes. Face-to-face negotiation was not different than e-negotiation, in terms of the final price, the number of installments for the balance and the sum of the advanced payment. However, both the negotiation media and the negotiation sequence significantly affected the main features of the negotiation process, in terms of time duration and the use of hard or soft tactics. However, there is still a research gap when it comes to the impact of remote negotiation on interorganisational relationships.

3. Conceptual Framework

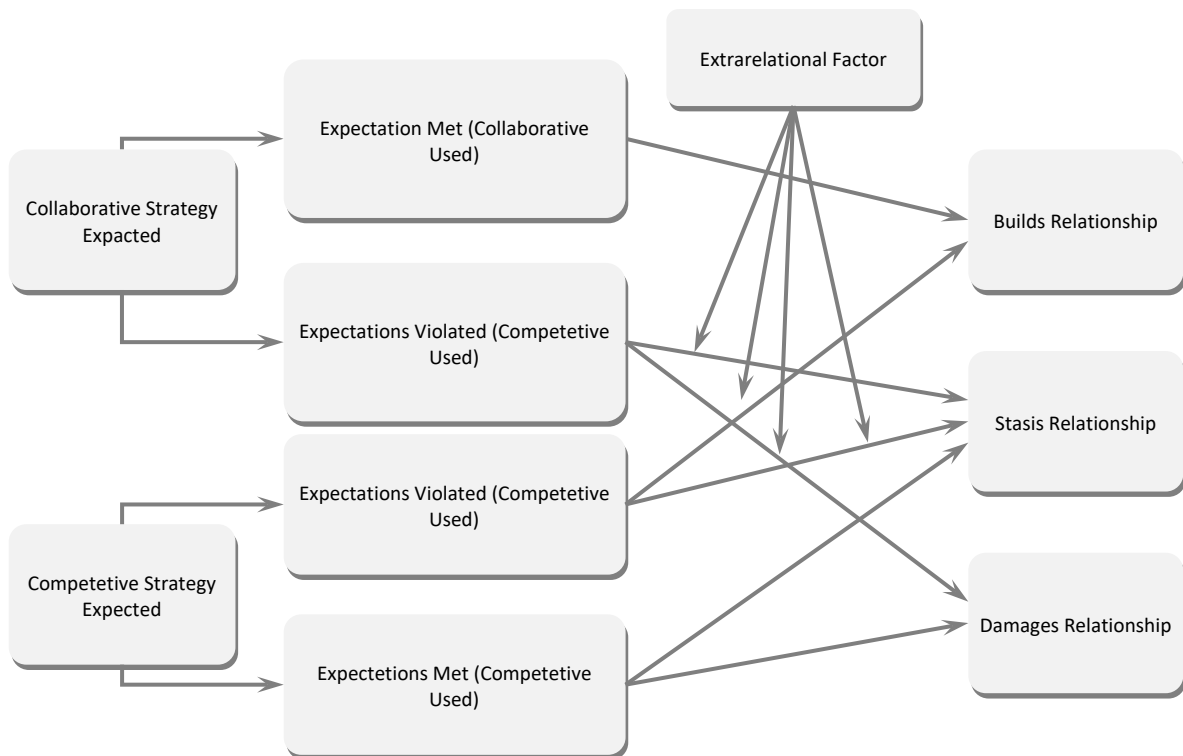
Understanding the role of negotiation in relationship formation is facilitated by an analysis of the model by S. Thomas, K. B. Manrodt, J. K. Eastman (2015). Taking a broader perspective, the authors of the model assumed that the relationship between suppliers and buyers is a key element in supply chain management practice. The model also assumes that there are two main negotiation strategies: a collaborative strategy and a competitive strategy. Different 'negotiation events' are discrete events that become part of the history of the relationship and then affect the relationship in its longer term. The relationship between the buyer and the seller is built up over a series of transactions. Each interaction contributes to the relationship history as illustrated in Figure 1.



Source: S. P. Thomas, K. B. Manrodt, J. K. Eastman *The impact of relationship on negotiation strategy expectations. A theoretical framework*, in: International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management. Vol. 45, No. 8, 2015, p. 802.

