

THE INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONS IN BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

Competitive paper

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Abstract

This paper discusses emotions as mediators in business-to-business relationships, an area that is understudied. Within consumer marketing, emotions have been widely studied, and calls have been made for business relationship research to take account of managers' emotions. This study addresses the gap by firstly establishing the relevance of emotions in troubled business relationships and secondly showing how emotions are a major component in determining the outcomes of the troubled relationships. The aim is achieved by analysing interview data in the form of narratives describing problematic relationships, to acknowledge both the emotions experienced by participants and their role in the course of the business relationship.

Introduction

The influence of emotions in business-to-business marketing has received little attention. In comparison, in business-to-consumer settings, such as in consumer behaviour or advertising, the situation is completely different. Indeed a review by Cohen & Areni (1991) shows that research on affective processes in consumer behaviour is firmly established. In addition in services marketing, researchers have studied consumers' emotional and behavioural responses to a variety of situations (e.g. Barger & Grandey, 2006; Dallimore et al., 2007; Grace, 2008).

It is therefore surprising to expect that, when working as managers or boundary spanners in business-to-business markets, people who are emotional consumers, service providers and targets of advertising leave all their emotions behind. On the contrary, various research streams suggest that human emotions, cognition and behaviour cannot be meaningfully separated. The sociology of emotion (e.g. Barbalet, 1998; Kemper, 1978) argues that people's actions are embedded in emotions. The affect heuristic research (see Slovic et al., 2002) sees affect as an important element in all human decision making. Furthermore, Winkielman & Berridge (2004) argue that emotions, even if genuinely unconscious, may drive behaviour and reactions

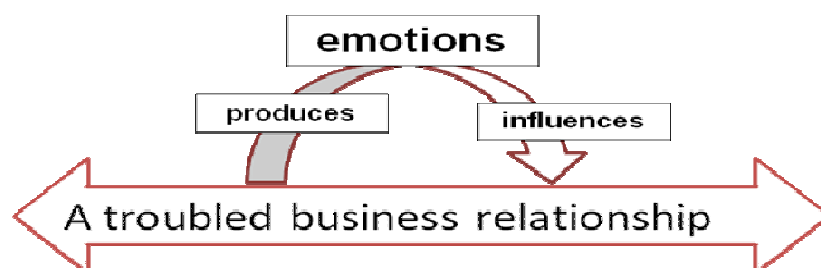
The need to study the functions and influence of emotions in an organisational context has been confirmed by researchers (e.g. Barsade et al., 2003; Fineman, 2000). Indeed Ashkanasy & Cooper (2008) state that, because human beings and organisations are only capable of

functioning normally if they have access to emotional information, the study of emotions should receive greater research attention. Decision making is influenced both by the emotions of the person experiencing the emotion and also of the counterparts' interpretation of the information that emotions provide about the person's feelings (Ekman, 1993), intentions (Van Kleef et al., 2004), and orientation towards the relationship (Knutson, 1996). For example, Kumar (2008) examines the instability of strategic alliances and shows how at each stage emotions have a role in influencing alliance's development and their future.

However, research into the role of emotions in organizational contexts has not been widely applied to the study of business relationships. Thus, this paper applies research on emotions from the field of social psychology and organisational behaviour to B2B Marketing. Those studies that, so far, have touched upon emotions in B2B relationships focus on either the role of the emotions which influence the development of the relationships or the customers' emotional responses to sellers' actions. In the first category, Andersen and Kumar (2006) consider the role of emotions in shaping business relationships at their initiation, development, voluntary and forced termination, and re-establishment stages. Bagozzi (2006) elaborates on salespersons' and customers' emotions, their self-regulation and impact on the exchange relationships. Both these studies are conceptual. In the second category, Selnes & Grønhaug (2000) and Wang & Huff (2007) both use empirical research to study how customers react emotionally to sellers' positive and/or negative actions. Thus, apart from some studies of customers' emotional responses, research into the emotions involved in business relationships and the influence of emotions on these relations has so far been conceptual.

This paper focuses on the emotions that arise during major changes in business relationships. It asks two questions. Firstly, what emotions are involved when a business relationship faces difficulties? There are first, the emotions that a triggering event produces at the time, within the relationship, and second, the emotions that are produced when an event and the relationship is recalled. Secondly, this study examines how the emotions influence a troubled relationship. Emotions are thus being considered to be mediators in the life of a business relationship. Managers feel emotions while doing business with each other, and those emotions influence not only the way they behave but also the behaviour of others in the relationship. In this study, the influence or consequences are defined very broadly as either the ending of the relationship [at any stage of its development including the very earliest phase of the Exploratory Stage (Dwyer et al., 1987)] or its recovery. The general setting of this study is pictured in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The role of emotions in a troubled business relationship



Empirically, this study uses interview data from Finnish suppliers' and customers' narratives of problematic relationships with their counterparts in Finland and elsewhere. Hence, we look at both the suppliers and the customers, although the data is not fully dyadic in nature. The reason why this study focuses on problematic relationship phases or 'the dark side of

relationships' is grounded on the notion that bad is stronger than good (see Baumeister et al., 2001), in other words that negative events have a stronger influence as they trigger stronger emotions than positive ones. Moreover, conflict has been demonstrated to be emotionally defined and perceived by a triggering event (Bodtker & Jameson Katz, 2001) and this paper suggests that the examination and understanding of severe problems in business relationships may also benefit from this view. Thus, troubled relationships can be expected to trigger stronger emotions and thus their influence can be more easily detected, aiding the theory development aim of this study.

The paper first establishes a theoretical starting point, and then applies the theory to the data to identify the emotions involved and their influence in business relationships. Finally it discusses the results, their implications and future work to be done.

The foundations of this study; inter-organisational interaction by managers

Bagozzi (2006) suggests that business relationships may need to be conceptualised in a new way that includes both rational and emotional forces. This study regards a business relationship as interaction between two companies (Blois, 1972; Ford et al., 2008) partly performed by managers representing their companies. In addition, we apply a sociology of emotions view to business relationships and regard them as a social phenomenon. Therefore, emotions are not only features of the individual managers that act on behalf of their companies but also features of the business relationship (Gergen, 1997).

However, to be able to understand business relationships as a social phenomenon and as interaction, a micro level of analysis is adapted. Ford et al (2008) state that interaction is a substantive process that influences and is influenced by all the elements of business: actors, activities and resources. We argue that of the above mentioned elements the actor layer or the interpersonal links developed between individuals through interaction, as defined by Ford et al. (2008), is a key to the understanding of business relationships as a social phenomenon. This is the layer where attraction, trust, and commitment, the elements of a relational infrastructure of a business relationship grows or diminishes (see e.g. Anderson & Weitz, 1992; Halinen, 1997; Moorman et al., 1992) and this study focuses on this micro layer.

Although we focus on the managers' emotions, we recognize that the micro level is not free from influences from the 'upper' levels, i.e. the company level, the relationship level, and the network level. The way managers behave is influenced, though not determined, by the forces at the institutional and organisational levels (Marchington & Vincent, 2004). Moreover, the actions that we focus on are also based on 'lower' levels of explanation, when it comes to emotions. Ashkanasy (2003) distinguishes five levels of analysis for studying emotion, namely: within-person; differences between individuals; in dyads; groups and, organisations. Therefore, the study focuses on the micro level of emotions expressed and interpreted by managers, but at the same time, the emotions are a function of the interaction taking place between a buyer and a supplier, embedded in the atmosphere of the business relationship, shaped by the company cultures and structures of the two companies. The complexity in this interorganisational setting is considerable, and therefore a study is limited in taking the contingencies into consideration. Nevertheless, their existence needs to be acknowledged.

