THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

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Abstract

This qualitative study probes internal marketing between departments posing as buyers and sellers, in a large multinational company with headquarters in Germany. It introduces two new concepts to the discussion, emotions and consciousness and develops the constructs of reactive emotional understanding (REmUn) and emotional understanding (EmUn). These are found to be crucial in explaining relationship developments between suppliers who are sales minded and market oriented, and buyers who are transaction minded and product oriented.

Four differences in the parties' perspectives have been found, 1) the marketers' orientation is towards the relationship; it is dynamic and pointing towards the future, while buyers are rather past oriented and static. 2) Value creation; marketers progress from value in exchange to value in use and see value co-created between customers and suppliers, whereas buyers define value self-reflectively; to them value depends solely on the company's ability to design and innovate. 3) Marketers avoid monetary opportunism, so customers are kept loyal, while buyers' functional focus is on avoiding lengthy discussions with suppliers which, in turn, leads to emotional exhaustion, impeding the exchange process. 4) Marketers strive to build personal relationships with buyers as they are expected to evolve into social bonds that keep the relationship for longer, while buyers are concerned with the separation between their private and working lives as their private life functions as a retreat in which they can rest after exhausting work.

Keywords: Emotions, Consciousness, Business Marketing, Relationship

Introduction

Traditional attitudinal constructs are beginning to fail in the explanation of buyer-seller relationships if we were to consider the actual complexity of their respective networks involved (Gummeson, 2007). Furthermore, if a buyer's techno-centric, rational thinking were to be confronted by a seller's customer-centric holistic approach, as suggested by a service and relationship conscious approach to marketing (Groenroos, 1994), the complexities involved would appear overwhelming. Simply capturing attitudes of buyers and sellers would merely reflect stereotypical concerns, such as a fixation on costs, and hence result in masking the true nature of exchange (Vargo & Lusch 2008). In order to find a practical way of unraveling these complexities and in order to overcome shortcomings of transaction-minded thinking it is here suggested that we turn the focus onto consciousness. Consciousness relates to an actor's filter on perceiving the world (Heidegger 1962) but also his/her capacity of becoming aware of the history as well as the uniqueness of any evolving situation present. Using an example of internal marketing, this research posits that business partners' conscious awareness of their emotions and their emotional reactiveness during interactions has a fundamental effect on business-to-business relationship development.

The importance of relationships in business marketing is largely accepted, particularly within the IMP tradition. Research tends to focus on two aspects of business relationships, structure and processes, processes explain changes in relationships overtime while structure describes the features of relationships. Among the large number of studies focused on structures of relationships, several constructs have been proposed. Among the most significant ones are trust, commitment, and satisfaction, which several studies have named relationship quality. However, a few other constructs such as bonds, information sharing, and distance are frequently mentioned in contemporary research (see Biggemann, 2010 for a recount on constructs typically used to describe structures of relationships). Most constructs denote one party's attitudes towards the other. For instance, a party that believes the other is credible, shows a positive attitude towards the party's honesty and is more willing to trust their promises. Likewise, if one party believes the other has the ability to complete a task, it may be willing to give that party a purchase order as there is trust competence towards this party. In the same vein, if one party wants to demonstrate its commitment to the other party it may allocate scarce resources towards a particular relationship overtly favoring one party over others. Conversely, lack of trust may prevent one party from doing business with the other as it may be considered too risky. Thus, this stream of research explains people's actions as guided by their attitudes towards the other, which are influenced by the features of the relationship between the parties. Yet these relationship qualities are often outcomes of complex interactions; resulting attitudes are often poorly considered in terms of their genesis and effects.