Figure 1: A Model of the Impact of Relationship History on the Outcome of the Negotiation and the Subsequent Relationship Depending on The Expected Negotiation Strategy

The history of the relationship influences the parties' expectations of the strategy expected from the other party - collaborative or competitive. The outcome of a single negotiation event influences the relationship in the future. Based on the history of previous negotiations, negotiators form their predictions about the strategy that the other party will use. If the negotiator expects the other party to use a collaborative strategy and his or her predictions are confirmed, the existing relationship strengthens. If, on the other hand, the negotiator expects his or her partner to use a competitive strategy and this expectation is confirmed, the relationship does not change or weakens if the negotiator would have preferred a collaborative relationship. If there is a mismatch between the anticipated strategy and the strategy employed by the other party, the impact of this mismatch depends on non-negotiation factors. These relationships are shown in Figure 2.



Source: S. P. Thomas, K. B. Manrodt, J. K. Eastman The impact of the relationship on negotiation strategy expectations. A theoretical framework, w: International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management. Vol. 45, No. 8, 2015, p. 803.

Figure 2 The Impact of the Expectation of the Negotiation Strategy and the Employed Negotiation Strategy on the Relationship

Non-relational factors are the final component of the model discussed above. They occur outside of the existing relationship and can help the supplier and customer understand why there has been an inconsistency as to the strategy expected and actually employed. Awareness of the reasons for this inconsistency can reduce the potential negative impact of the inconsistency on the relationship. By non-relationship factors, the authors of the model mean, for example, a general increase in commodity prices, which may cause the choice of a competitive strategy, or a weakening of the economy, such as a crisis.

The uniqueness of this model consists in the fact that it takes into account the relationship preceding the negotiation and thus does not treat the negotiation as a discrete event of a transactional nature: previous encounters create a history that influences the following encounters. Based on this model, it is assumed that the way the negotiation is conducted influences the course of the negotiation and, depending on whether the negotiation takes place in a remote mode or in a traditional mode, the participants in the negotiation have slightly different expectations of the other party's negotiation strategy, plan the negotiation event slightly differently, and behave differently and use different strategies during the negotiating stage. Accordingly, the following research hypotheses are put forward:

Hypothesis 1 (h1): As early as at the stage of expectations about the other party's strategy, there are different expectations in remote and f2f negotiations.

Hypothesis 2 (h2): As early as the stage of expectations, the parties plan slightly different strategies in remote and f2f negotiations.

Hypothesis 3 (h3): In remote and f2f negotiations, expectations of the other party's strategy more often or less often differ from the actual strategy.

Hypothesis 4 (h4): Parties change strategies more easily and quickly in remote negotiations than in f2f negotiations.

4. Methodology

A questionnaire-based opinion survey and interview method were used to collect data for analysis.

A total of 47 respondents from businesses in the Silesian Voivodeship in Poland took part in the survey. This number definitely cannot be considered as representative when considering the number of businesses in the Silesian Voivodeship, which is over 450,000. However, it should be noted that data collection is relatively difficult under Polish conditions. In Poland, managers generally cope with a heavy workload, and on top of that they receive a lot of requests to fill in different questionnaires. They are also often reluctant to fill in questionnaires for fear of disseminating confidential or competitor-relevant data (Dyduch, 2020). Therefore, the survey was supplemented with an interview method, which is used and recognised in the study of such concepts as negotiations (Thomas, Manrodt, Eastman, 2015). In this way, a certain triangulation of the study was achieved, nevertheless it could be seen as a lead-in to a larger project.

The respondents in the survey were managers of companies from different industries (trade, construction, manufacturing, insurance) whose responsibilities include negotiating with business partners and who declared experience in both remote and traditional negotiations. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions designed to verify the study hypotheses, in which the respondents were asked straightforward questions about the phenomena under study with a request to rate them using a Likert scale, which is a measurement strategy used in survey questionnaires and questionnaire interviews to establish the extent to which the phenomena under study can be assessed. It is often employed to measure attitudes towards specific interactions, behaviours, events, objects, projects or problems. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with a given statement about negotiation by marking how strongly they agreed with it on a 5-point scale, where a score of 5.0 indicated the highest degree of agreement and 1.0 the lowest degree of agreement. The averaged agreement ratings of a given statement gave a picture of the respondents' perceptions of negotiation. Thus, for example, if a statement received an average score of 2.0 from the respondents, this means that they tend to disagree with the statement. The study did not use descriptive statistical methods, if only due to the limitations of the size of this study.

Interviews were additionally conducted with 15 respondents in which they commented on the questionnaire questions. Their responses were recorded in the form of personal notes, as most respondents expressed concerns about being recorded. The data thus obtained was subjected to semantic analysis, which complemented the data obtained from the questionnaire.

5. Results

Forty-seven respondents provided their answers. They were employees or owners of companies in industries such as packaging (sales and production), insurance, construction, recycling and services. All declared at least medium negotiation experience.

