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# Competition vs. Collaboration in Business Negotiations: The Prevailing Bargaining Practices in West African Marketplaces

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**DOCTOR OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS**

**BY**

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[Date]

**Doctoral Thesis:**

**“Competition vs. Collaboration  
in Business Negotiations: The  
Prevailing Bargaining Practices  
in West African Marketplaces”**

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## Abstract

Traditionally, commercial transactions take place in West Africa on marketplaces that sometimes extend over hectares. Vendors rent stands or display their stalls expecting to attract buyers. But how are exchanges negotiated? To address this concern, we looked at the existing literature in this area. The literature review revealed that research on this subject has not covered all West African countries. While research concerning for example, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Senegal exists, the literature review did not reveal any such study concerning the Republic of Benin and its neighbor of the west, Togo.

This thesis aims to fill this void somewhat by focusing on the bargaining practices prevailing in these two countries. Our research revealed that the Republic of Benin is characterized by a unique mode of bargaining, where the seller announces a price equivalent to double the value of his product. It is then up to the buyer to use the bargaining techniques to which she was introduced at a young age by her mother. A skillful bargainer would be able to reduce the starting price by half, after long minutes of negotiation. Our research also allows us to state that all market participants recognize that this practice constitutes a waste of time for all parties, even though some traders insist on this method, which allows them to take advantage of buyers, who do not master this style of haggling. How can we change this centuries-old practice that prevails in Benin? This thesis offers some reflection paths!

## Chapter 1: General Introduction

This chapter presents the subject, defines the scope of the study, and provides background information on the thesis. Last, it elaborates on how we could apply the knowledge acquired to our community.

### 1.1 Presentation of Subject or Issue

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces, and the impact of competition and collaboration on these practices. The bargaining practices in West African marketplaces are highly dynamic, and are heavily influenced by the competition between buyers and sellers, as well as the collaborative relationships that exist between them. By exploring the impact of competition and collaboration on the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces, this thesis will provide valuable insights into the economic development of the region.

What are the limits of this study?

### 1.2 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study for the thesis on "Competition vs. Collaboration: The Prevailing Bargaining Practices in West African Marketplaces" will be limited to the analysis of bargaining practices within the West African region. Specifically, the study will focus on the role of competition and collaboration in the bargaining process and explore the prevalence of each within the region. More precisely, the study will focus on Republic of Benin's marketplaces. This choice is justified by the fact that the literature review did not reveal any research on Benin's marketplaces that deals with

bargaining practices. The only research journal article that we found did not elaborate on the bargaining practices<sup>1</sup>. The study also covers Togo, a Republic of Benin's neighboring country on which we could not either find a research paper on the topic. Our study will involve a review of existing literature and empirical data collected through interviews and surveys with marketplace vendors, buyers, and other stakeholders. The research will also consider the influence of cultural, economic, and political factors on bargaining practices in the region. The results of the study will provide valuable insights into how competition and collaboration shape the bargaining process in West African marketplaces.

In the next paragraph, let us present some background information on this topic.

### 1.3 Background Information

Business negotiations are an important part of the modern global economy. The bargaining practices in African marketplaces are an integral part of the African culture and have been in place for centuries. These practices are still very much alive in many African countries, and they are often used to determine the price of goods and services. This thesis looks at the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces, comparing competition and collaboration. West Africa is a region in the western part of the African continent, comprising of 16 countries including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. West Africa is known for its vibrant and colorful markets, where vendors and shoppers

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<sup>1</sup>Ahoyo, J.R. (1975). Les marchés d'Abomey et de Bohicon. Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer, 28-110, 162-184



bargain for goods and services. Bargaining practices in West African markets vary from country to country.

The next paragraph elaborates on the context of the study.

#### 1.4 Context of Subject

From an economic standpoint, West Africa marketplaces are a key source of economic activity in the region. They are often characterized by intense competition among traders, who use a variety of bargaining strategies to secure the best price for their goods. The bargaining practices of West African traders have a significant impact on the local economy, as they can influence prices, the availability of goods, and the overall efficiency of the marketplace.

The political context of West African marketplaces is complex. The region is home to a variety of ethnic and religious groups, each of which has its own set of rules and regulations governing the marketplace. In addition, the region has a long history of colonialism, which has shaped the political and economic landscape of the region. These factors can all influence the bargaining practices of West African traders.

Concerning the historical context, we can add that the bargaining practices of West African traders have evolved over time. In the precolonial period, traders often relied on bartering and other informal methods of negotiation. In the colonial period, traders adopted more formalized bargaining strategies, such as haggling and bidding.

From a cultural standpoint, West African marketplaces are deeply embedded in the local culture. Traders often use traditional methods of negotiation, such as song and

dance, to make their point. In addition, traders often rely on informal networks of social relationships to facilitate the bargaining process.

Also, West African marketplaces are increasingly connected to the global economy. Customers come from neighboring countries to the biggest marketplace in Republic of Benin. This place known as the *Dantokpa Market* in Cotonou, which is Benin's economic capital city, is considered as the biggest marketplace in West Africa. The region is home to a growing number of multinational corporations, which often bring their own set of bargaining practices to the region. In addition, the rise of regional trade blocs and international organizations has also had an impact on the bargaining practices of West African traders.

What about the purpose of this research?

### 1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces, and to explore the impact of competition and collaboration on bargaining outcomes. It aims to identify the most successful strategies for bargaining in West African marketplaces and to analyze the factors influencing the use of such strategies. The research will examine the differences between competitive and collaborative bargaining practices and the implications of both approaches. The study will also explore the implications of bargaining practices for market efficiency, economic development, and social cohesion in West Africa.

How could we apply to our community the knowledge acquired in writing this thesis?

## 1.6 How to Apply to our Community the Knowledge Acquired

One way to apply the knowledge acquired in this thesis to our community would be to develop a training program for local business owners and entrepreneurs. The program could teach participants the advantages and disadvantages of both competitive and collaborative approaches to negotiations, and provide strategies for successful bargaining practices in West African marketplaces. Additionally, the program could provide resources and support to help local business owners and entrepreneurs to better understand the cultural context of the local marketplaces and to develop their own negotiation skills. With this knowledge, local business owners and entrepreneurs can be better equipped to negotiate with potential partners and can help to create a more successful business environment in the community.

The next chapter will present the focus of the research.

## Chapter 2: The Research Focus

This chapter will state the issue to be researched, elaborate on the research questions, describe the research, and show its importance. It will also define the key terms used and indicate the theoretical framework of this thesis.

### 2.1 Statement of the Issue to be specifically researched

The specific issue to be researched in this thesis is the effect of competition versus collaboration on bargaining practices in West African marketplaces in general and in Republic of Benin and Togo in particular.

This research will provide insights into the most effective strategies for business owners and customers in their negotiations and for success in West African marketplaces, taking into account the impact of modern information technologies on the current trading practices.

What are the questions the research will try to answer?

### 2.2 Research Questions

This research will attempt to answer a wide variety of questions among which the following:

1. What bargaining practices are most commonly used in West African marketplaces?
2. How do competition and collaboration compare as bargaining practices in West African marketplaces?

3. How do different cultural norms affect the use of competition and collaboration in bargaining practices in West African marketplaces?
4. What are the benefits and drawbacks of competition and collaboration as bargaining practices in West African marketplaces?
5. What strategies are used by traders to maximize their bargaining power in West African marketplaces?
6. How have the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces changed over time?
7. What impact do the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces have on the local economy?
8. How do the bargaining practices in Republic of Benin and Republic of Togo compare to other West African marketplaces such as Ivory Coast, Ghana, Niger, and Senegal?

The next paragraph will provide more precision on the research.

### [2.3 Description of the specific research](#)

This research focuses on the prevailing bargaining practices in Republic of Benin and in Togo among other West African marketplaces, particularly the competition versus collaboration between buyers and sellers. The research will investigate the economic and social effects of bargaining practices, and how they differ between some West African countries. It will also examine the various strategies employed by buyers and sellers to achieve the best outcomes, and the role of culture and tradition in bargaining. In addition, this research will explore how the bargaining practices in

Benin and Togo marketplaces have evolved over time, and how they compare to other global marketplaces. Ultimately, this research will provide a comprehensive understanding of the bargaining practices in Benin and Togo marketplaces, and the impact they have on the local economies.

How important is this research in terms of providing insight into understanding how bargaining practices in West African marketplaces vary from one region to the other?

#### 2.4 Importance of this research

Research on the competition vs. collaboration practices in West African marketplaces is important in understanding the dynamics of bargaining in the region. The results of this research will provide insight into the various strategies employed by marketplaces in order to secure a better outcome for their business and customers. This research will also be useful in understanding the behaviors of buyers and sellers, the role of networks and relationships in marketplaces, and the implications of competition and collaboration on the long-term success of the marketplaces. Ultimately, this research could provide valuable information for policymakers on how to best foster an environment of collaboration and competition in order to create a thriving marketplace.

Various terms will be used in this thesis and they should be defined.