The majority of studies in the field of business relationships take a relational marketing perspective from which the parties are thought to derive a long-term orientation and form relationships with their counterpart if they are convenient for the business. Sales and marketing people on the supplier's side often have to deal with buyers who are likely to be more transaction oriented, and who may tend to see the transaction as money-for-goods as opposed to service-for-service relationships as suggested by emerging marketing thinking. Thus, it could be argued that in order to understand two interacting parties with two different mindsets we may need to extend the theoretical scope of relationship structures and to look into the lesser explored, inner aspects of relationships by using such terms as emotions.

Plutchik's (1970) defines emotions as a conscious feeling that arises from sensations in the viscera and skeletal muscles. Averill (1994) further distinguishes between three forms of emotional expressions. They are, emotional syndromes (feelings such as anger, grief), emotional states (response representative of the corresponding emotional syndrome) and emotional reactions (such as facial expressions or overt behavior). As there are no cognitions without emotions (Gnoth 1997) it is suggested that these kinds of emotional expressions also warrant attention. They too affect the dynamics of interactions between two or more business partners and thus the strength of relationships. While we accept emotions to be part and parcel of human relationships, business relationships may have been missing out on opportunities by rarely employing this construct in its research. This paper therefore aims to extend the scope of research on business relationship to areas that include emotions and consciousness.

Literature review

To build the foundation for the present study, the literature review includes contributions to relationship marketing, internal marketing, aspects of S-D logic, marketing and minds, emotions and consciousness. We begin with relationship marketing as it is in this field that contemporary business marketing research is grounded. From this perspective, transactions involve more than independent exchanges of goods and money between buyers and unknown parties. Instead, interactional processes are viewed as multidimensional and any change in an exchange relationship will involve different dimensions and elements of interactions (Andersson & Tuusjaervi, 2000). The firm-customer relationship is not a bilaterally conceived world (Bolton et al., 2004) of individual and isolated transactions between companies. Particularly in large companies, each business unit is itself connected to others to form the firm (Håkansson & Ford, 2002). Relationships therefore need to be approached from a multilateral holistic and dynamic perspective (Berghaell, 2003; Ramaswamy,2008; Vargo, 2008). Relationship marketing puts the buyer-seller relationship at the centre of a firm's strategic or operational thinking (Sin, Tse, Yau, & Chow, 2002). Thus, it is often not the need for exchange that drives the relationship, but the relationships between buyer and seller that often drive the exchanges (Dibben & Harris, 2001).

Marketers' relational, sales minded, multilateral, interconnected approach may be contrasted with the transactional, linear, fragmented, independent view of exchange that buyers are often likely to have. Vargo and Lusch (2008) argue that receiving money in exchange for a service -or for a 'product', as buyers would tend to see the transaction, disguises the fundamental basis of the actual service-for-service exchange. The view of service for service fosters direct and reciprocal exchange, while money for products could be deemed as an indirect form of interacting putting the other party at a distance and difficult to see, hence discouraging relationship formation (Abela & Murphy, 2008).

To overcome such distancing effects due to beholders' perspectives, scholars in the service marketing area often call those members of the organizations 'internal marketers' who have no direct contact with customers. They thereby highlight that they, too, need to be customer-conscious and sales-minded employees (Gummesson, 1991). Successful marketing strategies are supported by this type of employee at every level (George, 1990; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). The term internal marketer therefore points to a mind-set that implies behavior and attitudes related to a personalised worldview that resembles the firm's marketing with end-customers (Morris, 1988). Such a mindset, or worldview which determines an individual's perspective on the market as a 'lived experience' (Husserl 1912) is influenced by beliefs and assumptions about life and reality that are a combination of existential beliefs, evaluative beliefs and prescriptive/proscriptive beliefs, or values (Koltko-Rivera, 2004).