The first part of the survey included questions to verify the validity of the model. This part of the survey comprised 4 questions and the respondents were asked to provide answers using a 5-point Likert scale. Confirmation of the theses based on the model was obtained: 'the negotiation style depends on the relationship we have with a given company' (4.7); 'if the relationship with a given company has been successful so far, I expect it to be rather good during the next negotiation' (3.85); 'the outcome of a given interaction with a business partner affects how the business relationship is shaped' (4.085); 'there are two negotiation styles, which can be described as competitive and collaborative' (4.46). The subsequent questions included in the survey aimed to verify all four hypotheses adopted.

5.1 h1) As Early as at the Stage Of Expectations About the Other Party's Strategy, There are Different Expectations in Remote and f2f Negotiations

The hypothesis in the study was that at the stage of expectations about the other party's strategy, there are different expectations in the case of remote and f2f negotiations. It was assumed that one of the two strategies - competitive or collaborative - is expected more often by the respondents specifically due to the fact that the negotiation takes place remotely. In order to verify this hypothesis, three questions were asked in the survey. The respondents verified the validity of the statements according to which, in remote negotiations, 1) they more often expect competitive strategies, 2) they more often expect collaborative strategies, and 3) strategy expectations do not depend on whether one negotiates remotely or f2f. The table below shows the results on the adopted Likert scale:

Table 1: Expectations Regarding the Other Party's Strategy in Remote Negotiations

Statement	Validity of the statements on the Likert scale
In remote negotiations, negotiators are more likely to expect competitive strategies	2.44
In remote negotiation, negotiators more often expect collaborative strategies	3.55
Expectations about strategy do not depend on whether you are negotiating remotely or f2f	4.5

Source: Author's own compilation based on the survey

5.2 h2) As Early as the Stage of Expectations, the Parties Plan Slightly Different Strategies in Remote and F2f Negotiations

In order to verify h2), four statements were provided in the survey, which are shown in the table below with the results.

Table 2: Preparation for Negotiations and Negotiation Techniques Used in Remote Negotiations

Remote negotiation event requires slightly better preparation than f2f negotiation	3.08
Remote negotiation event require different techniques than f2f negotiations.	3.02
When preparing for a remote negotiation I am more likely to think about using competitive strategies than collaborative strategies	2.36
When preparing for a remote negotiation, I am more likely to think about using collaborative strategies than competitive strategies	4.27

Source: author's own compilation based on the survey

The survey revealed a fairly 'moderate agreement' among the respondents with the statement that a remote negotiation requires slightly better preparation than an f2f negotiation, as well as the use of different negotiation techniques. It also revealed that the preferred approach in planning is a collaborative strategy.

5.3 h3) In Remote and f2f Negotiations, Expectations of the Other Party's Strategy More Often or Less Often Differ From the Actual Strategy

The third hypothesis concerned the negotiation situation, and in order to verify it, two statements were presented to the respondents for evaluation. These related to the strategies actually used by the negotiating partner compared to the expected strategies and the negotiation techniques used in remote negotiations.

Table 3: Anticipated and Actual Strategies and Techniques Used in Remote Negotiations

In remote negotiations it happens more often than in f2f negotiations that the strategy used by the negotiating partner is different from the one I anticipated	2.0
It is my impression that in remote negotiations the parties are more likely to 'switch' techniques rather than in f2f negotiations	2.12

Source: Author's own compilation based on the survey

Both statements received a low average score on the Likert scale, indicating that the respondents 'only partially' agreed with the statements presented.

5.4 h4) Parties Change Strategies More Easily and Quickly in Remote Negotiations Than in f2f Negotiations

The fourth hypothesis addressed the change in strategy over the course of the negotiations and the chosen strategy versus the predicted strategy. To verify hypothesis h4), the respondents were asked to evaluate two statements.

Table 4: Changes in Negotiation Strategies in Remote Negotiations

In remote negotiations, it is more common than in f2f negotiations for the negotiating partner to change the negotiation strategy.	1.89
In remote negotiations I am more often positively surprised by the attitude of the other party than in f2f negotiations.	4.36

Source: Author's own compilation based on the survey

The statement claiming that the strategy used by the negotiating partner is different from what was anticipated received a very low score and can thus be considered as not validated. A high average score was given to the statement saying that the respondents were 'positively surprised' by the attitude of their negotiating partners.