## 2.5 Definition of Terms

**Accommodating:** This negotiation style focuses on compromise and cooperation, and is a non-confrontational approach that seeks to build relationships and prioritize the other party's needs.

**Avoidance:** This negotiation style is characterized by a total lack of engagement with the negotiation process, and can often lead to lost opportunities or a stalemate.

**Bargaining:** The process of negotiating the terms and conditions of an agreement.

**Bargaining Power Theory:** The Bargaining Power Theory was first proposed by John Nash in 1951. The theory asserts that two players in a bargaining game will reach an optimal outcome if they both have equal bargaining power.

**Collaboration:** This negotiation style is based on the idea of creating a win-win situation for both parties, and is focused on finding mutually beneficial solutions.

**Competition:** This negotiation style is focused on winning at all costs, and is based on the belief that the negotiator's own interests should be put first. It consists in vying with others to gain advantage or superiority in a market.

**Compromising:** This negotiation style is a middle ground between the competitive and accommodating styles, and seeks to find a solution that is acceptable to both parties.

**Dropshipping:** This is a type of retail business model where the seller does not keep any inventory. Instead, when a customer places an order, the seller transfers the order and shipping details to a third-party supplier who then ships the order directly to the customer. This allows the seller to offer a wider range of products without having to manage inventory or ship orders themselves.

**Game Theory:** The "Game Theory" was first elaborated by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944 in their book *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. Game theory is a branch of mathematics that studies strategic decision making. It is used to analyze interactions between two or more players, where the outcome of each player's choice depends on the choices of the other players. Game theory models are used in economics, political science, and psychology to analyze social and economic situations.

**Power-As-Knowledge Theory (PAKT):** The Power-As-Knowledge Theory was developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the mid-1970s. This theory suggests that power is a form of knowledge, and that those in power are able to maintain their position by possessing knowledge of how to manipulate and control the behavior of those in subordinate positions.

**Marketplace:** A physical or virtual space where goods and services are exchanged.

**West Africa:** A region of the African continent that encompasses the countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

This thesis will refer to various theories.

## 2.6 Theoretical Framework.

The theoretical framework for this thesis will draw upon theories of game theory, bargaining power, and power-as-knowledge to analyze the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces. Game theory will be used to explore the strategies and tactics employed by buyers and sellers in marketplaces in order to



maximize their respective outcomes. Bargaining power will be used to examine the relative power of buyers and sellers in the bargaining process and how this affects the outcomes of the negotiations. Finally, the concept of power-as-knowledge will be examined in order to understand the ways in which the knowledge of local marketplaces and customs can be used to gain an advantage in bargaining. It is expected that the findings of this thesis will provide insight into the various bargaining practices in West African marketplaces and the ways in which these practices are shaped by game theory, bargaining power, and power-as-knowledge.

The Game Theory is a branch of mathematics that studies how rational decision makers interact in strategic situations. It is used to analyze situations in which the outcome of one person's decision is affected by the decisions of others. Game Theory will be used in this thesis to analyze the strategies used by buyers and sellers in bargaining in West African Marketplaces. It can help to determine the optimal strategies for each side given the outcomes of the other. For example, it can be used to determine the optimal price for the seller given the buyer's preferences and the seller's costs, and the optimal price for the buyer given the seller's preferences and the buyer's budget. By analyzing the strategies used by both buyers and sellers in the context of Game Theory, it can help to produce better outcomes for both parties.

The Bargaining Power Theory is a theory that seeks to explain the dynamics of bargaining between two or more parties in a market setting. This theory suggests that the outcome of a bargaining process is determined by the relative power of each party in the negotiation process. This theory will be used to explore the strategies used by buyers and sellers in bargaining in West African Marketplaces by examining the relative power of each party in the negotiation process. This includes looking at factors such as the availability of resources, the amount of information each party

has, and the bargaining skills of each party. By examining these factors, the bargaining power theory can help to identify strategies that are most likely to be successful in negotiations in West African Marketplaces.

The Power-as-Knowledge Theory (PAKT) is a theoretical framework that seeks to understand how power is embedded within systems of knowledge. This theory is based on the idea that knowledge is a powerful tool that can be used to shape social relations and to create and maintain inequalities. The PAKT posits that knowledge is a form of power that can be used to control and influence others, to acquire material resources, and to shape social norms and values. The theory suggests that knowledge is a form of capital that can be used to gain access to resources, create and maintain networks of influence, and to exercise control over others. This theory will be used to explore the strategies used by buyers and sellers in bargaining in West African Marketplaces. By understanding the ways in which knowledge is used to shape social relations and to create and maintain inequalities, it is possible to gain insight into how buyers and sellers use their knowledge to gain advantage in negotiations. For example, buyers may use their knowledge of local markets and products to negotiate better prices, while sellers may use their knowledge of customer preferences to increase their profits. By understanding how knowledge is used in bargaining, it is possible to gain insight into how buyers and sellers can use their knowledge to gain advantage in negotiations.

In the next chapter, let us explore other work done on this topic.

## Chapter 3: Review of Other Work Done

This chapter will cover related research of literature, interviews, research of internet material, conferences attended, etc.

### 3.1 Other Research Done

Literature on business negotiations in West African marketplaces exists, but is not quite recent. Most of the research focused on the bargaining practices in the region and the effect of competition and collaboration on the negotiation process and outcomes. However, the research did not cover the bargaining practices in Republic of Benin and the Republic of Togo.

In an article by Ahoyo (1975), the author devoted a few lines to the bargaining practices in Africa in general. He explained that customers' tight budgets and sellers' low profit margins justify the fact that both parties are willing to spend up to 30 minutes bargaining. Customers sometimes just want to get a reduction of XOF 5 (the equivalent of \$0.01), and sellers resist to concede such a small amount of money on her selling price. However, the article did not elaborate on the bargaining process.

In a study by Lambert (2006), the author explored the dynamics of business negotiations in West Africa. Her research focused on the intersection of business and culture. Lambert also provided an overview of the various strategies used by West African negotiators, such as the use of silence, the use of humor, and the use of nonverbal expressions.

A study by Adu (2008) provided an analysis of the practices in West African business negotiations, highlighting the importance of cultural and environmental factors. Adu argued that successful business negotiations in West Africa require an understanding

of the local culture and environment, as well as the ability to build relationships of trust and mutual respect. He also emphasized the importance of effective communication and the need to be flexible in order to reach a satisfactory agreement.

In a study by Ebohon (2009), the author found that the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces were generally competitive, with the use of aggressive tactics such as threats and intimidation. He also found that collaboration was not a common practice in these marketplaces.

In contrast, a study by Seck (2009) indicated that collaboration was a common practice in West African marketplaces. He noticed that the bargaining practices in the region were characterized by a combination of competition and collaboration, with both parties trying to reach a mutually beneficial agreement. He also found that collaboration was more beneficial to the negotiation process as it improved the relationship between the parties and helped them build trust. Focusing on Senegal, Seck looked at the various techniques used by sellers and buyers to negotiate prices and examined the relationship between the two parties in the context of the marketplace. Seck also highlighted the role of gender and the impact of modernization on the bargaining process. He furthermore found that the bargaining process is an important part of the marketplace and that there is a need to understand the dynamics of the process in order to better understand the dynamics of the marketplace.

It is worth mentioning a study by Kemdirim (2009), which examined bargaining practices in West African markets, focusing particularly on the Nigerian market. The author highlighted the importance of bargaining in the context of the Nigerian economy and argued that it is an important skill for traders to possess. He also noted

that bargaining is a form of social interaction, and that it can be used to build relationships and trust between buyers and sellers. Finally, he provided suggestions for how traders can improve their bargaining skills.

In addition, the literature review revealed that an article by Ozsakallioglu (2012) examined the role of culture in business negotiations in West African markets. The author drew on the literature of negotiation theory and cross-cultural communication to identify the ways in which culture shapes the negotiation process in these markets. Ozsakallioglu used a qualitative research approach to analyze a case study of a business negotiation between a French and an African party, and found that cultural differences and dynamics have a significant impact on the negotiation process. The author concluded that cultural understanding and adaptation are essential for successful negotiations in these markets.

Last but not least, Sebah (2014) explored the differences between West African markets and other markets in terms of the negotiation process. Focusing on Burkina Faso, he argued that West African markets require a different approach to negotiation than other markets, as the process is more complex and heavily influenced by cultural norms. He examined the various strategies used in West African markets, such as the use of intermediaries and the importance of relationship building, and provided insight into how to best navigate these negotiations.

Overall, the literature suggests that competition and collaboration are both existing in West African marketplaces. While competition is more dominant, collaboration is also a common practice. The literature also advocates that collaboration can be beneficial to the negotiation process as it helps to build trust between the parties and can lead to better outcomes. Cultural norms play a key role in the negotiations process.

There is other research work done on this topic, as highlighted in the next paragraph.

### 3.2 Other Findings and Conclusions

A study conducted in Ghana by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) that examined the bargaining practices of retailers in West African markets is an example of research undertaken on this topic. The study found that competition was the dominant bargaining practice in most of the markets studied, though collaboration was also present in some. Other studies have looked at the use of bargaining practices in different West African countries, including Nigeria, Liberia, and Senegal.

The Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) conducted a study on the bargaining practices of retailers in West African markets from 2011 to 2012. The research methodology used was a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, including interviews with retailers, surveys of customers, and analysis of transaction data.

The study found that bargaining was prevalent in all countries covered by the study, including Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal. In Ghana, the study found that customers typically bargained in open-air marketplaces, with the majority of customers and vendors engaging in some form of bargaining. The study also found that bargaining was more common among lower-income customers, and that women were more likely to bargain than men.

The study concluded that bargaining was an important factor in determining the prices of goods in West African markets, and that it was a key component of the informal economy. The study also concluded that the bargaining system was

beneficial for both customers and vendors, providing customers with an opportunity to obtain goods at lower prices, and vendors with a form of income security.

Finally, the study recommended that governments in West Africa take measures to ensure that bargaining practices are fair, and that customers and vendors are protected from exploitation. The study also suggested that governments should consider introducing regulations to ensure that bargaining practices are conducted in a transparent and ethical manner.

There have been other researchers, who conducted studies on similar topics in West Africa.

### 3.3 Other Methodologies

The African Development Bank conducted in 2017 a study that examined the bargaining practices of retailers in Nigeria, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast. This study used survey data to assess the bargaining practices of retailers in the three countries.

The findings of the study showed that bargaining was very common in the three countries, with the majority of shoppers in each country engaging in bargaining with retailers. The study also found that shoppers in Ghana and the Ivory Coast were more likely to bargain than shoppers in Nigeria, and that the most common way of bargaining was by offering a lower price to the retailer.

The conclusions and recommendations of the study suggested that retailers should be aware of the bargaining practices of shoppers in the three countries and take steps to ensure that their prices are competitive. The study also recommended that policies should be put in place to ensure that retailers are able to make a fair profit while still offering competitive prices to their customers.

As we can see, many studies took place, yet they did not cover all West African marketplaces.

### 3.4 Strengths & Weaknesses

It would be worth noting that, among the studies that we could identify, only one covered Benin. However, the author did not study the bargaining practices in the local marketplaces covered by his research. Our research will cover the bargaining practices in Republic of Benin as well as Republic of Togo marketplaces, to fill this void.

Also, the most recent studies on the topic were conducted six years ago. In this era of rapid technological progress, the impacts of recent technologies on trading practices are not covered by the studies, which could be outdated. A more current study would shed a light of modernity on this topic in the era of more advanced information technologies and new business techniques.

The next chapter will elaborate on the research methods we used.



## Chapter 4: Research Methods

This chapter covers the goals and objectives of the research, the research hypothesis, as well as the research strategy and techniques. It will also present on the data sources, the method of data collection, the method of data analysis, the verification ethical considerations, and the challenges encountered in conducting the research.

### 4.1 Goal(s) and Objective(s) of the Research

This study has several goals and objectives. The goals are the following:

1. To analyze the impact of competition and collaboration on the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.
2. To identify the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.
3. To understand the implications of competition and collaboration on business negotiations in West African marketplaces.

Let us now talk about the objectives of the study.

The objectives are as follows:

1. To conduct a comprehensive literature review on the subject of competition and collaboration in business negotiations.
2. To survey and interview business owners and stakeholders in West African marketplaces to understand their bargaining practices.

3. To analyze the data collected to identify the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.

4. To draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the findings.

Overall, this research will provide insights into the most effective strategies for business owners and customers in their negotiations and for success in West African marketplaces, taking into account the impact of modern information technologies on the current trading practices.

What about the research hypotheses?

#### 4.2 Research Hypotheses

We will explore many hypotheses in conducting this research.

Hypothesis 1: Competition-based bargaining practices are more effective than collaboration-based bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.

Hypothesis 2: Collaboration-based bargaining practices are better suited to achieving desired outcomes in West African marketplaces than competition-based bargaining practices.

Hypothesis 3: Negotiators in West African marketplaces are more likely to use competitive bargaining practices than collaborative bargaining practices.

Hypothesis 4: Negotiators in West African marketplaces are more likely to achieve desired outcomes when using collaborative bargaining practices than when using competitive bargaining practices.

What strategies and techniques did we use in conducting this study?

### 4.3 Research Strategy and Techniques

This thesis explores the current bargaining practices in West African marketplaces, looking at the factors that influence the bargaining process, the impact of these practices on the economy of the region, and the potential for improvement. The research focuses on the bargaining practices in selected marketplaces, which are located in Republic of Benin, Togo, and other West African countries.

The strategy includes the following:

1. Analyze existing literature on negotiation and bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.
2. Collect qualitative data through interviews and focus groups with local business people and market participants.
3. Analyze the data to identify prevailing trends in negotiation and bargaining practices.
4. Compare and contrast the competition vs collaboration approaches to determine which is most successful in West African marketplaces.

As far as the research techniques are concerned, they focus on:

1. Literature Review: A review of existing literature related to competition and collaboration in business negotiations and bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.
2. Interviews: Interviews with local business people and market participants to gain insight into their negotiation and bargaining practices.

3. Focus Groups: Focus groups with local business people and market participants to gain further insight into their negotiation and bargaining practices.

4. Data Analysis: Analysis of the collected data to identify prevailing trends in negotiation and bargaining practices.

5. Comparative Analysis: A comparison and contrast of the competition vs collaboration approaches to determine which is most successful in West African marketplaces.

What are the sources of our data?

#### 4.4 Data Sources

We referred to various data sources including:

1. Academic journals
2. Case studies
3. Interviews with business professionals
4. Surveys of current business practices
5. Government documents
6. Newspaper articles
7. Online resources
8. Historical accounts

By examining the literature on competitive and collaborative bargaining styles, and by analyzing the results of the interviews with local business owners and customers, this

study drew conclusions about the prevailing bargaining practices, and highlighted the advantages and the disadvantages of those practices for customers as well as traders.

Which method did we use to collect data?

#### 4.5 Method of Data Collection

The data collection method for this thesis includes interviews, surveys, and participant observation. Interviews were conducted with business owners, scholars, managers, and other stakeholders in West African marketplaces to gain insights into their bargaining practices, and how competition and collaboration affect them. Surveys were used to gather data on the bargaining practices of West African marketplaces. Participant observation was used to observe and document the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces in order to gain further insight into the topic.

In some cases, we preferred closed questions to open-ended ones because of the following disadvantages of the latter:

- they may be difficult to answer and even more difficult to analyze,
- they require effort and time on behalf of the respondent,
- they require the development of a system of coded categories with which to classify the responses,
- they require the respondent to have some degree of writing ability, and
- respondent handwriting can be illegible.

However, open-ended questions do have many advantages, such as (1) allowing respondents to express their ideas spontaneously in their own language, and (2) being less likely to suggest or guide the answer than closed questions because they are free from the format effects associated with closed questions.

Therefore, we pilot tested a first version of a questionnaire that was open-ended. This questionnaire was based on the research questions listed in paragraph 2.2 of this thesis. The objective was to collect evidence on the parameters of the issue with the aim of later formulating a multiple choice or closed version of the questions.

Furthermore, as with open-ended questions the responses may come in very different forms, and these may lead to answers that cannot be systematically coded for analysis, we self-administered the open-ended questionnaire. This allowed us to provide appropriate probing helps to clarify answers that cannot be coded systematically. We provided guidance by writing specific instructions on how to answer the question in order to minimize the number of responses that have very different dimensions.

Then, we developed a closed questionnaire that was widely distributed to customers as well as traders in Republic of Benin and in Republic of Togo biggest marketplaces primarily.

Also, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that customers and sellers answered specific questions related to their category. Thus, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they are customers or sellers. Based on their answers, customers were asked to skip the question on whether they are a retailer or a wholesaler. Those distinctions allowed us to notice that responses vary according to

respondent categories. We elaborate on this in the next chapter devoted to the results of the research.

The questionnaire started with demographic questions to elicit information from respondents concerning their personal characteristics and social background. The objective was to explain variations in bargaining patterns. Those questions focused on gender, age, and income level. Since those are sensitive and personal questions, the questionnaire was fully anonymous and handled carefully.

Also, to check the consistency of the responses, in some instances, we combined open and closed questions.

Furthermore, to reach a significant number of customers and sellers in the selected countries, the questionnaire was used to conduct an online survey. As a member of various social media networks, we could also reach many respondents through those platforms. The online survey allowed respondents to answer demographic questions such as age and income level, which are sensitive in our area where you are not expected to enquire about those, except for friends and close relatives. As far as friends and relatives are concerned, we administered the questionnaire in-person.

It is worth mentioning that, at the end of the designing process the questions were reviewed with the following preoccupations in mind:

1. Will the item provide data in the format required by the research questions or the hypotheses?
2. Is the item unbiased?
3. Will the item generate data at the level of measurement required for the analysis?
4. Is there a strong likelihood that most respondents will answer the item truthfully?

