Full Length Research Paper

Information Communication Technology (ICT) for Negotiations

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the negotiating issues such as transparency in negotiations, the difference between e-negotiations and auctions, and the negative and positive aspects of technology and human face to face negotiations. This paper also looks at Facebook as a technology media of tools for e-negotiation. The last section presents a list of negotiation software and some major trends in the technology (Information Systems) in relation to e-negotiations.

Keywords: Negotiation software systems, information communications technology (ICT), e- Negotiations, world wide web, human factors; face-to-face negotiations.

INTRODUCTION

Negotiation can be wisely viewed as "every time, we seek to influence the other party (OP)" (Low, 2010, Pp. 1). Thompson (2005, pp 2) speaks of "an interpersonal decision-making process necessary whenever we cannot achieve our objectives single-handedly". This means that "parties are committed to peaceful means for resolving their dispute"; they have "to make a decision about their interdependent goals or objectives" (Lewicki and Litterer, 1985). A successful negotiation means that both parties agree on their goals and objectives.

   Every day, we are all involved in some form of negotiation in one way or the other. We do it at work, at home, while shopping, or planning to buy some things at the later stage. Whether we admit it or not, but we negotiate. The negotiation objectives can be of various kinds such as for sales, purchases, freight transportation, vehicles, property, training charges, employee's salary or others. Negotiation is also a mean through which business partners arrive at an accord under the setting of strategic dealings or the win-win state of affairs to all involved. It may also be a self-determining decision making situation. The technology such as phone, fax,

pager, e-mail, voice over internet protocol (VOIP) is basically the mean of communication which help us in the process of negotiation. In addition other technological components such as various kinds of information systems can also be used for negotiation. Although the use of technology is not a pre-condition to conduct negotiations, however, computer and communication technologies in this era of information economy, do play a special role in trading and therefore, in negotiations and provide challenges and special opportunities for the manager to negotiate online while sitting at distant places.

   In the past, large number of negotiation information systems has been developed by academic researchers (in terms of algorithms) and by different vendors (in terms of final products), in addition to usual applications of ICT such as computer, e-mail, fax, teleconferencing etc, The main objective of these systems is to provide analytical support to enable the negotiators to do their jobs faster and in a transparent manner. According to Stark and Rangaswamy (1999), the spectrum of negotiations systems includes: (1) expert systems that use accumulated knowledge to aid a party in preparing for a negotiation, (2) Information systems such as individual decision support (DSS) and group decision support (GDSS) that might help in negotiations combined with

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technologies for and facilitate the actual negotiation process in multi-agent settings; and (3) "autonomous agents" that are programmed to negotiate on behalf of their human principals.

Bearing in mind the gradual increasing use of computer and ICT in negotiations by decision makers / companies, in this article, the authors reviewed the use of computer and ICT when one negotiating vis-à-vis face-to-face. In addition, this paper also deals with the analysis of what technology can do to resolve the problems of social interaction, the lack of face-to-face interactions or simply the lack of human touch (that high relationship factor) when negotiating across different locations and times. Further, it identifies trend in the computer and communication technology with specific reference to the types of information systems and future areas of concern to the researchers regarding use of technology in negotiations. The issues such as auctions versus negotiations are also discussed in this paper.

Auctions and Negotiations

Standardized and mass produced goods, like telephones, computers, printers, medicines and DVD players are typically purchased at list price with some variations here and there. However, buildings, fighter jets or consulting services are tailor-made (not always) to the need of the buyer and they are procured by hiring contractors. Therefore, the buyer can choose either 1) to have a contract by using an auction or 2) negotiate with the potential seller. Bulow and Klemperer (1996) explained the benefits of competitive auctions for sale or procurement and the regulators also prefer auctions with a view to stop corruptions. However, there is a widespread use of both auctions and negotiations in public and private purchases. Fixed price contracts lend themselves to competitive bidding while cost-plus contracts do not. This implies that the choice between auctions and negotiations is dependent on the nature of the contract. Furthermore, complex projects–for which adaptations are expected before and after the contract– are more likely to be negotiated, while simpler projects with fixed cost will be awarded through competitive bidding. (Bajari and Tadelis, 2001, pp. 287-307). It is also said that procurement is focused on designing a contract or auction that minimizes contractor's informational rents while giving appropriate incentives to minimize moral hazard and one of the more important issues is to limit transaction costs. (Bajari and Tadelis, 2004, 2005).

On this issue, the authors do not have any debate in this article but are of the firm view that reduction in transaction cost and increase in transparency (less corruption) can be achieved as in the process of e-government in which Korea e-Government helps local companies to sell Korea products in the international business market by providing an e-trade service for international business purposes. (Low and Ang, 2011). This is certainly possible if negotiations are conducted with the help of ICT. Provisions of in-depth audit trails of information systems help in achieving the objectives of transparency. Kersten, et al. (2000) has also mentioned that the difference between auction and negotiation mechanisms has blurred with the arrival of the Internet, electronic commerce and other decision support and communication technologies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method applied in this research is the qualitative research method (the interviewing method), and the researchers adopted a semi-structure form of interview. This method helped the authors to have a deeper understanding of the interviewees' thinking and their preferred method or ICT tools for negotiations. The study sample consisted of sixty-one (61) corporate business leaders/managers and university academicians. All of them were computer literate and they had used ICT for negotiation in their daily business dealings. The interviewees included four Malaysians, four Singaporeans, two Australians, two Britishers, three Bangladeshi, one Pakistani, one European, one Iraqi (eighteen foreigners or expatriates making up 29.5 percent of the total number of interviewees) and the rest are Bruneians. As done in Low's (2006) study, at the beginning of these interviews, the researchers started with some small talk which was useful in putting the interviewees at ease. Very often, a light conversation on their personal likes and interests, detected in previous interactions or previous telephone calls, would serve as a springboard for further discussions.