From this viewpoint, whenever two managers or boundary spanners construct value by interaction, as in business relationships, emotions are likely to be involved (see Lawler & Thye, 2007). Therefore, when events in the relationship produce emotions, the emotions also

influence the future events in that relationship. This view suggests that to understand what goes on in business relationships, and why, we need to study emotions in the relationships.

Connecting Emotions and Troubled Business Relationships

Emotions; what are they and how do they work in relationships?

The answer to the question of what emotions are depends on who you are asking. 'Emotion' refers to both the everyday usage (what people mean by it) and what research tells us (Parrot, 2001), where a number of definitions are proposed. Moreover, affect, mood, emotions, and attitudes are closely related terms and sometimes used as synonyms. An explanation provided by Stanley & Burrows (2001) will be used in a simplified form to provide a picture of what goes on when we feel emotions. The following description is related to situational emotions (Nussbaum, 2001), which refers to emotions that are associated with a particular context and situation. Simply said, the emotional process starts from an important event (Frijda, 1988) or change (Ben-Zeev, 1996, 228) that is detected and thereafter appraised, i.e. its significance to the person is interpreted. It is then followed by an emotional response (physiological, subjective awareness, and behavioural intention). This motivates the person to behave in a way s/he has learned. In addition, once the person has responded by action, it forms a second event that is then appraised as well. Emotions thus orient and implicate the persons in her/his social environment, they colour her/his actions and also give energy, urgency and readiness to act in a particular way (Ben-Zeev, 2000; Illouz, 2009).

Emotional experience consists of three basic components: physiological, cognitive, and behavioural and communicative (Bodtker & Jameson Katz, 2001). The physiological component refers to the physical expression of emotion, e.g. our hands sweating when we are nervous. The cognitive component relates to our assessment of the situation against our goals and expectations. If the goal is fulfilled, we express positive emotions and vice versa. Finally, the behavioural and communicative component refers to how emotions are being expressed, in verbal and non-verbal behaviour and by intentional and unintentional behaviour. These expressions are guided by cultural expression rules, telling us which emotions we are free to express and which feelings we need to try to contain. On the other hand, the person may also be 'looking backward', and thus appraise events that have already happened, which will produce different emotions than they experienced. Moreover, we can also look forward to an event and anticipate the emotions we will feel, although they may not come true (see Lawler & Thyne, 2007). This paper focuses on emotions as expressions of what an individual feels - stressing the cognitive and the behavioural and communicative components.

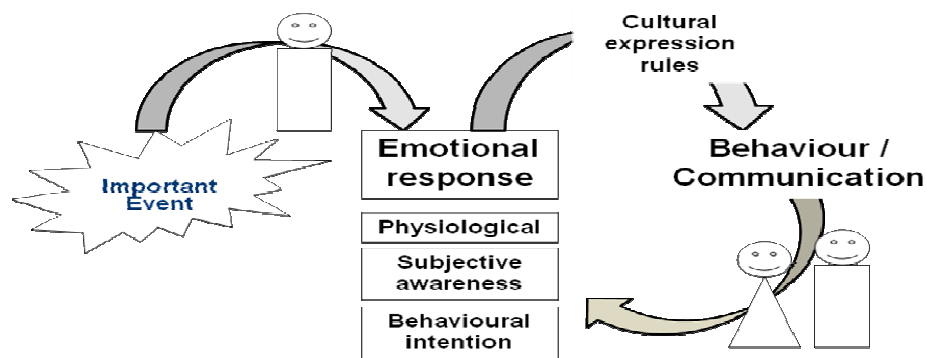
The above discussion is about the subjective experience of emotions. When studying business dyads we also need to understand that emotions communicate *meanings to those other actors* that are part of the chain of events and share the culture (see Gergen, 1997; Stanley & Burrows, 2001). Through this emotional communication, emotions not only help individuals to know other's emotion and intentions, but they also evoke complementary and reciprocal emotions in others, and serve as inputs to other's behaviour (Keltner & Heidt, 1999). All these functions help to coordinate the dyadic social interactions.

In a business relationship setting, it is the emotions of the boundary spanners and all individual actors that are involved in the relationship and can see, read, hear or feel the emotion that is of interest. An illustration of this is a situation when project manager A expresses joy when talking about a completed joint project in an end-of-project meeting. Even if the supplier's project manager B experienced many problems during the project, she

should not, if she wishes to continue the business relationship, express regret that the project ever took place in front of the project team. Business relationships also offer opportunities for game-playing in negotiations. For example, I as a Buyer may deliberately appear angry with the intent (or hope) that by doing so I will achieve a desired response from the Salesperson. The desired result might even be to provoke the Salesperson to be angry so that I can then complain about their behaviour! The important point is that our emotional behaviour communicates and evokes responses, which we in turn often respond to and so on. These examples also show that, although our emotions are not totally controllable, it is possible and often necessary to seek to control or regulate the manner in which we express our emotions. For example, if I feel angry when reading the reviews of this manuscript, I can still restrain myself from throwing the laptop on the floor or writing an insulting letter to the reviewers. However, every researcher can more or less predict what follows after one reads a rejection letter.

This sequence of event, emotion and its consequences can be referred to as an emotion episode or script (Abelson, 1981; Fehr & Russel, 1984; Gibson, 2008; Shaver et al., 1987) as pictured in Figure 2. An emotion episode starts from an event that triggers an emotion (i.e. a reaction), which is expressed by the manager. This experienced emotion also influences the manager's behaviour in the subsequent task (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Fisher, 2002).

Figure 2. An emotion episode at a dyadic level



In an interaction, the expression is seen by the counterpart and communicates not only the emotion that the individual manager is under, but also what might be the reason for the emotion and how he may behave. For example, when the manager A expresses anger in a discussion, manager B in the supplier company understands that something she just said made manager A feel angry and thus A may end the discussion. The episode ends with an outcome, which is the reaction of the counterpart B. In this example, the reaction may be to apologize and try to calm manager A down so that the conversation may continue. On the other hand, if manager B does not control her emotions, she may also get irritated by manager A's expression of his anger and the outcome may be more harsh words from her that A will remember for some time.

The above example also highlights the dual nature of a script; it describes the reason for the emotion, but it also offers clues on what is expected to happen (Gibson, 2008). This descriptive-normative dual nature relates to the time sequence of the script, the expression is explained by a trigger that happened earlier but the cultural expression rules shape our views on how particular emotions should be expressed in various situations. In a business relationship, the cultural expression rules will be shaped in the interaction, and influenced by the cultures of the two interacting companies, but also by the individual managers that

interact with each other. Thus, the expression rules will develop during the interaction but they also control the interaction and bring in stability and predictability.

Although the previous example dealt with negative emotions and their outcomes, Keltner & Heidt (1999) suggest that emotions actually help people to solve relational problems. A problem is an event that produces emotions, and therefore also encourages action taken to solve the problem, thereby changing the emotion. To put it in another way, unless we feel emotions, problems could be left unsolved, since they would not bother us (bothering being an emotion). One function of emotions is to direct our attention toward relevant events, to either protect ourselves from dangerous events or to nurture, in other words to maximize positive outcomes (Stanley & Burrows, 2001). The problem solving, protective, and 'profit increasing' functions of emotions are therefore important in problematic business relationships.