5. Do most respondents possess sufficient knowledge to answer the item?
6. Will most respondents be willing to answer the item, or is it too threatening or too sensitive?
7. Does the item avoid 'leading' respondents to a specific answer?
8. Is the language used in the questionnaire clear and simple, so that all respondents are able to understand all of the questions?

Then, the data were analyzed, but how?

#### 4.6 Method of Data Analysis

There are several methods of data analysis, which encompass the following:

1. Quantitative Analysis: This method of data analysis involves collecting and analyzing numerical data from surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. The data could then be used to draw conclusions about the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.
2. Qualitative Analysis: This method of data analysis involves collecting and analyzing qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and document reviews. This data could then be used to draw conclusions about the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.
3. Comparative Analysis: This method of data analysis involves comparing the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces to those of other countries or regions. The data could then be used to draw conclusions about the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.



4. Statistical Analysis: This method of data analysis involves collecting and analyzing statistical data from surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. The data could then be used to draw conclusions about the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces.

This research adopted a qualitative approach to investigate the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces. Qualitative research is suitable for this study because it allows for the exploration of complex topics in their natural settings and enables the researcher to gain an understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the participants<sup>2</sup>.

In conducting this research, we also took into account verification ethical considerations.

#### 4.7 Verification Ethical Considerations

These include:

1. Respect for autonomy: Respect the autonomy of those involved in the research, including those who are negotiating in West African marketplaces. Make sure to obtain informed consent from participants, and ensure that any data collected is treated with confidentiality.

2. Beneficence: Ensure that the research is conducted in a way that is beneficial to those involved in the negotiations. Make sure that the research is conducted safely and that the participants' privacy is respected.

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<sup>2</sup>Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011)

3. Nonmaleficence: Make sure that the research is conducted in a way that does not cause any harm to the participants. Ensure that the data collected is not used in a way that could be seen as exploitative or manipulative.

4. Justice: Ensure that the research is conducted in a way that is fair and equitable. Make sure that all participants are treated equally and that the data collected is used to benefit all participants.

5. Respect for persons: Respect the dignity and autonomy of all participants involved in the research. Make sure that the research is conducted in a way that is respectful and does not exploit any participants, and

6. Fidelity: Make sure that the research is conducted in a way that is honest and accurate. Ensure that the data collected is precise and reliable, and that any conclusions drawn are based on sound evidence.

We conducted this research, keeping in mind the considerations listed above.

It is worth mentioning that we encountered some challenges in conducting this research.

#### 4.8 Challenges encountered in conducting research

These can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Access to data: Gathering data related to business negotiations in West African marketplaces was challenging due to the lack of available information. Access to reliable sources of data and contact with people and organizations in the region was difficult. Oral tradition prevails in many regions. Therefore, we could not easily find the data we expected. Also, more than 10-year-old data are yellowed and torn, due to

poor data conservation conditions. Most of the libraries do not have an air conditioning system in place, despite all year long high temperatures in most West African regions. In some cases, documents are moldy due to high humidity.

2. Language barriers: Language barriers presented a challenge when conducting interviews or collecting primary data from West African marketplaces. A significant number of customers and traders do not speak either English, or French, or the local languages we understand. Therefore, we could not interview them.

3. Cultural differences: Cultural differences were also a challenge when conducting research in some regions. For instances, in some areas, women are not supposed to have long conversations with men, except for their husband. It was quite impossible to interview those women.

4. Security issue: Due to terrorist attacks, especially in northern Benin, we could not conduct research on those marketplaces. This restricted or limited the scope of the research.

5. Time constraints: Conducting research in remote places, with bad road conditions, was time consuming and challenging due to the need to travel, collect data, and analyze the results.

The results of our research are presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5: Results of Research Analysis

This chapter includes the interpretation and explanation of the results, the questions about alternative approaches, and the strengths and weaknesses of statistical analysis.

### 5.1 Interpretation of Results

The results of the survey on this thesis could be interpreted in a variety of ways. It could be seen as evidence that competition is still the dominant form of bargaining in West African marketplaces, if the majority of respondents indicated that they prefer competitive bargaining strategies when negotiating business deals. Alternatively, the results could be interpreted as showing that collaboration is becoming increasingly popular in West African marketplaces, if a significant proportion of respondents indicated that they are willing to negotiate collaboratively. The survey results could also be seen as evidence that both competitive and collaborative bargaining strategies are being used in West African marketplaces, if a substantial percentage of respondents indicated that they use both strategies in their negotiations.

In fact, the survey covered various types of marketplace actors. Those included customers in one side and sellers in the other side. Sellers were then categorized into wholesalers and retailers. Moreover, the kind of goods sold by traders were also taken into consideration. In this regard, we distinguished between agriculture products (including foods) sellers, manufactured foods sellers, other manufactured goods sellers. Moreover, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that we could find out whether the bargaining practices vary if the seller realizes that a customer is loyal. Customers were also asked to indicate the type of goods they purchase and to

specify whether their bargaining practices vary according to the type of goods they want to buy. We could also notice that the customers' education level, gender, age, as well as income level were determining factors, which have an impact on the bargaining practices. Finally, we should indicate that the results of our survey vary from one country to the other.

Let us first elaborate on the bargaining practices in Republic of Benin. Here, around 75% of the marketplace actors are women. The latter are expected to teach their daughters the bargaining techniques before they become teenagers, as they will have to go to the marketplaces, at least as customers. 95% of female respondents confirmed that their mothers coached them on bargaining techniques. The remaining 5% of female respondents who did not have the chance to be trained mentioned that they have a hard time bargaining. The following dialog between a seller and a customer illustrates how people bargain in Republic of Benin in general.

**Customer:** Hi! How much do you sell these goods?

**Seller:** It is not expensive. It costs CFA 1,000 only!

**Customer:** Oh! This is too expensive! I will give you half of your price!

**Seller:** Sorry! I am a reseller and I did not buy it at CFA 500! As you are my first customer today, I am willing to give it for CFA 900!

**Customer:** Please, I don't have such a money! What about CFA 550?

**Seller:** My last bid is CFA 800!

**Customer:** Your goods are too expensive. Let me try another seller.

The customer will start stepping away from the stall, expecting that the seller will call her. The seller usually asks the customer to come back, unless she cannot afford to sell at a lower price.

**Seller:** Why don't you come back my friend? I will leave it to you for CFA 750.

From there, they will resume bargaining and the process can take 10 to 20 minutes, on average, as indicated by more than 50% of the respondents. The seller could end up accepting CFA 600 or even less, depending on the cost of the goods. The name of the game is for the seller to systematically double the cost of the goods in her first bid, knowing that the customer will try to get it at half-price. This is obviously a time-consuming process, which is now a tradition in Republic of Benin's open-air marketplaces. Sellers take advantage on customers who do not master the bargaining techniques. We should mention that, while the customer is stepping away, expecting the seller to call her back, another customer, who does not know how to bargain or does not want to waste time bargaining may jump in and offer to the seller the price the first customer is reluctant to accept. In such a case, the seller promptly delivers the goods to the new customer. Often, an argument ensues between the two customers, the first treating the second as a woman who does not know how to haggle and who gets money easily without suffering.

The survey revealed that some factors have an impact on the bargaining practices.

The first factor is gender. 90% of male respondents indicated that they can spend up to five minutes bargaining, whereas 92% of female respondents are willing to spend up to 20 minutes bargaining. As a result, women manage to make better deals than men. It is worth mentioning that 75% of male sellers indicated that they are willing to

sell goods at a higher price to men customers. Also, 60% of women traders mentioned that they sell at a higher price to men customers, as they are inclined to be nice when dealing with women, and do not spend too much time bargaining.

The second factor is age. 75% of teenagers and young adult customers responded that they find bargaining as a waste of time. Taking advantage of modern technologies and business practices, they favor on-line purchases, where there is no bargaining, goods are home-delivered, and payments are made upon receipt of goods either by cash or through mobile money. They also prefer modern supermarkets where the price is clearly indicated, when their purchasing power allow them to buy in those places where prices are higher than in the traditional open-air marketplaces. This new trend will end up reducing the importance of big open-air marketplaces with thousands of stalls, as mentioned by 75% of surveyed customers. For instance, Dantokpa Market, or simply Tokpa, which is located in Cotonou, the Republic of Benin's economic capital, is the largest open-air market in West Africa. It is one of the largest retail areas in Benin, covering over 20 hectares. Buying in such a big marketplace requires that customers spend hours walking from one stall to the other to get the best price.

The third factor which influences the bargaining practices in West Africa marketplaces is customer purchasing power. 70% of middle-class respondents indicated that they hate wasting time bargaining.

The fourth factor which has an impact on bargaining practices is the business type. 80% of retailers indicated that they don't mind spending 20 or more minutes bargaining, provided that they end up taking the best out of the customer, whereas 90% of wholesalers tend to be more collaborative with their customers to retain them.

We could infer that the retailers, who deal with one-time customers are inclined to competition, whereas wholesalers favor collaboration in Republic of Benin's marketplaces. Also, 60% of retailers asserted that they become more collaborative with regular customers.