During the interviews, the preliminary questions asked were:
1. What method of negotiation do you normally use in your daily business dealings?
2. What about negotiation of business dealings which are geographically or physically far apart? What ICT tools do you use for negotiation most often?
3. Do you think face to face negotiation is better than the use of internet, email or Facebook ?
4. What kind of ICT tool is best to be used in what kind of business dealings?
5. What do you think of online bidding? Which business dealings are this method good for?

The interview method is useful in this study because it enables more qualitative data to be collected from the respondents (Cavana, 2001: 134-135). Open questions (Cavana, 2001:142). were used, enabling the respondents to more freely express themselves while, more critically, allowing the researchers to gather more on ICT for negotiation information.

RESULTS

Fifty-three interviewees or 86.9 per cent voted that " face to face negotiation has personal touch with individuals and organisations" and most of them gave the remarks, such as 'many negotiations are negotiations of opportunity - such negotiations are not planned they occur during informal, chance encounters.'; 'Negotiators might use a positive emotional style in a face-to-face interaction'; 'negotiators buy from people whom they feel comfortable' and 'are better able to relate with'.; 'Negotiators might use a positive emotional style in a face-to-face interaction'; 'People engage in "politeness ritual". 'They gesticulate, nod, smile and make direct eye contact as well as verbalisations ('uh-huh') that serve to affirm the other person or show that they are listening to the other party.' and 'In face to face negotiations, we spot problems and solve conflicts in a short time'.

However, fifty-five or 90.1 per cent of all the sixty-one interviewees felt very strongly that there are limitations in face to face negotiation because 'face to face negotiation requires specific time and specific place'; 'often limited numbers of people can negotiate in a specified place like an office or conference room'; 'any party can also throw tantrum(s); and these may be seen as pressures or threats to the other party' and 'good for high level, high cost and important negotiation where final decision is crucial.'

Fifty-eight interviewees or 95.1 percent of the interviewees commented that e-negotiation was fast and very useful for far off places and during the interview, they made some assuring remarks such as 'the information age has created a culture of 24 hours /7 days availability.'; 'we can negotiate anytime anywhere.'; 'e-negotiation is good for things urgent,' 'saving cost and cut travelling expenses'; 'e-bidding can be done from any parts of the globe.' and 'online/real time analytical capabilities can be used for better decision.'

The disadvantages about e-negotiation as mentioned by forty-nine or 80.3 percent of the interviewees are as follows: 'e-negotiation is impersonal' '(and) important information may not be mentioned or conveyed during business dealings.'; '(there is) a lack of informal communication and a loss of opportunity to clarify and to negotiate'; 'creating rapport is more difficult to establish with impoverished mediums of communication.' and 'because of the fact that people are far apart, the issues are more likely to go unresolved and perhaps forgotten. This can contribute to an escalating cycle of destructive or negative negotiating behavior.'

Furthermore, forty or 65.6 per cent of all the respondents felt that 'e-negotiation requires trust between two or more parties when negotiating' and their remarks were: 'the element of doubt is always there when negotiating using ICT.'; 'the e-negotiators are of lying or deceiving them,' 'when negotiating using ICT, after all, I don't see them, their faces and their reactions.' and '(ha2) we can also make aggressive demands or give threats'.

ANALYSIS and DISCUSSION

Human Factors in Negotiations

Trading partners who are geographically separated from each other to a significant extent (comparative to the value of the negotiations and other constraints on their ability to meet physically) use technology that facilitates negotiation between them. This negotiation technology can provide the use of technology that facilitates negotiation between them. This negotiation technology provides online/real time analytical capabilities for better decision making in an environment which involved many buyers and seller. The internet exchanges for business to business: B2B negotiations are the best example for such as environment. However, most organizations still prefer human to human negotiations to have personal touch with individuals or organizations they are investing their resources in. This is more prevalent in traditional businesses and closely located businesses. This section presents the positive and the negative aspect of face to face human negotiations.

Face-to-Face Negotiation Resolving Conflicts Immediately

Normally when people work in close proximity, they can spot problems and solve conflicts in a short time; they can resolve or nip any conflict in the bud! When people are physically separated far apart, the issues are more likely to go unresolved and sometimes forgotten; and this can contribute to an escalating cycle of destructive negotiating behavior.

On the other hand, when technologies such as email are used, there is a lack of informal communication as well as a loss of opportunity to clarify and to negotiate. The most limiting aspect of same-time, different-place negotiations is the inability to chat informally inside offices (Thompson, 2005). The casual conversations that negotiators usually have in a restroom, or in the factory's canteen, or while walking back from lunch are often where the most difficult problems are solved. It is very often seen that stalemated negotiations get resolved outside of the formal bargaining forum or in the pre or post-negotiation stage(s) (Low, 2010, pp 39 - 65). Many negotiations are negotiations of opportunity – kind like entrepreneurial joint ventures. Such negotiations are not planned they occur during informal, chance encounters.

Establishing Rapport in Face-to-Face Negotiation

Face-to-face negotiators are more likely to be in sync with each other (Thompson, 2005). In Drolet and Morris's (2000, pp 36, 26 - 50) research, they uncover that visual access between negotiators fosters rapport and thus facilitates cooperation and pie expansion. The more face-to-face interactions and contact between the negotiators, the better it is and the greater the rapport, the more integrative the negotiation outcomes are likely to be. It is also said that face-to-face negotiators feel a greater amount of rapport than do negotiators in the video conferencing and audio-only conditions. And what more, creating rapport is more difficult to establish with impoverished mediums of communication (Drolet and Morris, 2000, pp 36:26 - 50).