What then would be the emotions that can be assumed to be important in business relationships? Let us first look at which emotions researchers label as basic. There are a number of classifications of basic emotions, but the one used in this paper is derived from a hierarchical cluster analysis of 135 emotion names, by Shaver et al. (1987). Thus, in this study, basic emotions are considered to be: love; joy; surprise; anger; sadness; and, fear, each forming a category to which over a hundred other emotion names can be related. This list closely resembles earlier studies by Fehr & Russel, 1984; Ekman, 1984; Epstein, 1984; and Izard, 1977, the main difference being the inclusion of 'surprise'. When looking at troubled business relationships, surprise (including amazement and astonishment) might be produced, and this is the reason for using Shaver et al.'s (1987) list. However, it is necessary to note that these lists use English labels for emotions and not all of these may equate with the Finnish (the language of the empirical data) labels.

For the purpose of this paper, it is important to note that two types of emotions are needed to continue problematic relationships (instead of simply ending them). Firstly, Fiske (2002) argues in his proxy theory on emotions that socio-moral emotions (e.g. desire for approval and acceptance, pride, fear of and respect of superiors, shame and guilt) provide the self-control needed to cooperate and resist impulses (see also Frijda, 1988) to exit a relationship. This is understandable, since it takes effort to develop and continue relationships, especially when problems arise. Secondly, Lawler & Thyne (2007) present a relational cohesion theory and suggest that frequent exchanges create positive emotions flowing into relational cohesion. This perception of the exchange relation as a unifying force in the situation results in commitment (defined as attachment to a social unit, in this case the dyad) and is manifested in staying in the relationship, gift giving, and engaging in new ventures (expanding the relationship). Thus, both *socio-moral emotions* that provide self-control and *attachment to the relationship* are needed to sustain important but problematic relations.

What can we say about emotions and their functions in business relationships?

Andersen and Kumar (2006) built a model of emotions in the development of business relationships. Before discussing the model, however, it should be noted that Andersen & Kumar (2006) address relationship development following the life cycle models of Dwyer et al. (1987); Ford (1980); and, Frazier (1983). This view is different than the one applied in this paper, which sees relationships and their development from a perspective inspired by critical realism (e.g. Sayer, 1992) and social exchange theory (e.g. Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Hence, business relationships are viewed as emergent interaction processes, creating structures that then influence the processes. Thus, for this paper, relationship development is not expected to

follow any predictable pattern or phases, but is influenced by different contingencies, agency, and reasons rather than causes (see also Parrot, 2001).

Andersen & Kumar (2006) elaborate on both individual boundary spanners, boundary spanner groups and other members of the buying and selling organisations. Their study makes propositions on how the emotions of these individuals and groups influence trust building in different phases of relationships development (initiation, development, voluntary termination, forced termination, and re-establishment following voluntary termination). For the purpose of this study, the emotions of boundary spanners are of interest. However, Andersen & Kumar (2006) do not connect emotions to triggering events but to phases, suggesting that during (positive) development phase, boundary spanners feel positive emotions such as joy, and during termination they feel sadness and other negative emotions. The propositions offered for the termination phases relate to the groups within the companies and the boundary spanning individuals. Andersen & Kumar (2006) propose that if influential groups have “negative affective states” these states may “lead to relationship termination”. Moreover, “the negative affective states held by influential individuals within the buying and/or selling organization may make relationship termination more likely” (Andersen & Kumar, 2006, p.532). Turning to the re-establishment phase, this is “critically dependent on the emergence of positive affective states among influential organizational members in the buyer-seller dyad” (Andersen & Kumar, 2006, p.532). Thus, these general propositions concern the consequences of positive or negative emotions held by groups and individuals. Our study is mostly interested in those managers who are influential actors in a relationship and not only the consequences of emotions but also their antecedents, in other words the events that produce the manager’s emotional experiences.

Two other studies focus on a customer’s positive or negative emotional experiences produced by a supplier’s acts of keeping or not keeping its promises. Selnes & Grønhaug (2000) and Wang & Huff (2007) show that if a customer perceives that the supplier is not keeping its promises, it will produce negative affections, which will decrease customer’s satisfaction and loyalty intentions. Wang & Huff (2007) also show that the negative emotions are more intensive, when the trust in the relationship is low. On the other hand, if the buyer sees the supplier as behaving in a way that benefits both parties (benevolence), it produces positive emotions and increases customer’s intention to continue the relationship (Selnes & Grønhaug, 2000). However, since these studies do not make use of narrative data, certain types of events cannot be connected to particular emotions and their consequences as a storyline.

Bagozzi (2006) reviews studies on the regulation of salesperson-customer interactions and outlines that the interactions include the goals and values not only of the firms, but also of the individuals, as well as the needs that arise from interfirm and interpersonal relationships. The focus of the paper is on the regulatory mechanisms in business relationships that work through interpersonal social emotions. Positive interpersonal social emotions comprise of attachment, empathic concern [originally empathy, but we use the label by Davis (1994), which excludes any personal distress from the emotion], and pride while negative ones include embarrassment, envy, guilt, jealousy, shame, and social anxiety. These self-conscious emotions arise from and relate to social relationships and coordinate people’s responses and provide self-control to better fit the relationships. Bagozzi’s review outlines the cultural practises, tendencies and contingencies that influence the process of sales-persons’ self-regulation, but indicates that research is only beginning to explain and understand them. Therefore, this study will also include the social emotions into the list of emotions studied empirically in the following section.

The empirical study

Empirically, this study wishes to validate the relevance of studying emotions within troubled business relationships. Thus, we first analyse the frequency with which managers use emotional expressions when talking about troubled business relationships. Secondly, to understand how emotions influence business relationships, we connect the emotions to what happened overall in the relationship, did it end or did it continue as recovered. This is done with the help of emotion scripts.

The study uses narratives on troubled relationships, in other words interview data sets that have been collected earlier and are therefore being re-used in this study (see Thompson, 2000). The data originates from two separate research projects. Project 1 studied a relationship that ended, because of severe problems. Data set 1 consists of narratives from 22 informants from both sides of the dyad (as well as from network actors). Project 2 gathered both relationship ending and recovery stories, and is one-sided. In other words, the managers represented either a supplier or a buyer company and in some of the narratives, the relationship in question was collaborative. Thus, in data set 2, each informant (nine in total) tells several narratives about dissolved and recovered relationships, resulting in altogether 28 narratives (see Table 1). Data set 1 includes both male and female voices, and from different hierarchical levels, but data set 2 is all male and mostly at CEO or owner-manager level. In all interviews, the first author was the interviewer and had also designed the thematic interview guides (without specific questions about emotions). All interviews were done on the premises of the interviewers' companies, in three different urban locations, namely Helsinki and Espoo in southern Finland and Oulu, in the north. All interviews were retrospective, with the interviewees talking about relationships that had either already ended, though some of them had only reached the establishment stage, or, if the recovered relationships still continued, the events discussed had already happened.

