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## How Croatian Managers Negotiate: Investigating the Relationship Between Managers' Personal Characteristics and Negotiation Tactics

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## **How Croatian Managers Negotiate: Investigating the Relationship Between Managers' Personal Characteristics and Negotiation Tactics**

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### **Abstract**

*Negotiating skills are among the most important skills in managing organizational challenges in today's highly competitive and rapidly changing business environments. Although the negotiation process has been a challenging area of research, it often fails to take into account the use of certain kinds of tactics during the negotiation process. In that context, the paper aims to explore the relationship between the negotiators' personal characteristics and the negotiation tactics that they employ. An additional aim is to define the potential connection between the negotiators' personal characteristics and the decision to start negotiating without a predefined negotiation tactic. In the context of personal characteristics, gender, age, company size, hierarchical level, experience, and negotiation frequency are examined. As regards negotiation tactics, the red herring tactic, take it or leave it, final offer, limited budget, and emotional negotiation tactic are addressed. The paper contributes to the existing literature by providing new insights into the negotiation behaviour of Croatian managers. In addition, it can serve as a basis for conducting future empirical research in the field of business negotiations.*

**Keywords:** *Business Negotiation, Croatian Managers, Negotiation Tactics, Personal Characteristics*

Track: *Management & Leadership*

Word count: 5.045

### **1. Introduction**

For the past fifty years, negotiation has received much attention within organizational behaviour and management science (Brett and Thompson, 2016). Nowadays, negotiation processes are viewed as dynamic events in which different dimensions are managed simultaneously (Age and Eklinder-Frick, 2017). In addition, negotiation can be seen as a process of information exchange (Harwood, 2002) and a game of strategy (Uher and Loosemore, 2004). Lewthwaite (2006) points out that successful negotiation refers to managing the context of the relationship in which the negotiation process takes place. As observed by Fox, Schwelle and Wissink (2004), every negotiation process has a unique set of sub-processes to suit the needs of the parties involved. Global companies increasingly rely on the effectiveness of business negotiations for their survival and growth (Reynolds, Simintiras and Vlachou, 2003). Importantly, strategic planning in negotiation facilitates tactical decision-making towards achieving the final objective (Frascozna and Hetherington, 2001).

According to Beenen and Barbuto (2014), negotiation is among the most important skills for a manager to develop. Furthermore, skilful negotiators are considered important assets that add to the firm's financial performance (ElShenawy, 2010). Additionally, cultural dimensions also affect the outcomes of negotiation (Thomas, 2008). In that context, culture influences many aspects of negotiators' assumptions, strategies, and outcomes (Gunia, Brett and

Gelfand, 2016). As stressed by Brett (2017), negotiating in a global environment benefits from a clear understanding of how negotiators' cultures influence their interests and the strategies they bring to the negotiation table. However, strategies are not applied uniformly in negotiations (Dupont, 2009).

To be successful, negotiations should focus on goals and cooperation within the negotiation (Halpert et al., 2010). In addition to goals and cooperation, various elements influence negotiation processes. Time can affect many aspects of negotiation including basic negotiation processes and outcomes, choice of tactics, and basic psychological processes of emotion, cognition, and motivation (Carnevale, 2019). Self-regulation provides a powerful toolbox to master the challenges that negotiators face at the bargaining table (Jäger, Loschelder and Friese, 2015). Lempereur (2012) highlights responsible negotiations suggesting that negotiations have social implications that go much beyond these close interpersonal interactions.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between the negotiators' personal characteristics and the negotiation tactics that they use. In that context, personal characteristics consist of the following variables: gender, age, company size, hierarchical level, experience and negotiating frequency. Negotiating tactics taken into account in this paper include the red herring tactic, take it or leave it, final offer, limited budget and emotional tactic. Additionally, negotiating without a predefined tactic is also included in the study. Given that no tactic is also a certain tactic, an additional aim is to define potential connection between the negotiators' personal characteristics and the decision to start negotiating without a specified negotiation tactic. This paper is divided into five sections. Following the introduction, the second section brings the brief insights into selected negotiation tactics. Research methodology is outlined in the third section whereas the fourth section brings out the research results. Finally, in the last section some conclusions have been drawn upon.