Reliability and Trustworthiness in e-Negotiation

More often than not, people do not buy from people they do not know. They buy from people whom they are better able to relate with (Low, 2001, pp 14 - 16). We thus act differently to strangers than to people whom we know. As the element of doubt is always there when negotiating using ICT, e-communicators are viewed to even attribute malevolent motives to people they do not know or who represent the out-group. Kramer (1995, pp 95 - 120) has coined this as the sinister attribution error (or bias). In other words, the e-negotiators are usually more likely to suspect or mistrust the other party of lying or deceiving them, relative to interacting or negotiating face-to-face though the situation provides no factual basis.

A Tendency to Adopt An Adversarial Negotiation Style via Electronic Technology

When negotiations are made through the email, the negotiators generally tend to adopt an adversarial negotiation style ("the squeaky wheel bias" (Thompson, 2005, pp 310) – whereas the same negotiator might use a positive emotional style in a face-to-face interaction (Keisler and Sproull, 1992, cited in Thompson, 2005, pp 310).

   When negotiating face-to-face, people engage in what is called a "politeness ritual" (Thompson, 2005, pp 309). They nod, smile, make gestures, make direct eye contact and make verbalisations ('uh-huh') that serve to affirm the other person or show that they are listening to the other party. In e-negotiation, there is a tendency for the negotiators to engage in more risky interpersonal behaviours such as making aggressive demands or even threats; there is bias that is called the burned bridges bias (Morris, et al., 2002 pp 89 - 100). Besides, they may also act as if these e-messages are ephemeral (Spoull

and Keisler, 1991) (though email when deleted can actually be retrievable from most computer systems).

The Solutions: Tapping the Benefits of Computer and Communication Technology When Negotiating

The growth of internet based business-to-business (B2B) trading is the result of increase usage of computer and communication technology in the processes such as negotiations. May it be email, internet exchanges, virtual market places or any other tool helps negotiators to break the ice and establish some rapport and that clicks the deals in today's world. Other tools, such as teleconferencing, attach the faces to names (Thompson, 2005) of negotiators and results in humanising the communication. Besides, what is positive and helpful is that with technology, it is possible to communicate with people anywhere in the world. The authors agree with Kersten et al. (2004) that the email should not be one's sole means of communication; it needs to be part of a coordinated communication plan that incorporates the other approaches yet at the same time one has to ask oneself, "What other mechanism or way allows one to deliver a personalized message to as many people as one wants (to influence or persuade), instantly, at little or no cost?" Can one think of a way? We can't. Managers are expected to negotiate at a moment's notice (Thompson, 2005), and also seize the opportunity(ies) of the use of words, (affecting the moods of other party) time and place in managing the negotiation climate (Low, 2010). The information age has, in fact, created a culture of 24 hours /7 days availability. The new media provide new opportunities and mechanisms to cooperate or to compete, taking advantage of computer and communication networks, and the fact that millions of people and businesses are online simultaneously in today's environment. It has provided different types of auctions and negotiations in the organizations. It is of the authors' opinions that the combination of technology and human interaction, and hybrids of auctions and negotiation processes may provide a better platform for negotiations and their best possible roles in e-business and other such form of business.

Being There

In the midst of the negotiations even at the times of conflict, the trick is to keep things going, facilitating whatever communications between parties; hence, in this aspect, the emailing or teleconferencing comes in handy. One can also combine emailing with teleconferencing and instant messaging to have intense communications, building rapport and growing the relationships between the negotiating parties.

The technology can bring businesses closer or in direct link to customers, by completing transactions, trading information more easily and/ or bypassing others in the value chain (Ghosh, 1998, pp 126 - 135). A book publisher, for example, could bypass retailers and distributors and sell directly to readers. Besides, businesses keep-in-touch (KIT) (Low, 2006a; 2002; 2001; 2000) with the customers are carried out via electronic technology. Not for a single slightest moment must one gives the impression to one's customer that one has forgotten him or her. Send him/her an email; and share a joke or an update of a new product and other information to keep in touch and build the relationships with him/her (Low, 2002).

With the use of ICT, a co-operative and service-oriented stance can be adopted when negotiating. "The improved quantum power of chip technology has led to advanced technology, and this can be tapped to service customers. Email and e-commerce can be used to pass information to them quickly and effectively. It can also be harnessed for faster online sign-ups, orders, promotions and improved timely service delivery" (Low, 2006a, 2002; 2000. pp 89). So the pertinent questions here are: what information a person has that he/she can use to make it easier for them to do business with him/her or for him/her to negotiate with them? What help can one give to one's customers by using the experiences of one's employees or that of one's other customers?

And what is even more pertinent is that virtual meetings or negotiations are often seen as a cheaper alternative to travel, they are better understood as a middle ground between a phone call and a face-to-face meeting. They save money, but they also save time. In a survey conducted by MCI, an American telecommunications firm, 69 percent said they preferred a virtual meeting to travelling because it saves time, while only 37 percent said they did it to save money. Each has its place and indeed, video-conferencing is a perfect second-meeting tool after the first handshake. (The Economist, 2004, pp 73).

What more, virtual meetings ranging from a simple three-way conference call to a fancy multi-media presentation, beamed to hundreds over the internet has its peak – particularly, after the terrorist attacks in 2001 with the long security queues and checks. And with 2003 and early this year's SARS scare, such virtual meetings are still growing. (The Economist, 2004, pp73).