Table 1. The interview data

	Data set 1	Data set 2
Number of informants	22	9
Number of relationships that the data talks about	1 dissolved	14 dissolved, 14 recovered
Number of narratives	23	28
Words in total	69.739	50.541
Interview duration	On average 1h 10 min	On average 1h 08 min

The data sets are not balanced in terms of the richness of the data or the gender and managerial status of the informants. However, our intention here is not to study the relationships as cases, and therefore the imbalance is of little importance. On the contrary, the variety in narratives helps, as the emotional expressions stem from different contexts and from different individuals. The level of analysis thus is not the relationship, but the emotional expressions and the influence of emotions in shaping events within the structure we call a business relationship. Therefore, the two data sets were combined into one.

The content analysis of the textual data was by the first author and facilitated with computer-aided text analysis using N'Vivo8 software. The use of a single coder is due to the fact that the language of the data is the native language of the first author, who has also conducted the interviews. Thus, she was the only one that was able to understand the original data, as well as could remember the tone of the narratives from the interview situations. In addition, since

the data has been analysed only once, no interrater nor intrarater reliability measures (see Weber, 1990) have been calculated at this point.

The content analysis utilizes the categorisation of basic emotions by Shaver et al. (1987), socio-moral emotions (Fiske, 2002; Lawler & Thyne, 2002), and of social emotions presented in Bagozzi (2006) as nodes in the coding scheme. Thus, the data was examined to determine whether or not the informants verbally express emotions when telling stories of business relationships, and if they do, how frequent were the emotional expressions. Quantitative content analysis (Weber 1990) was performed by reading through each narrative and when a verbal emotional expression was found, categorising it under an appropriate emotion node. Examples of direct emotion words are the following “it was quite confusing” and “we started out all happy”, which were categorised as expressions of basic emotions of fear (the former) and joy (the latter). However, although the narrative included direct expressions of emotion it was not taken out of its context before coding it. For example ‘I told that as a vengeance, we will organise a meeting where we speak with three-letter abbreviations’ was not categorised as an expression of the emotion of vengefulness, because the rest of the narrative revealed that it was said as a joke, to a group of customers (psychologists) using jargon the software supplier could not understand.

The narratives also included less direct emotional expressions that did not involve emotional words as such. Nevertheless, as stated earlier, the emotional behaviour of the informant became clear from the narrative and based on that the researcher could also categorise indirect expressions. An example of an indirect expression is: “It could have resulted in an argument, if we would have just given them, if we had looked only at the contract, but they were very honest and confessed that they simply did not know how to do it [the product] properly, and paid our money back. They lost a lot of money in doing so.” This part of a narrative was categorised under the social emotion of empathic concern, since the full narrative was told as an example of an unwanted ending, which the informant talking said that it could not be helped.

Since some of the socio-moral and social emotions were sub-categorised under basic emotions, Table 2 shows those connections and similarities in the three categories. Thus, by using these categorisations, the study can also say something about the types of emotions that seem to be expressed when experiencing problems in a business relationship.

Table 2. The basic, socio-moral and social emotions analysed from the data

Basic emotions	Socio-moral emotions	Social emotions
Love		
Joy	Pride	Pride
Surprise		
Anger		Envy and Jealousy
Sadness	Guilt and Shame	Guilt and Shame
Fear	Fear of superior	Social anxiety
	Desire for approval and acceptance	
	Respect for superior	
	Attachment to dyad	Attachment
		Empathic concern
		Embarrassment

Secondly, since some of the narratives connected the emotional experiences to certain events in the relationship, the analysis was able to form emotion episodes consisting of triggering event – emotional response – the consequences (i.e. the end or recovery of the relationship). In other words, the emotion nodes were connected with categories of events that were derived from the data, and the two categories of the outcomes of the relationship.

Fineman (2004) suggests that only identifying the emotional words in the stories does not explain much of the phenomenon and suggests that critical discourse analysis should be used to do justice to the emotional form and context of the stories. However, the following frequency analysis was made to establish the relevance of studying emotions, and as a guide of what types of emotions troubled business relationships trigger.

The frequency analysis

First it should be noted that none of the interviews were designed to study emotions. Thus, the managers were not asked any questions about emotions, nor did they receive any instructions to reveal their emotions when telling the stories. Thus, the emotion words and expressions were produced spontaneously as part of their narratives during the interviews.

Only two interviews contained no emotional expressions and the only basic emotion that was not expressed in any of the narratives was, unsurprisingly, love (see Table 3). The emotional expressions that most often occurred in the data are related to sadness (75 expressions) and anger (41 expressions). This is logical, since it can be assumed that problems in a business relationship trigger more negative than positive emotions.

The emotions that enhance the continuance of the relationship, namely socio-moral emotions and social emotions were rarely expressed. The social emotions that the narrative contained were pride, shame, and attachment to the dyad (these are also socio-moral expressions) and empathic concern. Since most of the data relates to troubled and ended relationships, there are obviously fewer expressions of socio-moral emotions that keep relationships together.

The emotions that were expressed, and which belong to one of the sub-categories of basic emotions as presented in Shaver et al. (1987) are discussed next in the order of their frequency in the data. The most frequently expressed emotions related to sadness and include disappointment, neglect and remorse. Anger related emotions expressed in the data were annoyance, bitterness, disgust, frustration, hostility and rage. Expressions related to joy included excitement, contentment, happiness, optimism, and relief. The category of surprise

included amazement and astonishment while the category of fear includes anxiety, nervousness, tenseness and uncertainty. Thus, since the narratives were more about relationship dissolution than recovery, while the emotional picture of the data is not totally negative, for the most part, as would be expected, it is.

Table 3. The basic, socio-moral and social emotions expressed and *not expressed* in the data¹

Basic emotions / no of expressions	Socio-moral / social emotions / no of expressions
Sadness / 75	Empathic concern / 5
Anger / 41	Pride / 2
Joy / 31	Guilt, Shame / 2
Surprise / 31	Attachment to dyad / 1
Fear / 18	<i>Envy, Jealousy</i>
<i>Love</i>	<i>Fear of superior</i>
	<i>Desire for approval and acceptance</i>
	<i>Respect for superior</i>
	<i>Social anxiety</i>
	<i>Embarrassment</i>

Taken together, the frequency analysis shows that emotions are expressed when talking about what had happened in troubled business relationships, and thus emotions are a relevant object of study within business-to-business marketing. Moreover, most of the expressed emotions are negative ones, as also suggested by Andersen & Kumar (2006), since the data relates to the ending phases of relationships.

In the following, we will connect the emotional expressions both to the preceding events that produced them as well as the subsequent events, as their outcomes. In other words by emotion episodes, we will place the emotions into the interaction within which they were produced and which they influenced.

Emotion episodes

In the following, emotion episodes from each emotion category are analysed. Thus, the triggering events, emotional responses, and the consequences of the emotions are combined into emotion episodes. We show examples of emotion episodes of each of the emotions that were expressed in the data, connected with a quote from the data, to reveal the logic of the data analysis to the reader. The episodes are being presented in the order of frequency that they appeared in the data, starting from the basic emotions.

Sadness (disappointment, neglect, remorse) was produced when the partner's behaviour was other than expected, or did not echo the wishes and behaviour of the actor. The first quotation opens up a pattern of events, where after the business relationship had run into serious problems, the boundary spanners from the buyer company still tried to resolve the issues at that level, but their efforts were not appreciated, and they felt disappointed and neglected by the supplier. This gave them the justification to involve the senior management and thus file an official complaint.