## **2. Insights into selected negotiation tactics**

Negotiation is a give and take process (Oliver, 2011). In that context, Magee (2015) maintains that successful leadership and management of the negotiation process incorporate multiple positions of power. Preparation phase is widely considered to be of the utmost importance for the overall negotiation process as it increases the chance of success. In addition to preparation strategies, a number of different strategies and tactics emerge during the negotiation process (Koko, 2008). Gosselin (2007) outlines that the tactics used in one negotiation may not be appropriate for another. Similarly, Korobkin (2014) outlines that negotiation is too context-dependent activity for any universally effective set of tactics. Using the predetermined strategies and tactics during negotiation increases the likelihood of a successful outcome (Hoechlin, 2018). As argued by Frascogna and Hetherington (2001), negotiating without strategy results in random selection of tactics that bring hit-and-miss results (p. 53). Likewise, Faure (2012) confirms that the absence of strategy may result in lack of coherence and effectiveness. Although tactics are sometimes perceived as manipulative, they are "*meant to be the "how-to" part of achieving the overall negotiating strategies*" (Acuff, 2008, p. 13). Wilkinson (2001) underlines three objectives of the tactics used by top negotiators, i.e. to distract, confuse, and dominate the negotiation process.

When it comes to negotiation, the red herring tactic is mainly based on an irrelevant issue to divert attention from the real issue. According to Presman (2016), red herring is a term derived from a nasty tactic used in fox hunting competitions. In general, it refers to providing a false statement to distract attention from other, more important, issues (Garrett, 2005, p. 125). The red herring tactic is sometimes referred to as the decoy tactic (Wiener, 2013).

Essentially, raising false issues is used to gain leverage (Williams, 2007). In other words, this tactic misleads the other party and creates a diversion (Greenwood, 2006, p. 29). Consequently, overcoming this tactic requires emotional and intellectual discipline and self-control to resist distractions (Sylvester, 2016). Likewise, McIntyre (2006) highlights the importance of recognizing this tactic. Moreover, the term “red herring” has become a metaphor for any diversionary tactic that essentially creates a “false trail” (Shabo, 2010).

Take it or leave it is another tactic worth mentioning. This is often a tactic of finality (Burke and Friedman, 2011). It represents an ultimatum and refusal to continue negotiations in order to force the other side to make a yes/no decision (Warner, 2011). As observed by Loo (2006), it is a powerful negotiation tactic designed to prevent further negotiations from happening. In this context, Loo (2006) describes this tactic as aggressive one resulting in too much resistance and conflict to facilitate an agreement. Furthermore, this tactic leaves the other side feeling cheated (O’Brien, 2016). Another negotiation tactic is a final offer, or best and final offer. According to Baarslag (2016, p. 201), final offer is a well-known real-life negotiation tactic that is primarily used as a means to put pressure on the opponent to accept. Simply stated, final offer means the party who makes that offer is willing to walk away from the deal (Reilly, 2016). It is often emphasized that the person making the final offer must be prepared to end the discussion if the other party does not accept the offer (Monczka et al., 2011, p. 498). As highlighted by Katz (2008), making final offers is best late in negotiation process, especially when dealing with inexperienced negotiators.

A very common tactic in negotiations is the limited budget. This negotiation tactic refers to the situation when one of the parties asserts budget constraints. In other words, the opposite party says that the budget is not compatible with the terms (Schaible and Aralihalli). This tactic is mainly focused on achieving a lower fee (Motley, 2017). Finally, emotions are an intriguing issue in the field of business negotiation. Moreover, emotions can also be used as tactic. In essence, emotions are prevalent at all stages in the organizational decision-making process (Kemp et al., 2018). It is crucial to understand the role of emotional states in the negotiation context. In negotiation settings, positive affect elevates expectations, a cooperative negotiating climate and higher joint gains (Barry, Fulmer and Goates, 2006). Furthermore, negotiators should be aware of their ability to manage emotions while negotiating. In general, controlling emotions leads to using them to one’s advantage (Carrell and Heavrin, 2004). Butt and Choi (2010) argue that the strength and the nature of the relationship between emotions and negotiator behaviour depend on the power of the negotiator.

