JEAS
Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences
E-ISSN: 2148-1792 P- ISSN: 1302-2024
Volume 3, Supplement Issue 1
www.jeasweb.org

Exploring and explaining the perceptions of marketing managers of ethical behaviors in face-to-face inter-organizational business negotiations

Farid Aghajani
PhD student, Department of Business Administration, Shahrood Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahrood, Iran.

*Amir Ghafourian Shagerdi**
Assistant Professor, Department of Business Management, Imam Reza International University, Mashhad, Iran
**Corresponding Author*

Mehdi Sanei
Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Shahrood Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahrood, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Background: The main issue of the present article was what is the experience and perception of managers of organizations in negotiation ethics and what is the main goal is to obtain and classify their concepts and experiences of negotiation ethics to a more complete understanding of this concept will be achieved. Method: The research method of the present study was phenomenology and library resources and field method were used to collect data. To analyze the data, three steps of coding, determining descriptive classes and shaping the output space were used. The statistical population of the study was expert marketing managers in the production factories of Toos Industrial Town in Mashhad and the sampling method was non-probability purposeful method. Findings: To form the outcome space, a hierarchical method was used and the descriptive classes, each of which expresses a special concept of negotiation, were arranged in order of complexity, and related to each other. Levels of complexity for descriptive classes were differentiated and arranged by the manner in which negotiation ethics emerged for different individuals in the organization. Conclusion: In order to move towards the promotion of a culture in which lies, secrecy, and the avoidance of providing accurate information are observed, the ethics of negotiation must thus penetrate and spread in the culture of society. In such a culture, people who consider themselves obliged to observe moral principles and norms, and are familiar with the ethics of negotiation in verbal beauty and verbal mastery, and consider themselves obliged to observe ethics in negotiation, should be understood as people of social status.

Key Words: business, inter-organizational

Introduction

Manufacturing companies and industries, to achieve their goals, make the most of negotiations, and especially these days are looking to employ modern and new methods such as virtual negotiation. In order to conduct research, the concepts of negotiation, ethics, and perception must first be properly defined and identified. It is then necessary to examine how marketing managers understand ethical behaviors in inter-organizational business negotiations. Much work has been done on self-negotiation, types of negotiation, negotiation tactics and methods, stages of negotiation, concept and definition of perception from different individuals and schools, but little can be found in the literature on the relationship between negotiation and ethics. In the introduction, the explanation and background of each of these concepts are mentioned and then the main topic is examined. A point that is important and should be kept in mind while conducting and studying this research is that active members in an organization can all have different and diverse perceptions of the phenomena of the organizational unit and related issues and problems in their minds and react to that phenomenon in different ways. People's perception of organizational situations does not necessarily correspond to reality, that is, the interpretation of reality is different from reality itself, and individuals within the organization act on the basis of their perception of reality, not reality itself. Most researchers have defined perception as the process of becoming aware of objects, their properties, and the relationship between them through sensory organs.

Individuals are influenced by the type of interpersonal relationship they have depending on how they perceive negotiation. Therefore, we are obliged to be cautious about everything that affects our behavior and constantly review and analyze the implicit guidelines of the theories we use to direct our activities (1).

There are different definitions of negotiation that almost all convey the same concept. According to the common definition in most available sources, negotiation is a dialogue-based process that aims to resolve disputes or gain common interests between two or more individuals or groups, provided that it can satisfy the parties. All parties involved or one or more of them can benefit from this result. According to Miriam Webster, negotiation is the act or process of negotiating with the other party to reach an agreement on an issue.

Given what observations have shown, little effort has been made to identify the causes of ethical and immoral behaviors in negotiation. Immoral behaviors hinder the progress of negotiations. At the same time, such behaviors are not inevitable during the negotiation (2). With the growth of business in the world, negotiation ethics has emerged as a challenge for the business community. Uti Tu investigated the link between trust and immoral negotiation. He used Amos software for measurements and structural models related to research hypotheses. All standard parameter estimation values were negative and t-value was significant, indicating that trust has a negative relationship with traditional negotiation (3). Kronsen addressed negotiation tactics that were morally ambiguous. He examined a series of two-way negotiations and concluded that people with ambiguous and dual moral qualities have deviations in their assessment of what negotiation ethics is. He examined how and to what extent individuals use appropriate ethical tactics in negotiation and how they understand the ethical principles in negotiation. Second, why do some people misrepresent the desired outcome of one negotiation in order to use it to their advantage in another negotiation? He considered two groups, one as the perpetrator and the other as the victim in the negotiation, and concluded that the negotiators who were convicted perceived the act as more moral and legitimate than the other group. He also examined whether the participants intended to engage in ethical negotiation but their understanding of ethics was something else, and whether the perception of this immoral behavior affected their ethical behavior and intention to engage in ethical negotiation in the future. Usually people think that the other side is behaving immorally and they seek revenge and use retaliatory tactics. He concluded that recognizing deviations in the parties' perceptions of negotiation ethics could be effective in refining negotiation methods and tactics (4). Al-Khatib et al. compared the behavior of negotiating managers in Saudi Arabia and the United States and observed many differences between them. Their findings show that idealism, relativism, and opportunism have a major impact on Saudi executives' perceptions of immoral negotiating tactics. However, in American managers, Machiavellianism and opportunism play a large role in their negotiation tactics (5). Lewicki and Robinson distributed a questionnaire to individuals, asking them to review a set of unethical negotiation tactics and comment.