¹ The numbers indicate the frequency that these emotions were noted in the interview transcripts.

Quote 1: *Buyer's Manager1* says: We filed an official complaint, when we felt that the supplier did not take us seriously otherwise. That did not change anything, although we said that we are an important customer for you since we are a large company, so let's try again. We do not wish to not end it with anger. It did not help and we felt that the supplier was not willing to cooperate. – Emotion episode: *Neglect and disappointment produced by supplier's lack of effort to resolve the disagreement. The outcome was taking the matter into next level, filing a written complaint to be handled by higher management.*

The second quotation shows how an event or process that took place in the past, still produces emotions when the person is talking about it and it makes him think what he or his company could have done differently to prevent the event from happening.

Quote 2: *Supplier's CEO* tells: Our customer in UK used our products mainly for testing. Then they had personnel changes and there was this new guy that had different ideas of how to do the testing and with what type of solutions. And they did send us specifications, to say that this is what they want us to offer for them. But, we did not really understand what they wanted. It clearly was a question of misunderstanding; the information did not quite travel. --- So, they ended up switching the main supplier. ... We clearly lost that customer, if you think about it. I don't think that, or at least I don't ... of course it is hard to say, when the distributor was in charge of the relationship, but I did go there once and tried to save it, but it did not help at all. – Emotion episode: *The story about 'a lost customer' (although the customer still uses some of their products) makes the speaker sad and shows uncertainty.*

Anger (annoyance, bitterness, disgust, frustration, hostility, rage) were raised after counterparty's actions were perceived to either take advantage of the actor's commitment to the relationship, or as evidence of counterparty's incompetence in performing a task. The anger resulted in withdrawal from the relationship, lowered levels of cooperation or at least a loss of motivation to work with the counterparty. Anger thus seemed to produce a vicious circle of negative emotions, which is difficult to control and therefore can be used as a reason to end the relationship and moreover, never to start it again.

Quote 3: *Supplier's CEO* speaks: We built their web services and e-marketing for a couple of years. Then we again suggested new things, and did not charge for the discussions and suggestions. Anyway, the client did not follow our suggestions and said that you charge too much. We visited their web-pages a few months later, and saw that they had implemented all our plans, but done by another service provider. I called him, and said that we have worked with you for years and invested in you. So, I expected that you would at least call me to terminate our contract and tell me that you are switching suppliers. ---. So, that is a situation where you do not want to continue doing business. And we knew that the client had unpaid bills also for other suppliers. So at this stage I told him that it's not worth hiring a collection company so that I can get you to pay. So, you can forget about the unpaid bill of some thousand Euros. – Emotion episode: *Annoyance and anger (combined with hurt and disappointment) produced by customer taking advantage of the supplier's commitment, followed by trying to insult the customer verbally and terminating the relationship.*

Quote 4: *Buyer's Manager2* explains: We discussed about the screen, whether it should move upwards and downwards or from left to right and Jack burned

completely, cursed and said ‘look here now; you are professionals, so you need to know what you are doing. We have more important things to do than to discuss this with you week after week.’ – Emotion episode: *Anger produced by the supplier asking the end users to participate in specifying the software, which the end user perceived to be waste of time.*

Quote 5: *Buyer’s Manager³ tells:* Then it started to be like, that we do not, hey no (the interviewee leans backward in her chair). So at this point our relationships really started to flame out. It started to be kind of negative, when you said company B, everyone was like yeah, right, and we don’t want to hear. – Emotion episode: *Hostility produced by continuing problems, attributed solely to the partner and their behaviour. The outcome was withdrawal from any cooperation that was not necessary.*

Quote 6: *Buyer’s Manager⁴ spells out:* Well, I did on many occasions think that, damn, it’s really nice to be in your first large project and then it goes to hell, pardon my expression. But it was like, it was behind the schedule, it did not work and all sorts of things happened, so you started to feel like hopeless, damn you, this is not going to work at all! So you kind of lost all hope. – Emotion episode: *Anger and frustration that were produced by problems in the task, attributed to the supplier, lowering the work motivation of the buyer’s project secretary.*

Joy (and excitement, contentment, happiness, optimism, and relief) was in this data expressed as being produced by a decision being made or by all the events which took place in a relationship. The outcome of the emotion seems to influence the actions in the future relationship or even the world view of the person, as Quote 8 reveals.

Quote 7: *Supplier’s CEO talks:* I do not feel displeased at all about the fact that we left that deal undone. We could have gotten revenue in the short run, but that would have been a bad customer relationship. So, you can influence these things rather well at the stage when you spend time with the potential customer to talk [our offer and their needs] through. – Emotion episode: *Contentment produced by the actor’s own decision.*

Quote 8: *Supplier’s CEO claims:* You should never say that a situation is desperate. I will not simply accept it, that it would be desperate. There’s always a solution if one wants one. That’s what I learned from this case. – Emotion episode: *Optimism produced by a relationship, influencing actions in all other relationships.*

Surprise seems to be produced by unexpected behaviour by the boundary spanners or unexpected emotional signals sent by the boundary spanners of the partner company.

Quote 9: *Supplier’s Manager speaks:* Customer’s boundary spanners in technology and in business, they may not discuss much with each other, they do not know what the other is doing. And then it can happen that the business people are very unhappy with the way we do things, and on the other hand the technical people are very happy. These situations happen very often. Or *vice versa*. – Emotion episode: *Surprise produced by incoherent behaviour of customer’s boundary spanners*

Quote 10: *Supplier’s CEO explains:* [After a change of a purchasing manager] the first thing that we encountered was that the new manager demanded benefits for

himself. He made suppliers buy him stuff, which had never [happened before] and was not in accordance with the values of the company. He let us know that ‘I want this and this kind of a mobile phone before you have any business to come here’. And he wanted this and that and, really, it started to go down that road. ... At our end, we started to think that we need to be very careful. Our company policy was to just give out normal Christmas presents, those that you give in a business relationship. Thus, we thought about such things that [if we do it], these things always come out and put us in a certain kind of light. This could give their higher management [of the customer company] a reason to end our relationship, on the account that we have tried to bribe the person. Because it may happen like that, since the rules seemed to be very unsteady. – Emotion episode: *Surprise produced by a change in boundary spanner and his behaviour that was different from what was expected (was unacceptable). As an outcome, the supplier’s boundary spanners became very careful, and later on the relationship was terminated.*

Surprise was also produced by unexpected events that were attributed to cultural differences. This resulted in efforts to increase the firm’s cultural sensitivity.

Quote 11: *Supplier’s Manager tells:* The second cultural difference is that, when in Europe it usually is the way that once you make an agreement, both companies intend to follow it. And if we agree on certain obligations, such as payments and stuff, you adhere to the agreement. With them [Asian companies], it is not like that. They do not think that way, but more like it’s kind of a review, that means that back then we thought that we could pay, but now we feel that we cannot. So, you need to discuss a bit on that. ... The contract negotiations usually are not that difficult. But then, they do not necessarily read the contract so carefully, because you can always alter it later on. – Emotion episode: *Surprise produced by cultural differences with the outcome to discuss the issue with the counterparty and within the company.*

Fear (anxiety, nervousness, tenseness, uncertainty) is evident in the Quote 12, as the CEO became frightened about what their customer’s boundary spanner was saying to him. He wanted to know if this was a single person’s opinion or was it shared by the customer’s management. The latter was more likely and this produced uncertainty of how the relationship was progressing. A meeting was therefore arranged to discuss and make a plan to put things right, to clear any uncertainty and fear of losing the customer. This is a good example of how emotion draws attention to important events and instead of running away from the event that frightened the CEO, his approach was to look ahead and to resolve the issue so that the relationship was maintained.