The fifth factor which influences the bargaining practices in Republic of Benin's marketplaces is the type of goods. Agricultural products such as corn, beans, cassava, yam, etc. and fish are purchased through a long bargaining process. Yet, the technique consisting in halving the proposed price does not usually apply to manufactured products like clothes, which are mostly imported goods with tight profit margins. This assertion is supported by the survey with 65% of customers and 75% of traders who indicated that they do not bargain too much the price of manufactured products.

The survey confirmed, however, that the bargaining practices in Republic of Benin are different from the neighboring Republic of Togo's practices. In Togo, customers do bargain as the price is not indicated, just like in Benin Republic. Yet, they do not halve the price, as indicated by all respondents. Furthermore, in Asiganmè, the Republic of Togo's biggest marketplace, 60% of the surveyed sellers mentioned that the price halving practice allows them to identify customers coming from Benin. At Asiganmè, the bargaining typically goes as follows.

**Customer:** Hi! How much do you sell these goods?

**Seller:** This is very cheap! CFA 1,000 only!

**Customer:** It's expensive indeed! Please, reduce the price a bit!

**Seller:** I will accept CFA 950!



**Customer:** What about CFA 900?

**Seller:** Ok!

Here, roughly a 10% reduction is acceptable versus up to 50% in Benin.

Our survey also covered the bargaining practices in the Makola Market located in Accra, the Republic of Ghana's capital city. Here, the bargaining practices are similar to those observed in Asiganmè.

Likewise, in *Grand Marché de Niamey*, the biggest marketplace of Niger Republic, customers are not expected to halve the price.

Similarly, in Ivory Coast's biggest open-air marketplace called *Forum des Marchés d'Adjamé* in Abidjan, customers ask for a slight reduction of the stated price like in Togo, Ghana, and Niger.

We will explain the results of our research in the next paragraph.

## 5.2 Explanation of Results

The research results of the thesis can be summarized in the following manner:

1. The prevailing bargaining practices in Republic of Benin open-air marketplaces are largely based on competition. The research found that most business negotiations in the country's open-air marketplaces are characterized by aggressive bargaining tactics and a "winner-takes-all" mentality. This is especially true when it comes to buying foods and mainly fish. The surveyed traders as well as customers did not know why Benin has this unique bargaining practice. However, the scholars we interviewed assumed this is probably cultural, as fish is specifically sold by a

specific ethnic group called the Toffins<sup>3</sup>. These Toffins have probably started setting their prices too high, leading customers into bargaining hard. This practice has been progressively copied by other traders, who realized that, with the aggressive bargaining method, they may end up selling their goods at a loss if they don't double their price upfront.

2. While competition is still the dominant approach to negotiations in Benin Republic, there are some signs of collaboration beginning to emerge. In particular, the research found that some traders are beginning to adopt more collaborative approaches to negotiations, such as involving more stakeholders and using problem-solving techniques. This is particularly true for wholesalers as they want to retain their customers, i.e., retailers.

3. The research also revealed that this aggressive business negotiation practice does not prevail in Benin's neighboring countries such as Togo, Niger, Ghana, and Ivory Coast.

4. Overall, the research found that the success of collaborative negotiation strategies in West Africa is dependent on the cultural context and the relationship between the parties involved. In particular, the research found that collaborative negotiations are more successful when there is a strong relationship between the parties and when the cultural norms and values of the region are taken into account.

5. As far as cultural norms and beliefs are concerned, the research revealed that in Benin and Togo, the first customers of the day buy at a lower price, as traders believe that if the first customer is lucky her chance would make them to sell a lot of goods in

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<sup>3</sup> The Toffins are an ethnic group living in the humid areas of southern Benin around and on the tributaries of the Ouémé River, where they populate several regions including the lakeside village Ganvié. They are considered the indigenous people of Cotonou, the economic capital of Benin. Their main activity is fishing. Toffin women, who sell fish caught by men, are the main fish sellers in Cotonou and its surroundings.

that particular day. Therefore, traders are nice with their first customers. Also, some sellers believe that the gender of their first customer impacts their sales. For instance, if a seller believes that women bring her luck, she would offer the best price to the first woman who comes in front of her stall so as to make her the first customer of the day. If, on the contrary, it is a man who comes first in front of her stall, she would deliberately push him away by offering him a dissuasive price. If the seller is unable to push away the customer whose gender, she thinks would not bring her luck, she would ask the latter to give the money to a person of the opposite sex who will give it to him. The objective is to avoid receiving the first payment of the day from a customer whose gender would not bring her luck.

6. The study revealed that middle-class, well-educated, and young customers hate spending much time bargaining. Therefore, they prefer online trading where the price is fixed upfront, with no need to bargain. Also, with online trading, goods are home-delivered and the price is paid through mobile money. Here, customers do not waste time bargaining. Also, there is no need to go from stall to stall in order to get the best price. This category of customers also likes modern supermarkets as prices are displayed.

7. Finally, the study shows that there is still a need for more research on the topic of competition vs. collaboration in business negotiations in West Africa, especially in Benin Republic. The country is still largely unexplored in terms of determining the sources and origins of the business negotiations practices that are used. As such, more research is needed to understand the current bargaining practices in the region and to identify ways to improve the effectiveness of negotiations. More precisely, historians, sociologists and anthropologists should conduct research to determine the origins and sources of the prevailing business practices and beliefs.

Let us now explore the questions about alternative approaches.

### 5.3 Questions about Alternative Approaches

As far as alternative approaches are concerned, we can ask various questions, including the following.

How do different negotiation strategies impact the outcomes of business negotiations in West African marketplaces?

Different negotiation strategies can have a significant impact on the outcomes of business negotiations in West African open-air marketplaces. For example, the use of a hard-bargaining strategy may be effective in securing better prices, but it can also create animosity in the long run. A more collaborative approach, on the other hand, can lead to better relationships between the parties involved and more mutually beneficial outcomes. The use of cultural knowledge and understanding can also be beneficial, as it can help bridge the gap between different cultural backgrounds and facilitate more effective communication. Finally, having a clear understanding of the local market and the different players involved can be very helpful in understanding the dynamics of the negotiations and reaching the most beneficial outcomes.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of competition and collaboration in business negotiations?

The advantages of Competition are as follows:

- Competition encourages innovation and creativity as businesses strive to outdo each other.

- It helps to keep prices in check, as businesses try to offer the best value for money.
- It can lead to more efficient use of resources as businesses strive to make their operations more efficient.
- It can help to create a more competitive marketplace, which can lead to better consumer choice.

What about the disadvantages of competition?

- It can lead to unethical practices, such as price fixing, that can harm consumers.
- It can lead to a race to the bottom, where businesses compete on price alone, rather than quality or innovation.
- It can lead to a lack of trust between businesses which can damage relationships.
- It can lead to unhealthy rivalry, where businesses become focused on beating each other rather than working together.

Now, let us talk about the advantages of collaboration:

- Collaboration can lead to better, more creative solutions as different perspectives are brought together.
- It can help to build trust and relationships between businesses.
- It can lead to cost savings as resources are shared.
- It can lead to increased efficiency, as businesses work together to achieve a common goal.

Despite its advantages, collaboration does have some disadvantages.

What about the disadvantages of collaboration?

- Collaboration can lead to confusion and delays as different parties try to reach a consensus.
- It can lead to a lack of accountability as different parties may have different ideas of what success looks like.
- It can lead to a lack of innovation as businesses focus on achieving consensus rather than pushing boundaries.
- It can lead to a lack of competition, which can ultimately lead to higher prices for consumers.

The followings are alternative approaches to competition and collaboration, which can be used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business negotiations in West African marketplaces.

- Networking: Networking is a great way to build relationships and foster collaboration in West African marketplaces. Building relationships with other business people in the area can help to create a more efficient and effective negotiation process as it allows for more open and honest communication.
- Mediation: Mediation is a great way to facilitate negotiations and create a more effective and efficient process. Mediation can help to facilitate a discussion between the parties, allowing for more productive conversations and a better outcome for all involved.
- Consultation: Consultation is a great way to ensure that all parties involved in a negotiation are on the same page. Consulting with experts in the field can help to provide valuable insight into the negotiation process, allowing for more effective business negotiations.

- Education: Education is an important part of creating a more efficient and effective negotiation process. Providing educational resources to business people in the area can help to create a more informed and knowledgeable negotiation process, allowing for more productive conversations.

- Technology: Technology can be a great way to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business negotiations in West African open-air marketplaces. Utilizing technology such as online platforms, video conferencing, and other digital tools can help to streamline the process and create a more efficient and effective negotiation process.

Now, let us think about how culture influences the negotiation process and outcomes in West African marketplaces.