The mind-set that characterizes an industrial buyer is often static and linear, and reflective of the rational thinking process dominant in Western industrialized cultures (Mintzberg, 1976, 1979). One particular characteristic of rational thinking is its fragmented perception of reality (Bohm, 1980) as it necessarily deals within its bounded rationality. Luhmann (1996) argues that this and any other type of filtering perception is a necessary brain function because

without it the complexity of the world would overwhelm humans and result in madness and chaos. Thus, it is legitimate in Western societies that as a consequence of the Cartesian paradigm, individuals perceive themselves as separate from others (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). The rational mode is accepted as the dominant brain function (Meyers, 2002). In a business context, this phenomenon is called firm-centricity (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), where the customer is seen as exogenous to, instead of, interconnected with, the company (Vargo & Akaka, 2009). In contrast to this firm-centric, linear and rational view on business as a whole, the marketing perspective tends towards the opposite of rational thinking, namely intuitive thinking (Anderson, Thomson, & Wynstra, 2000; Meyers, 2002; Miller & Ireland, 2005). Phenomenologically, one may argue that intuitive thinking is holistic and integrative creating a gestalt in which the sum is greater than its parts, hence contradicting positivistic, Cartesian thinking. However, Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer (1999) believe that the vast majority of research into non-rational behavior has had an individualistic slant instead of focusing on the relationship context.

To caution any individualistic, egocentric or even selfish orientation, Edvardsson, Holmlund and Strandvik (2008) argue that listening to and understanding business partners on an interpersonal level are essential capabilities when starting up new business relationships. Likewise, and building on Heidegger's idea of meditative thinking (Dalle Pezze, 2006) listening is more than merely acknowledging the sounds of words; it is also a more complex process as Rosenberg (2001) details. This phenomenologically derived mode of listening requires all receiving channels to be empty and has been described as empathetic listening (Rosenberg, 2001). Empathic listening and thinking helps us understand customer's cognitions, emotions, and behavior in a broader experiential sense (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008).

Emotions are ubiquitous throughout marketing. They influence information processing, mediate responses to persuasive appeals, measure the effects of marketing stimuli, initiate goal setting, enact goal-directed behaviors, and serve as ends and measures of consumer welfare. Yet, the role of emotions in marketing is only slowly beginning to emerge (Bagozzi et al., 1999). The main component of an emotion is a cluster of mental representations, in the view of the cognitive school of thought (Griffiths, 1997) and has to be controlled so as to be efficient in interpersonal interactions (Kofman, 2003).

This suggests that emotions can be controlled (Averill, 1994) and through changes in motivational and perceptual processes, individuals can learn to choose a starting point or perspective for their emotions to become conscious which then allows them to influence/change/challenge this starting point. Uncontrolled emotions lead to uncontrolled emotional reactiveness (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Aware of this syndrome, Kofman(2006) calls for more emotional activeness in business environments as a way of being aware and controlling emotions in business interactions. However, Ekman and Davidson (1994) argue that an emotion happens rather than being chosen. They maintain that one is not easily capable of initiating any emotion that one wants to feel, neither are people capable of

terminating an emotion completely by simple choice. Controlling emotions requires a degree of consciousness during interaction.

Consciousness is central to critical evaluations of past behaviors with relevance to future behaviors (Zaltman, 2000). Evaluations of past behaviors can be conscious and purposive, or unreflective and unconscious, depending on the person and the conditions for emotional arousal (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Three dimensions of consciousness are said to exist: unconscious emotions, low-level consciousness, and higher consciousness (Mayer & Salovey, 1995). The dimension of consciousness is important because qualitative differences emerge in emotional responses depending on the degree of conscious attention available to such reactions. As Mayer and Salovey (1995) conclude, the higher the level of consciousness the greater the complexity and creativity of responses. The state of consciousness thereby often provides profound motivation, meaning and drives, in both the self and others (Wilber, 1997). Consciousness facilitates individuals to appreciate that they are part of a larger system (Liang, 2007).