Quote 12: *Suppliers’ CEO says:* I met Jane [buyer’s project manager] in a seminar and talked with her. She said she wanted to stop the project. I thought this was an alarming statement and told this to our staff and phoned to Andrew [the owner of the project at buyer]. Andrew assured me that they had not discussed it [stopping the project]. We also phoned Mary [Jane’s superior] and she did not agree. Then we arranged a meeting with us and them and tried to find out what was going on. --- We wanted to know if the customer wanted to continue. We really wanted to continue, they were a large customer to us and an important reference customer. – Emotion episode: *Uncertainty and nervousness, as well as fear of losing a customer were produced by what the customer’s boundary spanner said, which was not in accordance of the comments of other boundary spanners. This led to a meeting being*

arranged to sort out the problems in the project, which were thought to be reason for the first event.

Quote 13: *Supplier's CEO tells:* It was very a very anxious situation, because the whole existence of the supplier is on the line. It is a normal psychological reaction, in a small-big or David-Goliath type of setting, well that is quite normal reaction. And the whole company's, the supplier's whole personnel needed to understand where we are, so it, it, needs to be, you need the information to flow in the company. – Emotion episode: *The CEO felt and still feels anxious of an event where a major client told them to move their production to Africa, or otherwise they would stop buying. He feels the need to explain that anxiety was a normal reaction.*

After the examples of basic emotions in business relationships, the analysis turns to the socio-moral / social emotions (i.e. empathic concern, pride, shame, attachment to dyad and envy). The basic function of these emotions is to keep the relationship ongoing, by attaching the actors to it emotionally and by self-regulating such feelings that would threaten the continuance of the dyad.

Empathic concern was the most often expressed social emotion. The first quotation reveals a story where the CEO is friends with and appreciates the competences of the supplier's manager. In spite of that, the supplier is producing low quality and several efforts to improve it fail. In the end, the CEO needs to make a decision to change the supplier, although he knows that it will hit the supplier hard. Showing empathic concern he explains that they did understand the suppliers' problems, did everything they could to be able to continue the relationship, and that the manager is still a very competent fellow.

Quote 14: *Buyer's CEO says:* Tom [using a Finnish expression, which reveals that he knew Tom very well] that was their manager, he was a very competent guy and we did all sorts of R&D work together as well. But, where we needed huge quantities, their quality was really bad. They sent us so much bad stuff that lowered the quality of our products. And although we did try and try all sorts of things and our experts helped them, it in the end ended up like that, that we came to the conclusion that this looks like it is not going to work. That we must switch to another company. So, it just was not enough, the quality was not, although everything else would have been properly handled. In a way it is a necessary element, the quality of the service or product needs to be good enough, for the thing to work. [Question: But they were prepared to improve their quality?] Yes, of course, we were their biggest client by far. Yes, and it must have been a bitter bite to swallow, when we stopped using their product, but it, we just could not help it, nothing could. – Emotion episode: *Appreciation and a joint history triggers empathetic concern as a response to quality problems. As a consequence the CEO took actions to save the relationship, and to avoid making a hard business decision. Even when recollecting the events, speaker expresses the feeling by stressing that they did everything to avoid the end of the relationship, since it hit his friend hard.*

The second quotation shows empathic concern towards a boundary spanner. What produced the empathic concern was that the supplier's Project Manager saw that the boundary spanner lacked the knowledge and competence to be able to take care of the issues and problems that arose during the software development work. In other words, the boundary spanner had been put into a situation she could not handle; therefore it was the buyer company's Project

Manager that was to blame. The supplier's Project Manager was already attributing much of the blame on the buyer's equivalent, so this re-enforced her opinions.

Quote 15: *Supplier's Project Manager speaks*: And then there was Maria. Well, the main user in these development projects should be really experienced and have knowledge on both technology and the business side. And Maria had just started with the client, so I really sometimes felt sorry for the girl. – Emotion episode: *Events where the boundary spanner (BS) failed were attributed to the BS's superior putting them in an unfair position and triggered empathetic concern towards the BS.*

Pride is illustrated by the following quotation when the CEO talks about a relationship that came close to being terminated, because of senior management decisions, but was being saved by the boundary spanners. He attributes their behaviour to his company's competence and quality of work and clearly takes pride in this. However, in this story pride does not have an obvious function of self-regulating behaviour, but it is being produced by memories of the CEO's own and his employees' work. On the other hand, it can be argued that if you take pride in what you do, you have an incentive (pride) to do your best, and in doing that, you also produce good value for the customer, which strengthens the relationship. Pride thus serves as an internal prize for the efforts.

Quote 16: *Supplier's CEO talks*: Our customer was a large company, and they do decisions high up. We had two ongoing projects there and they got terminated on a very short notice, a week's notice. So, the things that we had done earlier, during the year and half, so we had showed them that we have an excellent quality and competence, and sort of commitment to the relationship. The customer had been very satisfied, and still is. And then, when, as I see it, it was pure because of that, when these terminations came [from high up], the customer did everything they could to find something that would replace those jobs. At first it was completely, like, such jobs that did not need to be done, they made it up so that we would be present in their business unit and it took about a month and after that it then started little by little, they started to find real projects to replace the two terminated ones. There was this short term, when we got the picture of customer trying to find jobs for us that actually were not that important. But they managed to keep us onboard and continue the relationship and I believe that it was only because we had had time to show them that we were a very good partner and they did not want to lose us. – Emotion episode: *Expressing pride about their own actions when recalling a recovered business relationship.*

The data shows that *shame* was produced when the actors looked at their own behaviour and felt that it was not appropriate in that situation, or that it produced difficulties in the relationship. The following quotation reveals a situation where the supplier's own actions in a subcontractor relationship influenced their customer relationships, since the subcontractors worked with the customers. Thus, when the supplier realized that what had happened was partly its own fault, i.e. they attributed the blame partly to their own behaviour; they felt shame. Shame was felt in front of both the contractor and the customers and took corrective actions at their own expense.

Quote 17: *Supplier's CEO says*: [The supplier had been using the subcontractor to install their systems at customer's premises. The subcontractor could not get the installation working and the customer complained to the supplier.] So, we thought, that well, normal people use common sense, so they would understand that a yellow cable goes into a yellow hole and a red on in red and so on. It is not a really difficult

thing, but, I don't know, if it was just the case that the subcontractor does only what they are specifically being told to do. It was a bit strange situation, but on one hand it was our own fault also. It ended up like the saying goes that when you pee into your own pants in the winter, it warms you awhile... We did not understand that they will do exactly at that level that we train them to do, and that we need a feedback loop, so that we really know what that level really is. We then realised that there is no other way than to train the people again and train more of them. – Emotion episode: *Supplier's own actions were attributed as inappropriate and triggered shame.*

Attachment in the following quotation is something that the supplier's CEO tries to signal to the customer, since he knows how it feels when customers do not contact them if e.g. they have problems with the payments or something negative to tell them. It has to be noted that the following story is not about lived emotions, although it shows an emotion episode that the speaker aims to follow when doing business.