6. Discussion

It is important to consider whether the fact that a negotiation event takes place on a remote basis is at all a factor that influences expectations and the choice of strategy, because, as we know from the model developed by Thomas, Manrodt and Eastman, the main factor is the relationship itself. As is clear from the model, there are other factors that may influence the negotiation and the strategies, and one of these factors is the fact that the negotiation takes place on a remote basis.

The verification of h1 has shown that there are some, albeit insignificant, differences in strategy expectations in remote negotiation and f2f negotiation. The highest average value was assigned to the statement that strategy expectations do not depend on whether you negotiate remotely or f2f. However, the respondents gave an average of 3.55 on the Likert scale to the statement that in remote negotiations negotiators are more likely to expect a collaborative strategy, and the statement about expecting a competitive strategy received 2.44 points on the Likert scale. Thus, it can be concluded that if there are already some expectations of strategy in relation to the type of negotiation, these are expectations of a collaborative strategy. This means that negotiators approach remote negotiations with enthusiasm, with a positive attitude and this attitude is more frequent here than in f2f negotiations. One can, of course, reflect on the reasons for this specific attitude. In some cases, the respondents explained the reasons in the conversation accompanying the survey. For some, what matters is the mere possibility of having a negotiation, albeit in a remote form, which could not take place at all in the traditional form due to cost or time. Some reported a general positive attitude towards new technologies and the opportunities that they offer. There was an opinion that with the proliferation of remote negotiations, it is possible to have many such meetings, including in the initial phase of a business relationship, and often relationships in this phase are not yet burdened with a negative history. Some also stressed that it all depends on the subject matter of the talks and there are some issues that would be impossible to address in remote negotiations.

It should be noted, however, that the belief that strategy expectations do not depend on whether you negotiate remotely or f2f gained the most points on the Likert scale. This suggests that the form in which the negotiation takes place does not have such a significant impact on the strategy expectations of the other party. In some statements accompanying the survey, the respondents indicated that if the business partner has already been met and the relationship has its history, the form of negotiation does not influence strategy expectations. This leads to the conclusion that the history of the relationship is more important, which, incidentally, is in line with the model developed by Thomas, Manrodt and Eastman.

Slightly more significant differences between remote negotiation and f2f negotiation emerged on the issue of strategy planning. Thus, h2 was successfully verified. The statement that, when preparing for remote strategies, you are more likely to plan to use a collaborative strategy yourself achieved a higher average score on the Likert scale than the statement about planning competitive strategies. When recalling the h1 validation effect, this implies that an enthusiastic attitude towards remote negotiation includes not only the expectation of a collaborative strategy, but also the planning of such a strategy. Some of the statements accompanying the survey confirmed that managers have become somewhat accustomed to remote negotiation and it has become an everyday occurrence for them. They are not a source of stress as they used to be and their level of acceptance as a form of maintaining business relationships has stabilised and is quite high. There have been some voices saying that it is simply a new form of negotiation, not inferior to f2f and even better than traditional negotiation in some respects. Hence the positive attitude and planning of collaboration strategies.

However, hypothesis h3, according to which remote negotiation and f2f negotiation differ in terms of consistency of strategy expectations, was not validated. The hypothesis assumed that, for example, in remote negotiation, negotiating partners use a different strategy than predicted, in other words, they are more unpredictable. This would supposedly mean that if we anticipated a collaborative strategy from a negotiating partner, that partner - contrary to our expectations - used a competitive strategy. The statement that "in remote negotiations it happens more often than in f2f negotiations that the strategy used by the negotiating partner is different from the one I predicted" received an average of 2.00 points on the Likert scale and this means that the respondents only partially agree with this statement. This allows us to assume that remote negotiation is not some special factor that causes negotiating partners to change their negotiation strategy. An equally low average score was given to the statement, according to which in remote negotiations the parties are more likely to 'switch' techniques than in f2f negotiations. This means that remote negotiation, or more precisely its form, does not encourage the parties to use more techniques and remote negotiation is not at all more unpredictable.

The last hypothesis focused on how easily and quickly negotiating partners change their own planned strategies to the opposite strategies. A very low (1.89) score for the sentence: "in remote negotiations it happens more often than in f2f negotiations that the strategy used by the negotiating partner is different from the one I predicted" proves that predictions about negotiation strategy in remote negotiations generally work. This is actually the key finding in the study conducted. This is because, as the model shows, the most desirable situation for building business relationships is when there are expectations of a collaborative strategy and then these predictions are confirmed. After all, this is the situation that builds the relationship. If we assume that in remote negotiations the parties are more likely to assume and expect a collaborative strategy and at the same time plan such a strategy themselves, then if both of these premises occur, we have a situation that is ideal for the relationship history and has a high potential for building a good history and a good relationship.