Information communication Technology has, nowadays, indeed become a powerful tool in influencing and galvanizing actions. One of the key Internet incidents in China, to name one, includes the Sanlu Milk Scandal case. In September 2008, Chinese milk giant Sanlu was exposed for trying to hush up news that its infant milk formula had been contaminated. It was one of China's worst food safety scandals as six babies died from kidney problems and some 860 were hospitalized. Public outcry

and anger led to serious scrutiny of the integrity of China's top Internet firms, with strong actions taken against the culprits. Soon after the news broke out, a Sanlu memo which suggested bribing Chinese search engine Baidu to cover up the news surfaced online. Two men responsible for the contamination were executed while four others, including the former head of Sanlu, were given life sentences (Ho, 2011, pp D2).

Having More Means to Put Pressure on the Other Party

In a bargaining or negotiation situation, text messaging and internet too can offer additional means to lobby for support or apply pressure on the other party.

One case in point happened recently in Philippines that has been touted as the "text capital" of the world; the country has about 120 million to 150 million messages crossing mobile telephone networks daily (The Straits Times, 2004, pp A5). In May 2005, a consumer organisation leading the first cyber protest in Philippines denounced the government plans to tax mobile phone text message, or SMS that has become more common than making a telephone call. The group posted an Internet petition, asking supporters to add their names to the document asking the Congress to scrap the tax measure aimed at generating revenues to help in plugging a budget deficit. Besides, mobile phone users were also urged to sign up joining the protest by sending an SMS to a dedicated cellular phone number that would collect all messages, and the petition was then sent to the Congress (The Straits Times, 2004, pp A5). Interestingly too, in China, Twitter-like blogs also help to bring swift justice; in fact, networking tools are used to rally netizens (there are 450 million netizens in China) to criticise or condemn errant officials. Usually the news about an official's wrong-doing spread rapidly through online China, and spilled over to the traditional media, and such casual social networking tools (such as Twitter and Facebook) "have taken on a great political significance (influence) in tightly controlled China". (Ho, 2011a, pp D4, italics ours).

To further elaborate, it is worthy to note that online forums, a unique part of cyber China, are going strong, and they provide channel to air views on hot topics, and in this sense, can sway or influence the public views. In China, the archaic bulletin board system (BBS) remains the Number 1 source of news for many young Chinese; almost every young Chinese frequents these online forums and depends on them for reliable information. (Ho, 2011b, pp D6).

In India, millions of citizens have embraced the country's five-year-old Right to Information Act, which allows citizens to demand almost any government information from the country's information service portal

(http://righttoinformation.gov.in/). By putting pressure on the other party, people use the law to stop petty corruption and to solve their most basic problems, like getting access to subsidized food for the poor or a government pension without having to pay a bribe, or determining whether government doctors and teachers are actually showing up for work. (Kumar, 2010).

Using Instant Messaging

Instant messaging can also be said to be much more like face-to-face interaction; negotiators need to respond quickly and in real time. It is claimed that instant messaging medium would be an advantage when negotiators had a weak bargaining position, but backfire when negotiators had a weak bargaining position because they are 'exposed' and could not easily run for cover.

In Chakravarti, et al. (2004) study (cited in Thompson, 2005), it was found that sellers who had strong arguments for their product fared particularly well in instant messaging. This is because they know well, could sense, and verbally bamboozle the buyers; however, sellers who had weaker arguments were not able to hold their own in instant messaging, and did much better negotiating via traditional email. The key point is thus: if you have a strong bargaining position, impoverished media can help you; if you have a weak bargaining position, insist on face-to-face, otherwise immediate communication. For argument's sake, the authors wish to pinpoint this: they are aware that some critics may also argue or highlight that "vendors with a strong argument for their services using instant messaging to 'bamboozle' customers is illogical" and some even funnily or naively maintain that "vendors with strong arguments in their favor are not bamboozling customers; it is vendors with weak arguments who are using the rich communication channels offered by other communication approaches to distract from their weak technical arguments." (Authors' comments: are the critics being presumptuous?) Here, critics should be relevantly pointed out that the authors are just highlighting that readers should take a careful step to unassumingly protect them from being hoodwinked by any vendor(s); and that is a fair or justified safe approach to take.

Having the Absence of Status and Power in e-Negotiation

It is common that some face-to-face negotiators can dominate over their other parties, with participation in the conversations being unequal. Appearance can affect status. Face-to-face negotiators are dependent on how they dressed, and in fact, they can power dress to look

successful. People who are weak in face-to-face negotiations can become powerful in e-negotiation; there is an absence of traditional status cues when negotiators interact via technology such as electronic mail; in fact, there is this "the weak gets strong" effect. In emailing, there can, indeed, be the absence of status and power. When people receive email, they do not know the status of the message sender, the very nature of the email hides the sender's status, where the person works or if they are in the company. Dynamic status such as age, position, dress, mannerisms and gender are missing in the email (Thompson, 2005, pp 313). In a way, this can create a co-operative team-playing (among equals) approach at least in the initial negotiation stages in the absence of such information.

Additionally, people who are introverts are seemingly able to communicate better, because they can plan or be better prepared before interacting with other party via technology. Then again they may also be put on the spot, and of course, here they can choose to counter such power display of the other party by not replying or responding to the other party via technology.