Quote 18: *Supplier's CEO explains:* It is the same in both ways. I am sure that customers feel exactly the same if we bury our heads into the sand [pretend that nothing happened] when something happens. --- That is why, for me it is important that we react immediately, when something happens, we react. --- It is the same in any project. Projects also have certain, clear phases, when we need to be active. When, after the initial excitement, when we remain doing our own things, doing the work, it comes the feeling that is this going to work? At that point, we need to call [the customer] and say, hi how are you, it is going well, and how are you doing and we are here, so that they... Those are the kind of things you just know, those are very small things, but they influence the bigger picture. Of course, you need to be able to deliver the task, but .. And always, we ought to do things so that, we do too little that catching up with the client, when we are in a normal routine updating, so in any way, we should always try to remember to pay attention [to the customer] and catch up, and hey how are you doing, should we look at this and develop this. And all the time, the customer feels, that we care about them and not only about the invoice getting paid. No matter how well the work is going. – Emotion episode: *Supplier describing behaviour that will show attachment to the dyad to the customer.*

To sum up, the analysis confirms that when managers tell stories about troubled business relationships, both basic and socio-moral / social emotions are being expressed. The data also revealed emotion episodes of event-emotional response-consequence confirming that the emotional responses do influence the actors' subsequent behaviour in that particular relationship, and potentially also in other relationships.

Results

The discussion of the results of this study is two-fold. Firstly, it will focus on the emotional and event-emotion-consequence – episodes and scripts (consisting of more than one emotion episode) that emerged from the data as expression of the lived emotions. The second part of discussion elaborates on the emotions that interviewees expressed while recollecting the past events, as expressions of how they now feel about the event. The rationale for separating the discussions here relates to the event-emotion-behaviour pattern, which takes place in the narratives at different times, and thus may produce different emotions later on when looking back, than on the spot (see Lawler & Thyne, 2007). By remembering the emotion episodes and scripts a person creates the possibility of learning from it, and perhaps to re-evaluate the role of their original emotional responses. For example, one may have felt shame about a

perceived failure, but recollection helps to understand that there was nothing else anyone could have done (see Shephard & Cardon, 2009).

Emotion scripts in a troubled business relationship

The above analysis confirms that emotions are involved in business relationships. The next aim is to analyse what kinds of events trigger certain emotional responses from managers, and what, if any, are the consequences in the relationship. To do this, the emotion episodes and scripts (chains of emotion episodes) within a relationship are analysed. In other words, the chain from an important event, to an emotional response followed by behavioural response and finally, either the end or the restoration of the relationship were identified.

Emotion scripts are created from emotion episodes, i.e. important events and their attributions (where apparent in the data); the emotions the events produced and their consequences are presented in Table 4. In other words, the table provides example of situations where emotional episodes followed each other and shaped the future of the relationship.

The emotion script shows that unacceptable behaviour can produce surprise, but if the manager cannot find an acceptable reason to justify or explain a party's behaviour (such as cultural differences) the actions that the surprise stimulate may intensify the situation to a point where the emotional experiences refer to anger, frustration and sadness. Thus even quite a neutral emotional experience that cannot be explained cognitively can roll the relationship's atmosphere into a negative one with the possible outcome that the business relationship ends.

Events producing fear of losing the customer/supplier can alert the managers to try to look for explanations from their and their company's own actions. Thus, although the emotion seems to be quite serious, the actions that it stimulates may actually help to restore and continue the relationship and therefore produce positive results. However, the second emotion script in Table 4 also indicates that in cases where higher management levels work towards easing the tensions and continuing the relationship, if a hostile environment has spread out at the boundary spanners' level, unless the actors are changed, it may be impossible to erase the negativity and continue the relationship.

Table 4. Examples of emotion episodes and scripts during a troubled business relationship

Events and their attribution	Emotions	Consequences
<p><i>Emotion script starting from Quote 10</i> UK buyer asks for personal benefits. Supplier's KAM regards this to be unacceptable behaviour.</p> <p>In the next meeting, UK buyer says to the supplier's KAM 'If you once again dare to look straight at me, I will wipe the table with you.' Supplier's CEO sees this as an insult.</p> <p>After a while, buyer asks for new negotiations, which turn out to repeat the previous pattern.</p>	<p>Surprise</p> <p>Humiliation, Anger</p> <p>Anger</p>	<p>Supplier's KAM became careful and reported the event to their CEO. No personal benefits were granted to the buyer. Supplier's CEO decides to join the next meeting.</p> <p>The CEO of the supplier leaves the room taking their KAM with him and ends the negotiation. CEO forbids KAM from contacting the buyer.</p> <p>The supplier raises the prices (6 %) and the minimum batch and shortens the period for payment etc. with the intention of terminating the relationship.</p> <p>The relationship ends.</p>
<p><i>Emotion script referring to Quotes 1, 4, 5 and 6 (buyer) and 12 (supplier).²</i></p> <p>After initial excitement, the relationship encountered a series of problems (different expectations, the quality of work, missing schedules etc). Buyer attributed this to Supplier's unprofessional behaviour (and <i>vice versa</i>).</p> <p>Supplier's CEO hears about problems. Suppliers' personnel did not want to meet the Buyer's personnel, they attributed blame to Buyer.</p> <p>Repeated recovery actions took place, but failed. Buyer attributed this to Supplier not taking them seriously. Supplier attributed the failures to Buyer's bureaucratic organisation, high work loads, and hostility towards Supplier.</p>	<p>Buyer felt: annoyance, anger, frustration hostility</p> <p>Supplier felt: fear uncertainty, and dislike, resentment (i.e. anger).</p> <p>Neglect, disappointment (i.e. sadness)</p>	<p>Buyer's personnel withdraw from real co-operation with the supplier.</p> <p>Recovery efforts; Supplier's CEO started discussion with the Buyer's higher management, Supplier's Project Manager was replaced.</p> <p>The problems continue, in spite of the recovery efforts.</p> <p>The buyer terminates the relationship.</p>

² Not all emotional expressions from this script are quoted in this study

Emotion episodes arising from recollection of a business relationship

Table 5 turns our focus on the emotional expressions that the managers felt when looking back and describing a story of a relationship to the interviewer. As already mentioned, these emotions may be quite different from the ones that were felt and expressed at the time. However, these are also interesting, since they still guide the managers' actions in the future, when similar events and relationships are in hand and thus provide a forum for learning.

Table 5. Examples of basic emotions produced when remembering a troubled business relationship

The story of the relationship	Emotions produced by recollection of the story: Basic emotions	Consequences
<i>“Well, I cannot say I’m pleased that our project failed (laughs), but I feel that it is a valuable experience that you get, to know how it can go. Like you learn from the mistakes, so that in next projects you can perhaps try to avoid them³. – Relationship ended because of serious and frequent problems.</i>	Joy (contentment)	Learning, actor aims to behave alike in similar situations
<i>Quote 8: A troubled relationship that was recovered.</i>	Joy (optimism)	The emotion confirms that the actions taken were right. Actor aims to behave alike in similar situations.
<i>Quote 2: Supplier’s narrative: We lost a lot of business from this customer, because I think we simply could not understand their requirements correctly.</i>	Sadness Uncertainty	Actor hopes not to repeat the mistake in similar situations.