Even more favourably ranked on the Likert scale was the statement "in remote negotiations I am more often positively surprised by the other party's attitude than in f2f negotiations.", which scored an average of 4.36. This sentence can be interpreted as a general impression of remote negotiations, which respondents evaluate positively. It appears that remote negotiation more than satisfies the expectations of negotiators. If this sentence is interpreted in the context of the Thomas, Manrodt and Eastman model, the conclusion can be drawn that remote negotiation, or more precisely its form, can contribute to building a relationship or at least sustaining it at the existing level.

7. Conclusions

Remote conversations, including remote negotiations, are mainly characterised by the fact that the participating parties are in different locations and the conversation is made possible by modern technology. This important fact changes the very nature of the conversation. It turns out to be impossible to interact informally between people and thus to establish personal interactions. The sharing of knowledge is hindered, the range of negotiation techniques that can be used is reduced, and it is impossible to read certain information arising from the context of the conversation (e.g. body language). On the other hand, remote negotiation means saving time and financial resources and the possibility to have many conversations in a short period of time. Many of the business meetings would not have taken place at all had they not been held remotely. The answer to the question of whether remote negotiation improves interorganisational relationships is therefore complex, but overall it is positive. The study found that participants in remote negotiations are enthusiastic about them, which applies to both their expectations and their strategy plans. They rather expect the other party to choose a collaborative strategy and plan to follow such a strategy. There is also a strong belief that the form of the negotiation does not matter, which is also to be interpreted in favour of remote negotiation: it is not 'inferior' to traditional negotiation, and it is rather the history of the relationship and the topics of the talks that play a more important role.

Remote negotiation is also just as predictable as traditional negotiation and negotiators do not change techniques here differently from traditional negotiation. The most important statement, however, concerns the positive surprise of the other party's attitude that negotiators experience during remote negotiations. While this is a rather general statement, it reveals important knowledge about remote negotiations in terms of their potential for relationship development. Indeed, if we return to the model developed by Thomas, Manrodt and Eastman, what matters most in the shaping of business relationships is whether expectations about the negotiation strategy employed by the other party are confirmed. For the forming of a good relationship, the most favourable situation is when the expectations concerning the use of a collaborative

strategy are confirmed. The negotiation then becomes part of the organisation's good relationship history, building and strengthening it, which is the most favourable situation from the point of view of the relationship.

The findings also allow for the formulation of managerial implications. Negotiation is an important part of the relationship between organisations. Managers undoubtedly strive for the best possible negotiation outcome. Most managers are already familiar with remote negotiation and are willing to use it in their practice. Remote negotiation does not allow for the same degree of interpersonal relations and knowledge sharing as traditional negotiation, but it is not inferior to traditional negotiation in terms of its potential to build relationships between companies. This potential value of remote negotiation is undoubtedly the most important finding of this research and the most important feature of this type of talks. Negotiators are enthusiastic about remote negotiation and certainly managers should take advantage of both the potential of remote negotiation and of this enthusiasm, as remote negotiation can be very helpful in forming good relationships and in building a positive history. Buyers and suppliers should be made aware of the potential of remote negotiation and encouraged to use it. They should also be encouraged to develop their own paradigms for conducting these types of conversations and creating an atmosphere for meetings and making the most of the potential of modern technology.

It should also be noted that regardless of the form of negotiation, preparation is imperative, but this should take into account the slightly different nature of interaction in the case of remote negotiation and the slightly different range of techniques that can be used. Managers should sensitise negotiators to these limitations and choose an appropriate form for the talks. It is important to remember that not every talk can be held remotely because of the subject matter and that a lot depends, on the history of the relationship between the companies.

The above study had its limitations. It might have been appropriate for the research to take into account how long the relationship has lasted and the nature of the relationship, as the application of remote meetings to talks can vary depending on what stage the relationship is at and what history it has. Certainly, further research could explore the preference for remote or traditional negotiation depending, for example, on the age, gender or education of the respondents. It should also be noted that the survey was conducted among respondents from Poland. However, it seems that Polish people have a specific approach to technology, which may be different in any other country. Also, the perspective of small and medium-sized enterprises was taken into account, whereas perhaps the perspective of large companies would be different. In addition, it would be useful to take into account that in the course of carrying out the survey, many respondents provided additional explanations about remote negotiation. This broadened the perspective slightly and represents some triangulation of the survey, but at the same time suggests that future research of this type should be expanded to include interviews.

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