Culture plays an important role in the negotiation process and outcomes in West African marketplaces. Cultural norms, values, and expectations can influence the way people interact with each other during the negotiation process. For example, in many West African cultures, negotiation is seen as an opportunity to build relationships, rather than a means of obtaining the best deal. As such, parties may be more willing to compromise and take into account the needs of the other person, rather than focusing solely on their own interests. Additionally, the language used in the negotiations can also be heavily influenced by culture, as certain phrases or words may have different meanings in different cultures. Furthermore, the negotiation process may be seen as a way of demonstrating respect and trust, which can lead to more effective negotiation outcomes. Finally, the concept of time can also have an impact on the negotiation process, as certain cultures may have different expectations for how long a negotiation should take.

It would also be interesting to examine the differences between traditional and modern negotiation techniques in West African marketplaces.

Traditional negotiation techniques in West African open-air marketplaces typically involve bargaining and haggling over the price of goods. This could involve a buyer and seller engaging in a back-and-forth conversation, often but not always in a friendly and relaxed manner, to try and reach an agreement. Additionally, traditional negotiations may involve some form of bartering, where goods and services are exchanged in lieu of money. One of the last barter markets in West Africa is located in Togoville, Republic of Togo. The exchanges begin on Saturdays at 9 a.m., at the whistle of the village chief's envoy. This allows villagers, who have agricultural or livestock products but no money, to obtain other agricultural, fishing or livestock products that they lack.

What about modern negotiation techniques?

Modern negotiation techniques in West African marketplaces are more likely to involve technology. This could include the use of mobile money and digital payments, as well as the use of online platforms like eBay and Amazon to facilitate negotiations. Local traders advertise their goods on mobile phone platforms which propose the goods to phone users, who can order the goods on line, have the goods delivered at home, and settle their bills on line through mobile money payment or with cash, upon receipt of goods. Additionally, modern negotiation techniques are more likely to involve the use of market research to gain a better understanding of current prices and trends in the marketplace.



How do negotiation strategies vary across different sectors in West African marketplaces?

To expand our study beyond the open-air marketplaces, we can state that negotiation strategies vary widely across different sectors in West Africa. In the agricultural sector, for example, negotiation strategies tend to focus on the quality of the product and the price of the product. In the manufacturing sector, negotiation strategies tend to focus on the cost of production, the quality of the product, and the delivery timescale. In the services sector including construction activities, negotiation strategies tend to focus on the scope of the services being provided and the duration of the contract. In the retail sector, negotiation strategies tend to focus on the price of the product and the payment terms. Cash purchases cost less than purchases on credit. Finally, in the technology sector, negotiation strategies tend to focus on the terms of the license agreement, the cost of the technology, and the timeline for implementation.

What role does power play in business negotiations in West African marketplaces?

Power plays an important role in business negotiations in West African marketplaces. Power dynamics can influence the outcome of negotiations, as those with more power tend to have higher levels of influence. This could be due to factors such as having more resources, having greater access to information, or having more bargaining experience. For example, a supplier with more resources may be in a better position to negotiate a better price than a smaller supplier, or a buyer with more bargaining experience may be able to get more favorable terms than a less-experienced buyer. Additionally, power dynamics can also influence the way

negotiations are conducted, with those with more power often setting the agenda and the terms of the negotiation.

What about legal and institutional frameworks? How do they regulate the negotiation process in West African marketplaces?

Legal and institutional frameworks in West African marketplaces regulate the negotiation process in a variety of ways. These frameworks provide a set of rules and regulations that govern how transactions should occur and how disputes should be resolved. For example, in some countries, local laws may require that certain types of transactions be recorded in writing or that certain types of goods must be inspected before they can be sold. For time to time, Ministries of Commerce appoint controllers, who check the expiring date of perishable goods. Sellers are fined and their expired goods are seized and destroyed. The controllers also ensure that the product scales are correctly adjusted because some unscrupulous sellers cheat by selling the products at a weight lower than that which the customer thinks they are buying.

In addition, institutional frameworks such as trade associations, cooperatives, and other collective bargaining organizations can provide guidance on how to negotiate in a fair and equitable manner. These organizations may set standards for pricing, quality, and other aspects of trade, and can help to ensure that market participants are aware of their rights and obligations.

Finally, cultural norms and customs can also shape the negotiation process in West African marketplaces. These norms and customs can provide guidance on how to conduct negotiations in a respectful and effective manner. They can also help to

ensure that negotiations are conducted in a way that is beneficial to all parties involved.

It would also be interesting to think about the implications of competition and collaboration on the sustainability of business negotiations in West African marketplaces.

Competition and collaboration both have a significant impact on the sustainability of business negotiations in West African marketplaces. Competition can drive down prices and create a more competitive market, which can lead to better deals for customers. However, it can also lead to a race to the bottom where businesses are willing to offer lower prices to win the deal, potentially leading to lower profits and sustainability. Collaboration, on the other hand, can create a more stable market where businesses can work together to create better deals and more sustainable business negotiations. For example, businesses can collaborate to create a joint venture or work together to create a more efficient supply chain. Collaboration also allows businesses to share resources, knowledge, and expertise, which can lead to better deals and more sustainable business negotiations.

Let us now elaborate on the strengths and weaknesses of statistical analysis for this research.

#### 5.4 Strength and weaknesses of Statistical analysis.

For this study, statistical analysis does have strength as well as weaknesses, which include the following.

Let us first think about the strength of statistical analysis in this study:

- Statistical analysis can provide a reliable and objective way to evaluate the effectiveness of different negotiation techniques.
- Statistical analysis can provide insights into the factors that influence the bargaining process, and
- Statistical analysis can provide quantitative data to back up qualitative findings.

As far as weaknesses are concerned:

- Statistical analysis may not be able to capture the nuances of the bargaining process in West African marketplaces.
- Statistical analysis may not be able to provide a complete picture of the bargaining process due to the complexity of the data, and
- Statistical analysis may not be able to capture the cultural and social influences that may be present in the bargaining process in West African marketplaces.

The next chapter concludes our study.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter includes general discussions, a summary of the study, and presents on how this thesis has enriched our own knowledge.

### 6.1 General Discussions

Business negotiations in West African marketplaces encompass a variety of factors including the bargaining power of the parties involved, the cultural norms and the economic environment of the region. As such, it is important to understand the current bargaining practices in order to effectively manage and navigate the business environment. This thesis examines the prevailing bargaining practices in West African marketplaces and focuses on how these practices shape the dynamics of competition and collaboration between buyers and sellers and the emergence of new forms of negotiation in recent times. It also provides an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of competition and collaboration in business negotiations. The research further examines the strategies used by the parties to gain the upper hand in negotiations, as well as the potential implications for the long-term success of a business. It also highlights the impact of modern information technologies on trading practices. Finally, the research provides insights on how to create a balance between competition and collaboration in business negotiations in West African marketplaces. Competition in business negotiations is characterized by a focus on short-term gains and a reliance on hard-bargaining tactics. This approach is often seen as a way to gain an advantage over the other party and can lead to a lack of trust and a breakdown of the negotiation process. On the other hand, collaboration in business negotiations is characterized by a focus on long-term gains and a reliance on

cooperative bargaining tactics. This approach is often seen as a way to build trust and create an environment of mutual benefit. The choice or preference for any bargaining practice could be influenced by the business environment, the negotiators' experiences, etc.

The current bargaining practices in West African marketplaces vary by country and region. In some areas like in Benin Republic, the biggest West Africa open-air market known as Dantokpa, competition is seen as the primary approach to business negotiations, while in others collaboration is seen as the preferred method. In addition, there is evidence which suggests that many West African businesses are beginning to adopt a more collaborative approach to business negotiations. This is likely due to the increasing number of multinational corporations operating in the region, which are often more likely to favor a collaborative approach to negotiations.

Also, modern information technologies have had a significant impact on trading practices. Advances in technology have enabled traders to access real-time market data, conduct sophisticated technical analysis, and execute trades more quickly and accurately. Additionally, online trading platforms have made it easier for retail traders to access the markets and take part in trading activities. Automated trading systems have also become popular and are used to reduce the time it takes to execute trades. More intermediaries intervene in the negotiation process than in the past. For instance, dropshipping<sup>4</sup> is now a well-known practice in many West African marketplaces. Finally, automated trading algorithms have been developed to identify potential trading opportunities and execute orders with minimal human intervention.

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<sup>4</sup> Business practice where the seller, owner of an online store, markets products via his site. But it is the supplier, manufacturer of these products, who will take charge of shipping orders and any returns in the event of customer dissatisfaction.

In summary, what can we conclude?

## 6.2 Summary

The literature review revealed that research on the business negotiations in West Africa were conducted. Yet, we could find no studies dealing with bargaining practices in Benin Republic where a unique bargaining practice, which consists in trying to buy the goods half of the stated price prevails. This thesis, therefore, focused on the bargaining practice in Republic of Benin. It also included Republic of Togo, its neighboring country. To a lesser extent, the research covered Ivory Coast, and Ghana, just to show how unique the bargaining practice in Benin is, since other research papers focused on those countries. The research results can be summarized as follows:

The prevailing bargaining practices in Republic of Benin marketplaces are largely based on competition. The seller bids the double of the normal price. The informed customer, knowing that the seller wants to cheat her, tries to halve the quoted price in bargaining hard. Most of business negotiations in the country's open-air marketplaces are, therefore, characterized by aggressive bargaining tactics and a "winner-takes-all" mentality. This is especially true when it comes to buying foods and particularly fish. The surveyed traders as well as customers did not know why Benin has this unique bargaining practice. However, the scholars we interviewed assumed this is probably cultural, as fish is specifically sold by one ethnic group called the Toffins. The latter, who are primarily fishermen, have probably started setting their prices too high, leading customers into bargaining hard. This practice has been progressively copied by other traders, who realized that they may end up selling their goods at lost if they don't double their price upfront.