Facilitating 2-Way e-Communications

It is of paramount importance that corporate leaders are aware of the fact that transparency or openness is essential in an e-community. Such a community diminishes the opportunity for any managers to lord it over others because they have knowledge that no one has. When all levels of the organisation know the bigger-picture, as happens in a transparent culture, they can make better-informed decisions for the organisations and for themselves (Baldoni, 2003, pp 94, 124)

Virtual communications through email is an effective way for the corporate leader or manager to share his or her thoughts and to persuade others to the leadership message, provide guidance and direction, and keep abreast of changing conditions by listening to feedback. Intra-group communications, information-sharing or negotiations can also increase and strengthen staff's confidence and commitment to the organisation. An electronic bulletin board, for example, allows members file messages on various topics to be picked up later by other group members (Dessler, 2001, pp 381).

Creating Informality and Casualness

When managers negotiate through the email, informality and casualness can also be created. Emoticons can be used; they can be useful in e-communications when expressing emotions; these emoticons can include the use of smiley:
:) Basic smiley – user did like the last statement or was

happy about something
;) Winky smiley
:-(Frowning smiley – user did not like the last statement or was not happy about something.
I-) Ho ho
:-o Oops
:-P Nyahhh! I do not believe in that!

Smileys tend to lend an air of informality in email and Facebook messages; they help to establish rapport as well as to build relationships between parties.

To some extent, these emoticons help to lend some level of informality or casualness in the interactions between the negotiating parties. The use of such symbols is one way of adding a human touch to otherwise naked communication. Although such things are not perceived as important by many users of technology, however, they are a very important tool of expressing emotions in e-communication.

Making Disclosures Help

It is true to say that face-to-face negotiators are more likely to overcome or avoid impasse and complete the deals satisfactorily than e-negotiators. Furthermore, the possibility of reaching a mutually profitable negotiation (and avoiding impasse) is a function of the richness of the communication (Thompson, 2005). Therefore, one can say that personal, face-to-face contact is the lubricant of the business engine. Without it, things do not move well. Nonetheless, it should be noted that e-negotiators could sometimes make brief disclosures; and these help. In e-negotiation, when making disclosures, it normally helps the negotiation process; this reduces the likelihood of impasse or deadlocks (Thompson and Nadler, 2002, pp 109 – 124.).

Enhancing Technology-mediated Negotiations

Negotiating by talking casually, and being friendly with the other party increases liking and rapport and results in more profitable business deals than when people just "get down to business". Low (2001) speaks of the power of relationships and the need to build rapport for easer or smoother deals between business people. And in this age of e-communications, people sometimes forget to use the telephone (Baldoni, 2003, pp 71). Negotiators who schmooze over the phone develop more realistic goals, resulting in a wider range of possible outcomes, and are less likely to impasse compared to non-schmoozers . More so, according to Morris, Nadler, Kurtzberg and Thompson (2002, pp 89 - 100), negotiators who schmoozed over the phone expressed greater optimism about the future working relationship with the other party, compared to negotiators who did not schmooze. Merely exchanging a few short emails describing you can lead to better business relations (Thompson, 2005). Brief telephone call prior to e-negotiation increases co-operation, pie expansion and the quality of relationship (Thompson and Nadler, 2002, pp 109 – 124.); the key here is that schmoozing over the phone before the actual e-negotiation helps, it certainly helps growing the rapport and relationship.

The authors would also argue that common email courtesy and politeness must be subscribed (Low and Singh, 2005, pp 56 - 69.), and there should be normal grammar and correctness in the writing of email, and only then, the negotiator would be able to raise his or her influence over the other party. Indeed there is no point to irritate the receiver with all kinds of mistakes (for example, unpunctuated sentences) written in the email.

Thompson (2005) also suggests schmoozing in terms of asking questions that would show your interest in the other party as a person or searching for both parties' common similarity points as well as linking the emails or exchange (e.g., "I will look forward to hearing your reactions on the preliminary report, and I will also send you the photographs you requested"). Overall, in e-negotiations, negotiators who attempt to build rapport build more trust than those who try to dominate the other party. (Thompson and Nadler, 2002, pp 109 – 124.; also cited in Thompson, 2005).

Facebook, increasingly popular these days, helps in communications and negotiations. It is a good communication tool and is now becoming the dominant social networking tool, facilitating our online and offline worlds. Facebook's capacity to galvanize human behaviour has already had vast and irreversible consequences for society, politics, and marketing. Facebook puts people, not information, at the center of how we relate to the world through the Internet. The authors agree with Kirkpatrick (2010) that Facebook is fast becoming a catalyst for a relationship revolution. Facebook puts people of the same interests together and like attracts like (Low, 2010, pp 5 - 6).

Here, the authors wish to cite an example where Facebook has become a good influencing tool. Just recently, a UK university used Facebook as a communication tool by asking friends students and colleagues to give donations and raise funds for the cancer research UK. A team of law lecturers and PTA (Postgraduate Teaching Assistants) volunteered to cut and dye their hairs in any colors according to the donors' wish as specified on the Facebook university website. A specific date was chosen for the cutting and dyeing hairs' ceremony and the volunteers were to retain the colored hairs for a month as promised to the donors. This is a good way or means of using Facebook for fundraising of a good cause. (http://www.justgiving.com/BLS-YueAng)

Using Online Forums and Websites to Influence Public's Opinion at Large

One key way of using e- negotiation technology to influence public at large is by voicing out one's opinion in the cyberspace. This happened in China when a twenty-one year old hotel pedicurist named Ms Deng Yujiao, who grabbed a knife and stabbed an Hubei official to death when the man tried to force himself on her. She was arrested and charged with murder. The news of her plight spread on China's online forums and websites, generating an outpouring of sympathy and millions of posts. The case, which took place in May 2009, tapped into popular resentment against officials' abuse of power and traditional Chinese admiration for women who would die for their chastity. The online anger also translated into offline protests, and saw lawyers and activists charging to Hubei to help Ms Deng. Public pressure eventually forced the authorities to reduce her charge to one of assault. She was found guilty but let off without punishment in view of her weak mental state. Furthermore, two other officials who were present during the incident were also sacked by the authorities.