It is noteworthy that the positive emotional expressions are to be found, not so much during the troubled relationships, but more when recalling the events. Thus, even stressful situations, when looking back, can be turned into an event that the speaker can be proud of (see Table 6) and would do it again or show optimism, expressing that even the most problematic relationships can be turned into a source of value or a source of learning. However, especially in stories where the events have not been fully explained, the data also provides examples of sadness and uncertainty and therefore the speaker has still doubts about what could have been the lesson to learn from that relationship.

³ This quote has not been presented earlier

Table 6. Examples of socio-moral and social emotions produced when remembering a troubled business relationship

The story of the relationship	Socio-moral / social emotions	Consequences
<i>Quote 16:</i> Buyer’s managers recovered the relationship in spite of their higher management’s decision to end it. Supplier attributed this to Buyer’s satisfaction with the Supplier.	Pride in own work	Confirms Supplier’s strategy. Supplier aims to follow the strategy in every relationship. The interviewer attributed this to Supplier being competent.
<i>Quote 14</i> Buyer ended the relationship, when Supplier could not deliver high quality products.	Empathetic concern	Buyer almost apologizes about the business decision, because of its negative influence on Supplier’s revenue. The interviewer attributed this to Buyer being a ‘a sympathetic character’.
<i>Quote 12:</i> The narrative is a normative story of how a supplier should act, in order to show attachment to dyad	Attachment to dyad	Maintaining the relationship. The interviewer attributed this to Supplier being competent.

When turning our attention to the socio-moral and social emotions that the informants expressed during the interviews, when recalling the relationships, we need to note that the interviewer’s presence influences the recollection. Table 6 shows that emotional expressions also influence how the interviewer views both the informant and his company. For example, when the informant told a story where his company’s customer was so satisfied, that its managers acted against their higher management decision not to continue the relationship, the interviewer was convinced that the speaker is a very competent CEO. When noting that the informants were all males, older or about the same age as the female researcher, who has no work experience in their business, we cannot overlook the idea of the informants also trying to influence the interviewer. Nevertheless, this only confirms the importance of studying emotions, since it gives an example where actor can deliberately try to produce certain emotions in a social situation, to communicate to the counterpart. As Gergen (1997) has put it, emotions are also features of the social relationship where they are produced and expressed.

Conclusions

In studying emotions in business relationships, this study focused on two questions; what kinds of emotions are involved in troubled business relationships and in what ways might they influence the future events in the relationship. A theoretical frame related the study to social psychology, organisational behaviour, and those few studies which touch upon emotions in business relationships.

The contribution of this study is to move our understanding beyond the conceptual company level. The study provides empirical support that individual managers - without being pushed into such responses - do describe the emotions they experience in the B2B relationships.

Analysis of the empirical data confirmed that both positive and negative basic and socio-moral/social emotions are produced in and by the interactions that occur within relationships and that they do have a role in relationship development as a whole. Thus, important business events create emotive reactions by managers and those emotions are remembered and partly also relived while talking about the events. This confirms the relevance of studying emotions in business relationships.

In addition, understanding emotions helps us also to interpret the actions and events that precede and follow the emotions, in other words emotion episodes and scripts. Emotion episodes and scripts offer us a device to elaborate on the influence that emotions have in business life. To do so, the categorisations of emotions into negative and positive and into basic and socio-moral/social are useful. Firstly, this study suggests that negative basic emotions are produced by unexpected or unwanted events, not fulfilling the goals of the manager. Negative basic emotions also seem to lead to events that maintained or increased the troubles in the relationship, instead of resolving them. Thus, negative basic emotions can be connected to reasons to end a business relationship. This result supports the propositions of Andersen & Kumar (2006) that negative affective states decrease trust and increase the likelihood of relationship ending. This study also supports the results of Selnes & Grønhaug (2000) and Wand and Huff (2007) on customer's emotional reactions and intentions to continue the relationship and suggests that suppliers follow the same emotion scripts.

The positive basic emotions took place either during the very early, non-problematic establishment stages of business relationships, or after them, during the interview situation. Thus, their recollections of the relationship sometimes triggered positive emotions even in such cases that had ended badly. We argue that such emotions are as important as the emotions that were felt during the relationships, for they relate to learning from even unsuccessful business relationships. Our study echoes the conceptual discussion of Shepherd & Cardon (2009) which emphasizes individuals' ability to learn from negative emotions and take a positive perspective to a negative event. Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld (2005) also present sensemaking as infused with emotions.

Secondly, the socio-moral/social emotions (e.g. empathic concern) seem to function in the way that the previous studies (e.g. Frijda, 1998; Lawler & Thyne, 2002) have suggested. They guided the subsequent actions towards continuing the relationship, in spite of the trouble it was in. However, it must be noted that to save a relationship from dissolution; both actors need to be involved. Moreover, at the same time, this study shows that there are also situations in business life, where, no matter how much empathic concern you feel towards a person or a company, you will not act on the basis of that emotion, since it would conflict with your own organization's business philosophy.

Limitations and future research directions

The major limitation of this study relates to the appropriateness of the data for revealing the phenomenon being investigated. Retrospective narratives have obvious limitations such as the risk of post hoc rationalisation. Nevertheless, as in this study, narratives which accept expressions of emotions as a natural part of the stories and which were not asked for or even probed for, can be considered as a reliable data.

Moreover, it is difficult to conceive of a more appropriate method of data collection for two reasons. Studies in real time would be ideal, however even the managers involved cannot predict when troubles are likely to arise in their firm's relationships. Therefore, apart from sitting around in a manager's office for extended periods in the hope that an appropriate

emotional event will arise there is a need to rely on some form of managerial recollection of the events. Even if by chance an investigator is present in a manager's office when a B2B relationship difficulty arises, the manager is unlikely to wish to take time at that moment to provide the investigator with information. In addition, especially situations perceived to be negative (and thus triggering negative emotions) are usually considered sensitive and thus seldom allowed to be studied at the time of their occurrence.

Controlled experiments are commonly used in emotions studies, however, their application when studying the role of emotions in B2B relationships is a challenge because it is extremely difficult to create life-like histories and contexts of a business relationship for use in an experiment. Other suggestions on how to collect data on emotions are diaries and interviews applying critical incident technique (see Flanagan, 1954). Fineman (2004) advocates the use of 'memory work', developed by Crawford, et al. (1992) as a suitable method for gathering emotional narratives. Thus, in future work on emotions in business relationships, care needs to be taken when designing the empirical part of the study.

Research into emotions in business relationships is only beginning. Two basic lines of inquiry suggest themselves. Firstly, to study emotions at different phases of a business relationship's life - from their establishment to their ending. Which emotional responses are involved in the stages and are the emotions of major components influencing the transitions from one stage to another? This approach has already been started by Andersen and Kumar (2006) and their results, as well as this study provide a starting point. Secondly, the study of emotions as a process within the processes that a business relationship consists of would offer another view on the phenomenon. Emotional responses are seen and responded to with emotions. The dyadic nature of emotion as a process mirrors the dyadic nature of a business relationship as a process. Thus, such investigations, although challenging both ontologically, theoretically and methodologically, would increase our understanding of the life of business relationships. Theoretical understanding of B2B interactions that would take in the economic, social and emotional drivers and influencing factors would surely be enriching.

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