These tactics were extracted from various business books and seminars and suggested a normative and competitive approach to how to negotiate. In addition, the opinions of experienced and expert negotiators on what they considered immoral were used. Their results showed that although there were questions about how to understand ethics in a variety of ways, respondents had full faith in what they considered acceptable tactics. They identified four of the 16 tactics presented as morally appropriate and the remainder as inappropriate. In addition, they observed significant differences in the ranking of methods between American citizens and others (6). Welkma et al. addressed the issue of ethics in email negotiations. First, attitudes and perceptions about immoral or questionable methods of negotiation were evaluated and perceived behavior was measured through a pre-negotiation questionnaire. The results and practical behavior in integrated and distributive negotiations were compared. Their results showed that this questionnaire can to some extent predict the actual behavior and attitude of negotiators in negotiation. The moral behavior of the negotiator, the moral behavior of the other party, and the perceived honesty of the other party are the best predictors of performance (perceived and real) as well as the extent of the use of immoral tactics and the honesty of the other party (7). The governor and his colleagues stated that the use of immoral tactics in email negotiations is increasing, partly due to the inability of the other party to read non-verbal cues. Two variables play a role in whether negotiations succeed: one is the use of immoral tactics and the other is the perceived honesty of the parties (8). Dlech noted that "it is difficult to imagine that one side of the negotiation is concerned with moral issues but the other is not" (9). However, some researchers have suggested that some immoral behaviors may be appropriate or even necessary in advancing negotiation (10, 11). Batson and Thompson pointed out that some people are willing to use ethical principles in negotiation, but if they think they will lose benefits by doing so, they may use immoral methods in negotiation (12). Welkma and Flori reported that when the negotiating party is from another country or the other party acts immorally, the negotiators also engage in immoral behavior (13). Dlech stated that mistrust between the parties can lead to immoral behavior during the negotiation (9).

With the above in mind, we want to address the main topic of this article, which is the perception of managers of organizations about ethical behaviors in negotiation. Also, what is the main goal is to adopt and classify the concepts and their experiences of negotiation ethics in order to gain a more complete understanding of this concept.

The philosophy of the present study was interpretive. Interpretive philosophy emphasizes the understanding of individuals or groups, as well as the phenomena under study and the differences between them, in a way that their meaning and concept is expressed and interpreted. This paradigm was idealistic in terms of its ontological position, meaning that all social realities are the product of meanings and interpretations made by individuals themselves, and also include individuals' mindsets, perceptions, and attitudes toward the phenomena being studied. In other words, it states that the nature of phenomena and the world are all representations of human mindsets and thoughts.

Research strategy

The present study used phenomenology, which is a qualitative and interpretive method, to find the answers to its main questions. This approach to educational science was developed in the early 1970s by a group of Swedish researchers led by Franz Martin at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Phenomenography, although initially developed in the educational sciences, has since been used extensively in other disciplines, including management sciences. In recent years, in the field of management and organizational studies, special attention has been paid to interpretive methods (including phenomenology). The increasing development of interpretive methods in management has often been due to researchers' dissatisfaction with positivist processes and methods to produce scientific knowledge (14).

Selection of participants and data collection in the phenomenological method

The process of selecting individuals to participate in phenomenological research is non-random and completely purposeful. The main point is that the participants should be selected in a way that achieves maximum differences and changes in concepts. In other words, the participants should be selected in such a way that they have the maximum difference in the experiences related to the phenomenon in question

(15). The stop or saturation limit in the selection of samples is the point after which no new concept is observed among the concepts presented by the interviewees (16).

The traditional way of gathering information in the phenomenological method is to conduct interviews with these characteristics: face to face, semi-structured, in-depth and with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions mean that the researcher can continue the interview process based on the answers he / she receives from the interviewee if he / she feels the need. In-depth also means that both the researcher and the interviewee are fully involved in the discussion of the concepts in question during the interview process until they reach a common understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Selection of participants in the present study

The statistical population of the present study is expert marketing managers in production factories of Toos industrial town in Mashhad and for sampling, purposive non-probability sampling method was used.

The study participants were initially 8 but increased to 14. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with both main and probing questions. During each interview, the researcher tried to obtain qualitative data in an independent and probing way and analyze the results without distortion and change.