In another incident with regard to the influencing power of e-negotiation technology is the incident when Beijing had gone full steam ahead in 2009 with plans to install a filtering software program called Green Dam Youth Escort in all new computers in the country. The Ministry of Information Technology had ordered it to protect children from harmful Web contents such as pornography. Through the discussion in online forums and websites, the plan drew fierce protests from the public and foreign computer manufacturers, as it was seen as a bid to expand state censorship. The proposal was watered down, then made no longer mandatory. The Green Dam clamp-down was cited as a main example of how the government could be swayed by lobbying (Ho, 2011, pp D2).

Both stories depicts the importance and the power of public opinion expressed in cyberspace.

The recent Egypt unrest was caused by thousands of Egyptians staging protests across the country demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. The internet has been the main platform for some of the most vociferous criticisms of Mubarak. The complaints echo those of fellow Arabs in Tunisia: soaring food prices, lack of jobs and authoritarian rule that usually crushes protests swiftly and with a heavy hand. After the activists used social networking and blog sites to coordinate protests and distribute video-clips, many websites were blocked inside Egypt, Twitter and Facebook were censored by the Egyptian Government as activists took to the internet to communicate the latest events from across Egypt. Live stream websites such as ustream.com have

been blocked, along with local news websites dostor.org and elbadil.net. Some using mobile applications and alternative programmes were able to bypass the Twitter block. Other web-savvy users have used proxies to circumvent the online censorship. Egypt is now facing much public opposition to its current political leadership. The government imposed curfews and restricted movement of its citizens at night and cut off the internet and other sources of communication media as much as possible. Basically the government wanted to control the source of influencing so that the public would not be swayed by the opposition elements through the media of Internet and email.

The Egyptian protests are unlike anything witnessed in the country since Mubarak came to power in 1981 again mainly due to the importance and the power of public opinion expressed in cyberspace. (Channel 4 News 2011).

Other than influencing public's opinion, nowadays, the advanced cyberspace also plays an important role in saving people's life from disasters. Take for example, Philippines is ranked the most disaster-prone country in the world, according to a recent study by Brussels-based Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters. The World Bank lists it among the countries most affected by climate change, and most in danger of facing frequent and intense storms. On average, the country is battered by 20 typhoons a year. Megi was just the tenth typhoon to hit the Philippines in 2010. In September and October 2009, typhoons Ketsana and Parma struck Luzon within a week of each other, triggering the worst flooding in four decades. During the Supertyphoon Megi, which hit the Phillipines islands with wind speeds of up to 269 kilometres per hour in October 2010, experts have credited the social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter for helping to keep the death toll below 20. The national weather agency, the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services (PAGASA) launched its official Twitter website in mid-October, just before Megiwas to hit islands. The real-time updates, which were "retweeted" by subscribers and reported by the mainstream radio and television stations, ensured that the public knew when and where the typhoon was expected to hit hardest. Thousands were able to move to safer places or took precautionary measures before the typhoon struck. Barelya month after being set up, PAGASA's Twitter by then has over 28,000 subscribers who receive the standard 140-character "Tweets" on weather. Basically, through this cyberspace technology, everybody is just one post away and this technology becomes the most effective and efficient way of communicating important messages (another word for effective influencing) to the public. (The Brunei Times, 2011).

Trends in e-Negotiation Technology

One of the major trends across all industries is to produce better quality products at the lowest cost to survive in the competitive environment. This has resulted in the philosophy of lean management which has enhanced the use of technology in all functions in the industry. Furthermore, for the locations of subsidiaries, business partners are spread across the world which increases dependency on computer and communications technologies. This is true in case of negotiations also. It is not only stock markets, but other firms are procuring and selling goods and services 24 hours across the world by using computer and communication technology. With the advent of new tools of internet technology which has resulted in considerable reduction of cost of communications has reinforced the use of technology in negotiations. It has made automated negotiations (NSS), intelligent agents, the auction, online market place in the context of e-business, the buzz words of today's Business world. Many negotiations softwares are available to assist the process of negotiation which is mainly in the category of Negotiation Support Systems (NSS). However, one of the most important, aspects of most popular software such as enterprise resource planning (ERP), Business Intelligence (BI), Customer Relation Management (CRM), and Supply Chain Management (SCM) do not have a module for negotiations. However, there are some attempts for developing negotiation methodology for coordinating sub-contractors and electronic supply chain issues (Kim, et al., 2000). It is clear indication of complexities of the negotiation systems vis-à-vis its acceptability in the organizations.

According to Bui and Shakun (1997), research and development about NSS have focused on two key technological aspects, i.e., (i) group decision and /or conflict resolution models to help negotiators to reduce conflict and achieve agreement, it may be a conceptual framework or a set of protocols for agent negotiations (Bartolini, et al., 2001, 2002), (ii) providing rich communication media to increase information exchange. The second development is evident from the functionalities of e-mail systems, chatting systems such as ICHAT, and Systems such as Net Meeting (Teich et al., 1998). The negotiation softwares are in the category of group decision support systems and christened as NSS. A list of these software is presented in Table I, 2 and 3. From the table, it is very clear that, this software has specific functionalities and are used for a specific task in a specific business/ negotiations environment.

The human factors and ICT for negotiation can be summarized as in Figure 1.