While competition is still the dominant approach to negotiations in Benin Republic, there are some signs of collaboration beginning to emerge. In particular, the research found that some traders are beginning to adopt more collaborative approaches to negotiations, such as involving more stakeholders and using problem-solving techniques. This is particularly true for wholesalers as they want to retain their customers, i., e., retailers.

The research also revealed that this aggressive bargaining practice does not prevail in Benin neighboring countries such as Togo, Niger, Ghana, and Ivory Coast.

Overall, the research found that the success of collaborative negotiation strategies in West Africa is dependent on the cultural context and the relationship between the parties involved. In particular, the research found that collaborative negotiations are more successful when there is a strong relationship between the parties and when the cultural norms and values of the region are taken into account.

Regarding cultural norms and beliefs, research found that in Benin and Togo, the first customers of the day buy at an attractive price, because traders believe that if the first customer is lucky, her luck will reflect on the merchant who will sell a lot of goods that day. Merchants are therefore kind to their first customer. Additionally, some sellers believe that the gender of their first customer has an impact on their sales. For example, if a seller believes that women bring him luck, he will offer a better price to the first woman who appears in front of his stall in order to make her his first customer of the day. If, on the contrary, it is a man who presents himself first in front of his stall, he would deliberately push him away by offering him a dissuasive price. If the seller does not manage to push away the customer whose gender, she believes would not bring him luck, he would ask the latter to give the money to a person of the



opposite sex who will give it to him. The objective is to avoid receiving the first payment of the day from a customer whose gender would not bring her luck.

Furthermore, the study revealed that middle-class, well- educated, and young customers hate spending much time bargaining. Therefore, they prefer online trading where the price is fixed upfront, with no need to bargain. Also, with online trading, goods are home-delivered and the price is paid through mobile money. Here, customers do not waste time bargaining. Also, there is no need to go from stall to stall in order to get the best price. This category of customers often go to modern supermarkets where prices are clearly marked, with no need to bargain.

Finally, the research found that there is still a need for more research on the topic of competition vs. collaboration in business negotiations in West Africa, especially in Benin Republic. The country is still largely unexplored in terms of determining the sources and origins of the business negotiations practices that are used. As such, more research is needed to understand the current bargaining practices in the region and to identify ways to improve the effectiveness of negotiations. More precisely, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists should conduct research to determine the origins and sources of the prevailing business practices and beliefs.

In writing this thesis, we got a better understanding of how West African marketplaces operate, as explained in the next paragraph.

### 6.3 How this thesis has Enriched our own Knowledge

Writing this thesis has enriched our own knowledge by teaching us the importance of understanding the cultural and economic context of a region and its impact on negotiations. By researching this topic, we gained a better insight into the dynamics

of the West African marketplaces and the different bargaining styles used. Additionally, we learned about the importance of collaboration in business negotiations and the need for effective communication strategies to ensure successful outcomes. Through this thesis, we also developed a greater appreciation for the complexities of international business negotiations and the need to take into consideration the various cultural, political, and economic influences that affect the process.

We cannot end this study without making a few recommendations. The next chapter is devoted to that.

## Chapter 7: Recommendations

This chapter includes the recommendations given for others to consider, the recommendations for future research, and the recommendations for implementing the plan of the thesis.

### 7.1 Recommendations given for others to consider

The recommendations are mainly for Government of Benin (GOB) to consider. Yet, before making those recommendations, it would be worth mentioning that GOB has undertaken in 2019 the building of 35 markets spread across the entire territory through two types of architecture: the hall for urban markets and improved hangars for regional markets. This project will ultimately allow an increase in the number of places, a better distribution of stands with storage spaces and stores, a positive impact on public health, a better categorization of sales spaces by type of product and activities, the specialization of certain markets, etc. However, taking into account the fact that more and more actors including the youth and the well-educated customers and traders, are fed up wasting time bargaining instead of using modern trading tools, GOB should think about investing less in building big open-air marketplaces in the future, as online transactions are more and more taking place. Instead, GOB should create business centers equipped with trading platforms for sellers and buyers to negotiate on line. Once the transactions are concluded, the purchased goods would be delivered at the buyer's address. Such platforms exist but are set and managed by individual traders for their own business. The recommended platforms would centralize the goods proposed by all sellers, who adhere to the proposed business center program. Each marketplace would have at least one such

a center. Potential buyers would consult online the list of the proposed goods along with their prices and 3D pictures. The system would alert the seller, who owns the goods picked by the potential buyer. The latter would pay online upon receipt of the goods, which would be home-delivered.

What about future research?

## 7.2 For future research

It is clear that there is a need for further research into the bargaining practices in West African marketplaces in order to better understand the appropriate method to business negotiations in this region in the era of topnotch information technologies. Modern information technologies have had a significant impact on trading practices. Additionally, online trading platforms have made it easier for retailers to access the markets and take part in trading activities. Modern trading practices such as dropshipping have found their way into West African marketplaces. Customers can purchase goods without going to the marketplaces. They communicate with sellers through the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM), are home-delivered, and settle their bills through the Mobile Money systems. Automated trading systems have also become popular and are used to reduce the time it takes to execute trades. Finally, automated trading algorithms have been developed to identify and target potential trading opportunities and execute orders with minimal human intervention.

In such a modern business environment, is not appropriate to design and implement a plan to change the centuries-old time-wasting bargaining practices?

### 7.3 For implementing the plan of the thesis

To implement the plan of this thesis, which aims at changing progressively the centuries-old bargaining practice, which consists- for the vendor- in quoting the double of the value of the goods, we would like to suggest the following steps:

1. Establish a research team comprised of experts in the field of business negotiations to analyze the prevailing bargaining practices in Benin Republic marketplaces.
2. Interview key stakeholders in Republic of Benin marketplaces, such as business owners, vendors, and customers, to gain insight into the deep reasons why such a unique bargaining practice exists in the country.
3. Develop a survey instrument to gather quantitative data on the bargaining practices in Benin marketplaces.
4. Analyze the data collected from the survey instrument and interviews to better understand this bargaining practice of Benin marketplaces.
5. Develop a strategy to promote collaboration over competition in Benin marketplaces, taking into account the context of the country. This would be done through an Information Education Communication and Behavior Change Communication (IEC/BCC) strategy.
6. Implement the strategy by providing training and resources to business owners and vendors on the benefits of collaborative bargaining practices. Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and GOB entities, e.g., the Ministry of Commerce, The Chamber of Commerce, local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), etc. should be involved in the implementation of the strategy.

7. Monitor the effects of the strategy on the bargaining practices of Benin marketplaces.

8. Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy and make adjustments as necessary.

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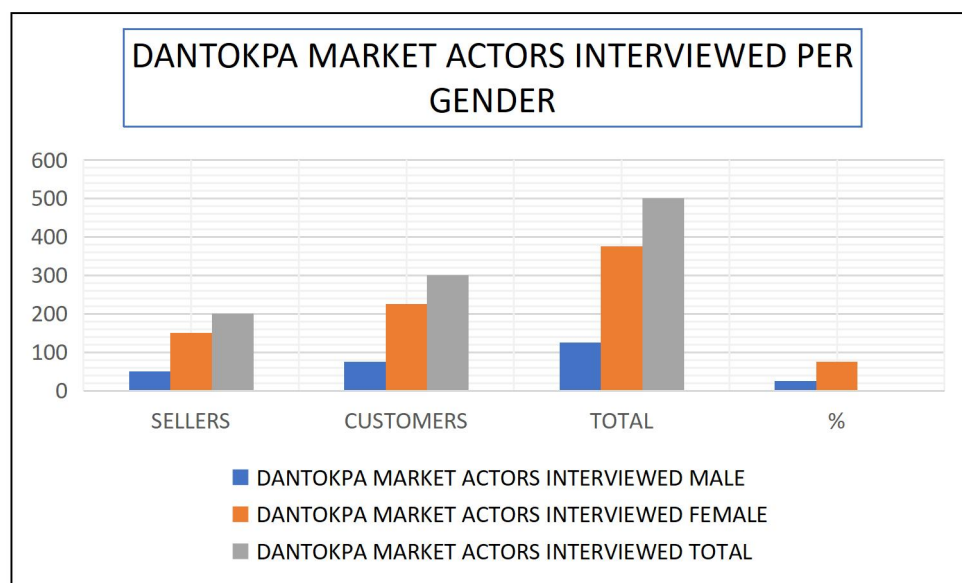