Wang, Han and Su (2017) stress the importance of understanding the impact of emotions on shaping conflict development and resolution. Likewise, Posthuma (2012) highlights specific emotions in conflict situations and the need to understand the role of emotions in facilitating effective conflict management. Some examples of emotional manipulation include faking anger, fear, disappointment, satisfaction, etc. (Singh, 2008). In general, emotional negotiation tactics attempt to trigger emotional reactions as a way to obtain concessions or to motivate the other side to become more cooperative (Katz, 2006). However, Liu, Liu and Wu (2012) argue that individuals need to be selective in their use of emotion-focused influence tactics. As underlined by Barry, Fulmer and Van Kleef (2004), people are more confident in their ability to deploy emotional tactics compared to other forms of misrepresentation. However, many people also fear that the negotiation will get emotional and as a result too personal (Pinkley and Northcraft, 2014). As emotional intensity rises, people make irrational, emotional decisions instead of rational ones (Warner, 2011).

It has to be emphasized that negotiation studies focusing on Croatian business settings are limited and underemphasized. Previous research has focused on the role of business negotiation, negotiation skills and negotiating behaviour. In that context, Tomasevic Lisanin,

Razum and Marić (2015) analysed skills and negotiating behaviour of Croatian business executives and factors affecting the negotiation process. The research revealed that Croatian business executives considered themselves successful negotiators with developed negotiation skills although their emotional and social intelligence was found to be insufficiently developed in the context of negotiation. Likewise, Križman Pavlović and Kalanj (2008) examined the role of business negotiation in gaining competitive advantage. The findings showed that Croatian managers were aware that business negotiation skills are an important source of competitive advantage. However, their awareness was not sufficiently operationalized. Similarly, the findings by Perkov, Primorac and Kozina (2016) suggested that Croatian employees were not adequately prepared for the negotiation process and that they were not improving their negotiation skills. Based on these findings, it can be observed that more research is still needed to better understand various determinants affecting business negotiations settings.

### **3. Research methodology**

For the purpose of this study, an empirical survey was conducted on the random sample of the managers in Croatian companies from March to June 2017. Before conducting the main survey, a preliminary survey had been carried out to assure that all questions and measurements were correctly structured. The structured questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was associated with respondents' personal characteristics whereas the second part was related to the negotiation tactics used. As the aim of this paper is to determine the existence of relationship between negotiators' personal characteristics and the choice of the negotiation tactics, two sets of variables were analysed (Table 1).

The first set of variables consisted of the following variables: gender, age, company size, hierarchical level, experience, and negotiation frequency. It is generally accepted that men and women do not necessarily possess identical negotiating styles (Karakowsky and Miller, 2006). Since negotiation is a managerial activity, it is justified to include gender in the analysis. Age is divided in five groups (25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64 and 65 and older). Variable company size is not exactly a negotiator's personal characteristic, but rather the characteristic of a company. However, company size is recognized as one of the major sources of bargaining power (Zuniga-Arias et al., 2006). Moreover, the size of a company as well as its power can influence the negotiation process and, consequently, shape the negotiating behaviour (Madeley, 1999). In this context, the company size is measured by the number of employees. Micro companies have less than 10 employees; small companies less than 50 employees, medium less than 50 and large companies 250 employees or more. Variable hierarchical level has two items: middle and top management.

Further, experience is measured by the length of employment with four choices (less than 5 years, 5-10 years, 10-20 years and more than 20 years). Negotiation on the regular basis may contribute to one's experience but those are two different variables. One may be employed for 15 years with only a few opportunities to negotiate. In addition, negotiation frequency has three options: never or rarely, occasionally and regularly.

The second set consists of six variables. The first variable is negotiation without a predetermined tactic. The other five negotiation tactics include the red herring tactic, take it or leave it, final offer, limited budget and emotional tactic. The respondents were asked to choose between "yes" (I use this tactics) and "no" (I do not use this tactics).

Variables		Measurements	Code
Negotiators' characteristics	Gender	Male Female	GD
	Age	25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65 or more	AG
	Company size	Micro Small Medium Large	CS
	Hierarchical level	Middle management Top management	HL
	Experience	Less than 5 years 5-10 years 10-20 years More than 20 years	EX
	Negotiation frequency	Never/rarely Occasionally Regularly	NF
	Negotiation tactics	No tactics	No Yes
The red herring		No Yes	T1
Take it or leave it		No Yes	T2
Final offer		No Yes	T3
Limited budget		No Yes	T4
Emotions		No Yes	T5

Source: Authors' analysis

The sample was formed from the population of the companies listed in the Croatian Chamber of Commerce register. The questionnaires were sent to the managers via e-mail. Out of the total amount of 1110 questionnaires sent, 256 valid questionnaires were received which gives the return rate of 23 %.

#### 4. Research results

The data gathered from the questionnaires were analysed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of the variables. The mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis are calculated.



Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Skew. Err.	Kurtosis	Kurt. Err.
Gender	0.402	0.491	.401	.152	-1.854	.303
Age	2.305	1.067	.382	.152	-.783	.303
Company size	1.805	0.983	.925	.152	-.345	.303
Hierarchical level	1.637	0.482	.327	.152	-.739	.303
Experience	2.375	1.077	-.572	.152	-1.686	.303
Negotiation frequency	2.613	0.555	.175	.152	-1.230	.303
No tactic	0.449	0.498	-1.080	.152	.172	.303
The red herring	0.102	0.303	.205	.152	-1.973	.303
Take it or leave it	0.125	0.331	2.654	.152	5.081	.303
Final offer	0.238	0.427	2.281	.152	3.229	.303
Limited budget	0.301	0.460	1.236	.152	-.476	.303
Emotions	0.191	0.394	.874	.152	-1.246	.303

Source: Authors' analysis

Further, one-sample t-test is performed to examine the difference between the sample average and population average (Table 3). As can be seen, all t values are statistically significant, except for the "no tactic" variable.

VARIABLES	t	Sig.
Gender	-3.180	0.002
Age	-2.929	0.004
Company size	-3.180	0.002
Hierarchical level	37.742	0.000
Experience	5.569	0.000
Negotiation frequency	32.060	0.000
No tactic	-1.630	0.104
The red herring	-21.063	0.000
Take it or leave it	-18.107	0.000
Final offer	-9.810	0.000
Limited budget	-6.937	0.000
Emotions	-12.526	0.000

Source: Authors' analysis

Table 4 summarizes the sample characteristics. The majority of respondents were male (59.8 %). More than half of them were under 44 years of age. Two thirds of the respondents hold top management positions. The length of employment is relatively equally distributed between the intervals. Almost two thirds of the respondents negotiate regularly as part of their everyday working routine. As regards the company size, more than half of companies surveyed employ less than 10 employees.

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
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<b>Table 4: Sample characteristics</b>		
Gender	256	100
<i>Male</i>	153	59.8
<i>Female</i>	103	40.2
Age	256	100
25-34	70	27.3
35-44	82	32.0
45-54	64	25.0
55-64	36	14.1
65+	4	1.6
Company size	256	100
<i>Micro</i>	132	51.6
<i>Small</i>	63	24.6
<i>Medium</i>	40	15.6
<i>Large</i>	21	8.2
Hierarchical level	256	100
<i>Middle management</i>	93	36.3
<i>Top management</i>	163	63.7
Experience	256	100
<5	67	26.2
5-10	77	30.1
10-20	61	23.8
>20	51	19.9
Negotiating frequency	256	100
<i>Never/rarely</i>	9	3.5
<i>Occasionally</i>	81	31.6
<i>Regularly</i>	166	64.8

Source: Authors' analysis

As can be observed from Table 5, merely 45 % of managers apply some negotiation tactic. Such a modest amount of tactics employed correlates with the predominant share of micro companies in which improvisation prevails over the business strategies and tactics. Out of 115 manager that use some tactic in the negotiation process, 10.2 % use the red herring tactic, 12.5 % use take or leave it tactic, 23.8 % use final offer tactic, 30.1 % use limited budget tactic and 19.1 % use emotions to achieve negotiating goals.

<b>Table 5: Negotiating tactics responses</b>		
Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
No tactic	256	100
No	141	55.1
Yes	115	44.9
The red herring	256	100
No	230	89.8
Yes	26	10.2
Take it or leave it	256	100
No	224	87.5
Yes	32	12.5
Final offer	256	100
No	195	76.2



Yes	61	23.8
Limited budget	256	100
No	179	69.9
Yes	77	30.1
Emotions	256	100
No	207	80.9
Yes	49	19.1

Source: Authors' analysis

In Table 6, correlation matrix is shown. Although the purpose of the study was to test the relationship between personal characteristics and negotiation tactics, it cannot be ignored that negotiation tactics correlate between themselves. One explanation could be that a substantial number of managers use more than one negotiation tactic.