Benefits and Limitations of the Study

Although, admittedly, one of the limitations of the study is that some critics may point out or even argue that the findings reveal "nothing new" or "it shows what that is presently known", the study has its benefits. The study does provide evidence and confirms some of the anecdotes and even the hearsay overheard in office lounges and lunch tables. Besides, no, if not few, research has so far been carried out on Information Communication Technology (ICT) for negotiation, and hence the research in this arena fills the gap. And further research is always welcome, and the study in this field can, of course, be updated. More so, Facebook, twitter and other tools/aids (and other media) are emerging negotiation 'gateways' or new avenues of influencing; and thus, information concerning such tools is both necessary and apt. Advanced technology is fast moving and the implication of this research is to highlight the current status of ICT for negotiation and be aware of the various ICT tools and aids to influence others.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the politeness rituals need to be borne in mind; it should be practised and shown when conducting e-negotiations. And more importantly, one has to bear in mind that when one is negotiating face-to-face or by e-negotiation, one is negotiating more with people; the people element should be borne in mind. High-tech must come with high-touch. After all, "it is the people who do business, not organisations. It is people who govern (negotiate), not nations" (Low, 2001 pp 15; Low, 2010 – italics ours).

As rightly said by Pollock (2003), the use of ICT in negotiations is equivalent to bringing in line 'logics of a technology' and the 'logics of human work' in an actual work environment. The similar sentiments are expressed by Castellani and Grasso (2002). They said negotiations process consists of architecture and a protocol, enabling a mixed human and computer-supported initiative along distributed scheduling and negotiation processes. Developments are taking place and new products are being made available of e-negotiation but not as ultimate decision making tools like an inventory control systems. However, their usage is increasing as analytical tools. Another very important factor of limited popularity of e-negotiations tools is that they are not part of enterprise

Table 1. shows some key reponses verbalised by the interviewees.

The Interviewees' Responses on Negotiation		
Responses	**Number of Interviewees**	**Percentage of Interviewees**
Face To Face Negotiation has personal touch with individuals and organizations 'Most negotiations are negotiations of opportunity - not planned but occur during informal, chance encounters'; 'Negotiators may use a positive emotional style when bargaining face-to-face'; 'I buy from people we know or better relate with.'; 'we get polite when talking face to face'; 'we usually nod, smile, make gestures, make direct eye contact and make verbalisations ('uh-huh') to show the other party that we are listening to them.' 'In face to face negotiations, we spot problems and solve conflicts in a short time'	53	86.9
Face to Face Negotiation requires specific time and specific place 'we should be flexible in terms of the place to negotiate. …limited numbers of people can negotiate in a specified place like an office/conference room'; 'Any party can throw tantrum(s); and we can use pressures or threats to the other party'; 'Good for high level, high cost and important negotiation where final decision is crucial.'	55	90.1
e-Negotiation is fast and very useful for far off places 'The information age has created a culture of 24 hours /7 days availability.' ; 'We can negotiate anytime anywhere'; 'e-negotiation is good for urgent matter'; 'e-negotiation help to save cost and cut travelling expenses'; 'We can also participate in e-bidding from any part of the world.'; 'Online/real time analytical capabilities can be used for better decision.'	58	95.1
e-Negotiation is impersonal and important information may not be conveyed during business dealings. 'A lack of informal communication and a loss of opportunity to clarify and to negotiate'; '(I) find it difficult to create rapport'; 'because of the fact that people are far apart, the issues are more likely to go unresolved and sometimes forgotten. This can contribute to an escalating cycle of destructive negotiating behaviour.'	49	80.3
e-Negotiation requires trust between two or more parties when negotiating 'The element of doubt is always there when negotiating using ICT.'; 'In using e-negotiations, I am usually more likely to suspect or mistrust the other party of lying or deceiving', 'we can often adopt an adversarial negotiation style.' 'We can even make aggressive demands or issue threats'.	40	65.6