Results

In this section, the explanation and analysis of the information received from the interviews was done. Given that each research pursues its own goals and the achievement of those goals justifies the subject of the research, conducting research and reviewing the findings will lead researchers to a deeper understanding and prepare the ground for future research.

Description of free codes

At this stage, the initial concepts were extracted from the raw data. Although the introduction of concepts from data is a fundamental feature of the inductive approach in qualitative research, during this path, the researcher's creativity is considered as an essential part. During the data collection process, the researcher used the theoretical coding used in the grounded theory research strategy presented by Strauss and Corbin (17). In this method, there were generally three coding steps, which were open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the first step, the researcher performs open coding, which means carefully and patiently examining the data line by line and knowing the processes in it. For this purpose, each of the interviews was reviewed several times by the researcher. The audio files that were recorded during the interview were converted into text and, in other words, written. Paragraphs that had a coherent meaning and resulted in the same category were separated and separated well. After that, within each paragraph, the concepts were discovered and named using the words used by the interviewees. Eventually, the interrelated free concepts led to the initial categories. In a total of 14 different interviews, more than 138 codes or basic concepts were extracted. In the initial coding, an attempt was made to avoid repeating the same codes in one interview as well as in subsequent interviews.

Themes (descriptive classes)

Axial coding is the result of putting the original code together. Hence, the researcher can form his initial descriptive classes (or main themes) of the phenomenon by examining and comparing the original codes and their subjects, as well as distinguishing the differences and similarities between them. According to King and Horax, although there is no clear rule for defining and recognizing a subject, some appropriate guiding principles can be used to identify it (18). By observing and reviewing items such as recognizing themes, reproducibility, and their distinctiveness, themes (descriptive classes) were divided according to their nature. Table 1 shows a list of descriptive classes and primary codes that have led to these themes. At this stage, the concepts have been edited in terms of naming and the naming of themes has been done in the same way.

Outcome space

By analyzing the interviews, various and numerous concepts of each individual of the phenomenon were adopted and each of these different and multiple concepts was presented as a descriptive category. After the formation of each of these classes, in order to get an accurate and complete understanding of the subject and present a multidimensional concept of the negotiation phenomenon, The obtained descriptive classes (different concepts) were combined in a broader structure called the outcome space to provide a complementary and, more importantly, multidimensional picture of each of the different concepts of the subjects under study (19).

In this research, to form the outcome space, the hierarchical method was used so that the attribute classes, each of which expresses a unique concept of negotiation, are arranged in terms of complexity, and related to each other. Therefore, Table 1 shows the outcome space and Figure 1 shows its drawn face. Levels of complexity for descriptive classes are distinguished and arranged by the manner in which negotiation ethics emerge for the various members of the organization, as described in more detail below:

- Individual level: The manifestation of ethics in negotiation for managers is perceived as honesty and adherence to their promises and promises.

- Organizational level: At this level, the ethics of negotiation is experienced in immoral tricks (flattery and tautology), undermining human dignity and political development of work in organizational relationships.

- Social level: At this level, morality is understood in the inner element and artery of society, and the avoidance of honesty in negotiations, the inner horizon or the fixed element of this level is perceived.

Table 1: Outcome space for different ways of perceiving the phenomenon of negotiation in organizational communication

<table>
<tr><th>Outer horizon</th><th>Inner horizon, fixed element (focus)</th><th>Inner horizon, variable element (focus components)</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Individual</td><td rowspan="2">Individual ethics</td><td>A) Honesty</td></tr>
<tr><td>B) Adherence to your promises and promises</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Individual</td><td rowspan="2">Individual ethics</td><td>A) Flattery</td></tr>
<tr><td>B) Tautology</td></tr>
<tr><td>Undermining human dignity</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Political development of work in organizational relations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Society</td><td>The culture of dishonesty</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Discussion and Conclusion

After reviewing the background of the research and studying the outcome space and output of the research, the findings of the research are expressed:

1. At the individual level, that is, at the first and most rudimentary level in terms of complexity, individual ethics as the focus and fixed element includes the two inner horizons of honesty and adherence to one's promises.

2. At the organizational level, that is, the second level in terms of complexity, perception and experience has been in the form of immoral tricks, undermining human dignity and political development of work in organizational relationships.

Immoral tricks include two variable elements: flattery and tautology.

3. At the community level, the most complex level, we see a culture of honesty avoidance. A culture in which the behavior of the majority in business negotiations, and especially in negotiations in which the interests are significant, is the avoidance of honesty and the use of all kinds of lies and deception to win.

What the atmosphere of the result of this research expresses is the need to create, cultivate and spread a culture in which negotiation (at this level, of course, any logical dialogue can be considered negotiation) is the first, best and most logical way that reaches the minds of the people of that society to solve problems, instead of resorting to negotiation after resorting to any immoral and inhumane way, from quarrels to lies and hypocrisy.

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