	GD	AG	CS	HL	EX	NF	T0	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5
GD	1	-.108*	.155**	-.291**	-.108*	-.074	-.020	.014	.003	-.104*	.070	-.116*
AG	-.108*	1	.012	.079	.596**	.147**	.184**	-.157**	.075	-.039	-.068	-.130*
CS	.155**	.012	1	-.440**	.010	-.010	-.116*	-.012	.003	.083	.217**	.046
HL	-.291**	.079	-.440**	1	.150**	.147**	.045	-.015	.064	.003	-.071	.099
EX	-.108*	.596**	.010	.150**	1	.171**	.138*	-.153**	-.066	-.101	-.070	-.105*
NF	-.074	.147**	-.010	.147**	.171**	1	.021	.001	-.077	-.007	.012	.053
T0	-.020	.184**	-.116*	.045	.138*	.021	1	-.278**	-.341**	-.468**	-.524**	-.399**
T1	.014	-.157**	-.012	-.015	-.153**	.001	-.278**	1	-.127*	-.036	.174**	.198**
T2	.003	-.075	.003	.064	-.066	-.077	-.341**	-.127*	1	.204**	.190**	.086
T3	-.104*	-.039	.083	.003	-.101	-.007	-.468**	-.036	.204**	1	.233**	.147**
T4	.070	-.068	.217**	-.071	-.070	.012	-.524**	.174**	.190**	.233**	1	.179**
T5	-.116*	-.130*	.046	.099	-.105*	.053	-.399**	.198**	.086	.147**	.179**	1

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

\*\*.. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Source: Authors' analysis

As regards negotiating without a predetermined tactic, the correlation analysis reveals no relations between gender, hierarchical level or negotiating frequency and negotiating without any tactic. On the other hand, there is a weak positive correlation between age and experience and negotiating without tactics. That result suggests that older and more experienced managers tend to negotiate without a predefined tactic. In other words, they rely on their judgement and improvise according to the current situation. Company size is negatively related to negotiating without a predetermined tactic. As mentioned previously, the smaller the company is, the greater chance the manager will negotiate without a predefined tactic.

Further, the results reveal that managers' age and experience are related to choosing the red herring tactic in the negotiation process. Since this tactic is quite demanding, it is highly improbable that young and inexperienced managers in the beginning of their career would choose it at the negotiation table. For this reason, the fact that negotiating frequency has no influence on the red herring tactic is even more surprising. According to the correlation matrix, no relationship is found between these two sets of variables.

As regards the final offer, or best and final offer tactic, the results show that male negotiators are more likely to use this tactic. On the other hand, female negotiators usually choose “softer” negotiation tactics. Furthermore, no other personal characteristics are related to the final offer tactic. Regarding limited budget tactic, the findings reveal that company size is positively correlated to the limited budget negotiation tactic suggesting that managers from larger companies tend to use it.

Lastly, a weak and negative relationship was found between gender, age and experience on the one side and emotional negotiations on the other side. Opposite the authors’ predictions, male managers use emotions more often than female managers do. Additionally, younger managers at the beginning of their careers take emotional approach during negotiations more frequently. In cases when one side lacks objective arguments, emotions can be a powerful tool for achieving negotiating goals.

## 5. Conclusion

As noted previously, the literature offers limited understanding of negotiating behaviour of Croatian managers. This study is particularly pertinent, given that the relationship between the negotiators’ personal characteristics and their negotiation tactics is still poorly understood. In general, the use of tactics has been neglected in the negotiation context.

Summarising the major findings that come from the research, the following conclusions can be made:

- Hierarchical level and negotiating frequency are not related to any negotiation tactic.
- Take it or leave it tactic is not related to any personal characteristic of the managers.
- Gender is negatively related to the final offer and emotional negotiation tactics.
- Age is negatively related to the red herring tactic and emotional negotiation tactics.
- The size of a company is negatively related to variable no tactics and positively related to the variable limited budget.
- Experience is positively related to the variable no tactics and negatively related to the red herring tactic and emotional tactics.

Based on these findings, it can be observed that more research is still needed to better identify the determinants of the overall negotiating behaviour. Variables such as market position, ownership, industry competition or geographical location have not been examined in the paper. The future research could be extended by including these variables. Furthermore, additional managers’ characteristics should be taken into account, e.g. level of education, area of expertise, personal styles, styles of communication, approaches to negotiation, and risk-taking propensity. In particular, cultural dimensions in the negotiation context have not been addressed, but deserve future investigations. Despite the limitations, the paper contributes to the existing literature by providing new insights into the negotiating behaviour of Croatian managers. In addition, this research can serve as a basis for conducting future empirical research in the field. It could also be helpful in future studies on this topic, particularly in the Croatian negotiation context.

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