Table 2. Software Tools for Negotiations

S/N	Software	Features
1.	Smart Settle Negotiator(http://www.smartsettle.com/html/products.html)	For professional Negotiators: Smart Settle Negotiator extends the power of the Decider to multilateral negotiations. One can simulate all the parties and develop strategies for negotiation. Negotiator puts you in secure real-time communication with other Negotiators and generates optimal solutions based on the preferences of any number of other parties located anywhere in the world.
2.	Smart Settle Pro	For Facilitators: Smart Settle Pro is our flagship product, the ultimate tool for secure multi-party negotiations. The Pro version is designed for simultaneous facilitation of any number of cases in stand-alone mode or on the Smart Settle Network
3.	Win Squared (http://www.winxwin.com/indexEmployment.htm)	The software with more than 600 techniques for handling employment negotiation in an effective manner without harming relationships. It analyzes more than a dozen different issues and provides custom advice.
4.	Negotiator Pro Ver 5.0 (http://www.negotiatorpro.com/negprosof.html)	It runs on MS-Windows 3.X, 95, 98 and NT. There is an older/ reduced price Version For Mac. Software allows the user to learn about his/her style, measure your ability of negotiate and prepare organizations/ individuals for real world negotiations. It has a special module for oil and gas.
5.	Symbolic Negotiation Software (http://www.idi.ntnu.no/~peep/symbolic/)	The software implements agents who broadcast their offers through a mediator agent. It is a P2P implementation, which should provide more flexibility and (relatively) higher efficiency.
6.	Debt Manager 2000 (http://www.debtmanager2000.com/debt_manager_2000_overview.php)	It is fully integrated debt negotiation web based software. It allows direct automated import from web form, Direct import from any standard CSV, Excel or other text file, and Direct import from email using lead import an AI tool.
7.	Ozro (http://www.eyedeas.net/clients/ozro/oursolutions/index.cfm) Agreement™ for Sales Ozro Agreement™ for Procurement Ozro Negotiate™ Ozro Agreement™ for Trade Settlement	Ozro Negotiate™ is the patented negotiation engine at the heart of the Ozro Agreements™ application suite. It is designed to facilitate people-centric, iterative, and multi-attribute negotiation, providing competitive advantage by prompting, capturing and synchronizing communications and data and producing supporting documentation - fostering comprehensive agreements in any context.
8.	DETERMINE's (https://www.determine.com/public/news.jsp) Module	It is collaborative contract negotiation software that coordinates multi party contract negotiations. It is an extension of contract performance management suite.
9.	INSPIRE (http://interneg.org/inspire/index.html)	Inspire© is a Web-based negotiation support system. It can be used as a game, a decision support system, a negotiation simulator, a demonstration negotiation support system, and as a research and training tool.
10.	Aero Exchange (https://www.aeroxchange.com/custom/public/products/aerosourcing.htm)	Aero Sourcing Negotiations tools includes Collaborative RFQ and Auction (Forward or Reverse) creation, Multi-Attribute Weighted Scoring of non-price elements of value, Multi-round capability for iterative changes or seller "short listing", Auditable communications captured in on-line threaded discussions (chat), Participation acknowledgements with email notifications and alerts, Reusable templates for all negotiation types, Spreadsheet export / import capability for bidding on an unlimited number of items in a single negotiation,• Unlimited URL / file attachment capability (files up to 4Mb in size each), and Real time analysis including summaries and graphical reporting tools.
11.	ChemConnect's (http://www.chemconnect.com/tools.html) easy-to-use tools	Through a unique combination of market information, industry expertise, e-commerce solutions, and an active network of trading partners, ChemConnect helps buyers and sellers of chemicals, feed stocks, plastics, and related products optimize their purchasing and sales processes. Accurately assess the market , Streamline negotiation processes , Get the best market price , Manage risk , Automate order processing and fulfillment

Table 2. Continuation

12.	AllSettle (http://www.allsettle.com)	All Settle is an automated internet dispute resolution service for a single value settlement. Claimants and claims adjusters can make and continuously adjust confidential demands and offers in order to reach a settlement.
13.	DS7(http://www.creditsoft.com/downloads/brochures/DS7/5-SettlementTools.pdf)	DS7 planning and negotiation tools simplify the settlement process. Our screens and reports help increase your negotiating power, while our automated alerts and calculations save you time and keep you in control. Define your own settlement fee programs. Calculations are performed automatically so you negotiate faster. Structure settlement payments over a period of time if needed Track multiple settlements per client at the same time. Store every aspect of a debt settlement including unlimited notes, View a schedule of upcoming settlements for your agency, Estimate settlement dates based on scheduled client savings, Easily calculate bulk settlements by creditor, Set up estimated settlement percentages by creditor or account, Automatically print a list of accounts ready to settle for each negotiator Settlement
14.	KandR Negotiations Associates (http://www.negotiators.com/consulting.htm)	It is a consulting firm. It provides negotiating planning, negotiating tools (MID charting goals for prioritization and NSR analyzer), negotiation participation and other services.
15	NegotiatingEdge (http://www.negotaitingedge.com)	It is a global consulting company that provides training and consulting services in negotiations.
16	Negotex (http://www.kelley.iu.edu/ardennis/wp/tr118-1.doc)	It is an expert system for negotiation preparation that provided a customized checklist of tips and guidelines.
17	Negotiationtools.com (http://www.negotiationtools.com/)	It provides training for negotiations.
18	ICONS (http://www.bsos.umd.edu/icons/icons.html) (International Communication and Negotiation Simulations)	It offers educational simulations of international relations. Decision makers of a particular country can negotiate solutions to global problems over the Web. Examples of such problems include arms control, the Middle East, human rights, international trade and other issues.
19	Parley (http://www.softplatz.com/Soft/Business/Math-Scientific-Tools/Parley-Negotiation-Software.html) Negotiation Software 1.0	Parley is a software tool that allows negotiators use current research to improve the results of their negotiations. It helps to identify relevant issues and resolutions, evaluate the parties' preferences, find efficient agreements and track the negotiation history.
20	Expert Negotiator (http://www.expertnegotiator.com/the-software/faq)	It is leading online negotiation planning and management software designed to help one to negotiate more efficiently and effectively based on the experts' research on what works. It guides one through a proven strategic negotiation process based on the experts' research and experience, helping ensure that one negotiate strategically and get the best deals.

Table 3. Facebook as software tool for negotiation

1.	Facebook as a communicating /negotiating tool.	It also introduces oneself to others. It initiates contacts and invites others so that one can influence or engage them. It enables an individual or an organisation to initiate an activity that links to a website for a particular cause (e.g. charity) (http://www.justgiving.com/BLS-YueAng). It can also help in rallying in the call to a cause and to galvanize actions.
2	Advertisements in Facebook	It introduces friends to new products such as music, videos, institutions, courses, food, promotion/offers and other activities. It enables an individual or an organisation to advertise one's products or services.
3	Sharing the same interest(s) in Facebook	One can share with each other one's hobbies and interests such as photography, music and videos.
4	Finding out more about the other party	One can view the profile and photographs of the other party (OP), gather more information of the OP so as to better influencing of him or her.
5	Raising opinion(s) or feelings) and receiving feedback in Facebook	One can express one's opinion(s) or feelings and in return, one receives many feedbacks from friends, family and colleagues. By doing so, one understands oneself better as well as creating rapport and mutual understanding with others.

Figure 1. Human factors and ICT for negotiations

systems.

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