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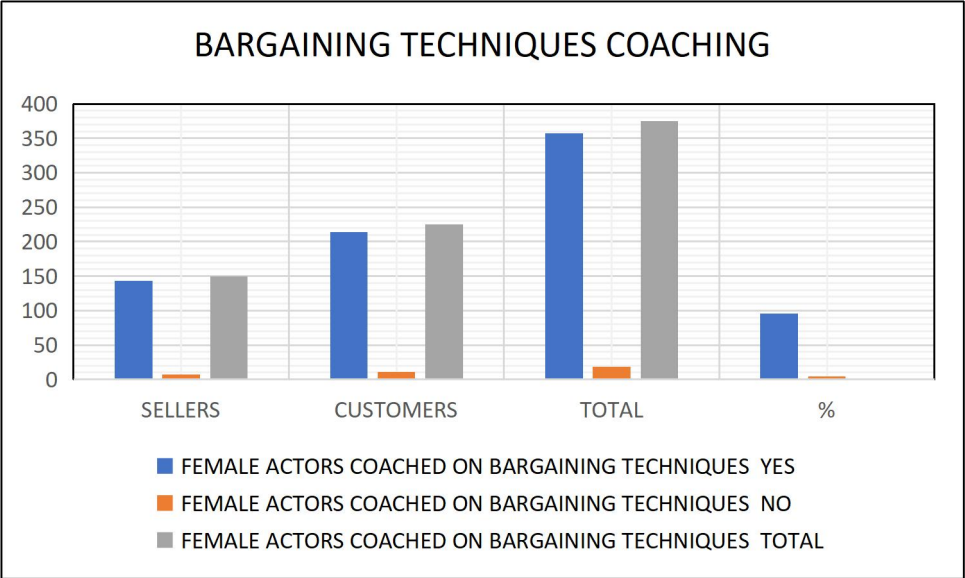
## Appendices

### DANTOKPA MARKET ACTORS INTERVIEWED

GENDER	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
SELLERS	50	150	200
CUSTOMERS	75	225	300
TOTAL	125	375	500
%	25	75	

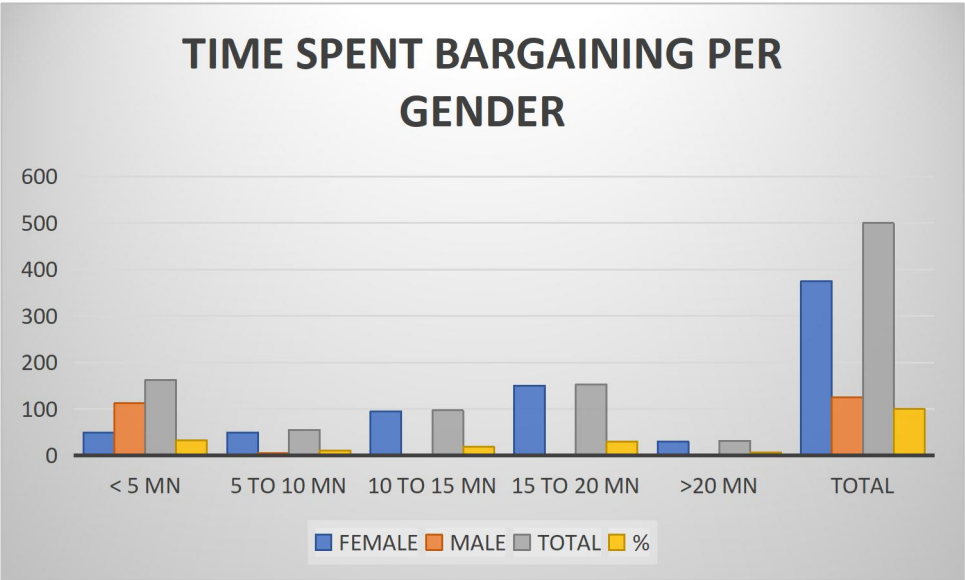


FEMALE ACTORS COACHED ON BARGAINING TECHNIQUES			
COACHED	YES	NO	TOTAL
SELLERS	143	7	150
CUSTOMERS	214	11	225
TOTAL	357	18	375
%	95	5	



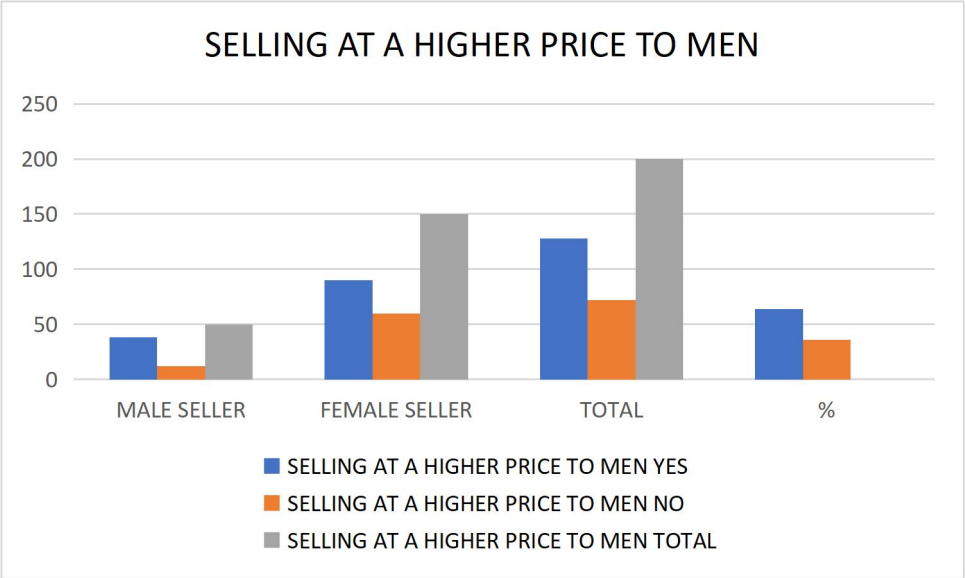
### TIME SPENT BARGAINING PER GENDER

GENDER	< 5 mn	5 to 10 mn	10 to 15 mn	15 to 20 mn	>20 mn	TOTAL
FEMALE	50	50	95	150	30	375
MALE	113	5	2	3	2	125
TOTAL	163	55	97	153	32	500
%	32,6	11	19,4	30,6	6,4	100



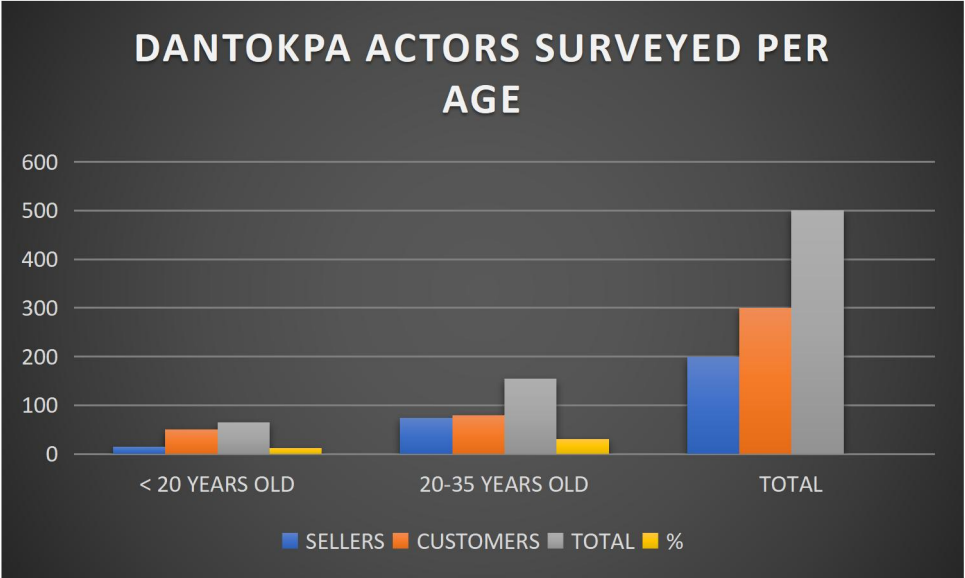
### SELLING AT A HIGHER PRICE TO MEN

	YES	NO	TOTAL
MALE SELLER	38	12	50
FEMALE SELLER	90	60	150
TOTAL	128	72	200
%	64	36	



DANTOKPA ACTORS SURVEYED PER AGE

ACTORS	< 20 YEARS OLD	20-35 YEARS OLD	35-50 YEARS OLD	> 50 YEARS OLD	TOTAL
SELLERS	15	75	90	20	200
CUSTOMERS	50	80	100	70	300
TOTAL	65	155	190	90	500
%	13	31	38	18	100



**IS BARGAINING A WASTE OF TIME?**

CUSTOMER'S AGE	YES	NO	TOTAL
< 20 YEARS OLD	38	12	50
20-35 YEARS OLD	64	16	80
35-50 YEARS OLD	60	40	100
> 50 YEARS OLD	35	35	70
TOTAL	197	103	300
%	66	34	100