Schmidt-Wilk, Alexander, & Swanson (1996, p.431) describe consciousness as "a state of restful alertness, in which the body is at rest but the mind is fully alert, poised for but not yet engaged in activity." Consciousness organizes rational thoughts and makes them more aware (Milson & Wilemon, 2008). Hence, consciousness allows adapting to the environment (Kofman, 2006). Louis and Sutton (1991) have argued that thoughts can be made more aware by switching cognitive gears from an automatic to a more conscious mode. Becoming more conscious is being mindful of what is happening in the here and now. Consciousness is living in the present, aware of oneself, what one thinks, feels, says and does (Liang, 2007). Hence, consciousness supports a network perspective and systems thinking, as, for both, it is essential to understand the integration of a node or system in relation to the network and environment. Being more conscious requires the awareness of feeling, that is, of feeling that feeling (Solomon, 1984). Solomon continues that this feeling occurs only after individuals build the second-order representations necessary for core consciousness.

A conscious person creates an atmosphere of togetherness compared to an unconsciousness person, which might create a power struggle (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005). What is referred to as consciousness needs to be brought into the relation between an organism and its environment (Mead, 1934). Complementing Mayer and Salovey's view (1995), Clore (1994) maintains that emotions that are felt cannot be unconscious by definition, and continues that not only is the conscious experience of emotions important, but also the consciousness of its cause and hence its meaning.

Methodology

This study takes place at two business units of a multinational corporation in Germany. The company is comprised of 41 factories in 13 countries. Both research settings are in Germany and included interviewees from one German factory (main site, approx. 1.000 employees) and from the German head office (on an additional site, approx. 2.000 employees). In 2009, the company had a turnover of 8.4 billion Euros. Including sales and customer service firms,

the company is made up of 60 companies in almost 40 countries (approx. 40.000 employees) worldwide. The environment can be characterized as highly specialized and compartmentalized and is dominated by numerous guidelines that regulate a variety of processes and behavioral patterns for every employee. To conduct the interviews reported on here and to understand their results within the context of the organization, the researchers adopted a constructivist perspective in order to understand the socially constructed reality of the employees and to draw meaningful conclusions throughout this research.

Interviewees were people who had contact with company suppliers. Most suppliers were OEM (original equipment manufacturers) to whom buyers give precise instructions on what needs to be manufactured. In this role the interviewees fit well with Gummesson's (1991) definition of part time marketers because through their actions, they potentially affect the firm's marketing function without being part of it. In order to be able to capture informants' worldviews and assess the extent to which they affect the firm's relational marketing policies within intercompany networks, an ethnographic research approach was deemed the appropriate methodology.

Two waves of interviews were conducted. The initial ones were later followed up by a set that also included some of the initial interviewees. These follow-up sessions had the function of member validation, which occurs when a researcher takes field results back to members to judge their adequacy (Neuman, 2000). The follow-up interviews thus were to re-discuss and clarify emerging themes and to increase the relevance of emerging findings (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Data from the first interview session were analyzed, and emerging themes were arranged. Evolving patterns were then discussed with some of the respondents to reassure validity of the results from the first data collection. Quotes from the first interview sessions had been read out to interviewees to initiate further discussion and gain clarification of patterns and categories. The lengths of the sessions in both rounds of interviews were around one hour each during work.

A total of 17 people were interviewed involving a total of 23 interviews. Twelve interviewees were males and 5 females. Interviewees occupied a wide variety of positions from top to no managerial positions. On average , they were 31 years old and had worked for the company, on average for 6.9 years. All interviewees had relationships with suppliers of the company. Table 1 summarizes interviewees' profiles.

Table 1. Interviewees' Profiles

Interviewee	Gender	Position	Management	Age/year in the company	Second round of interviews
1	Male	Product Manager OEM	No	35/1	Yes
2	Female	Product Manager OEM	No	30/3	No
3	Male	Head of Organization and Processes	Middle	45/20	Yes

4	Male	Head of Quality Management OEM	Middle	28/6	Yes
5	Female	Product Manager	No	34/2	No
6	Male	Quality Manager OEM	No	30/6	Yes
7	Female	Administration for Product Managers	No	27/7	No
8	Male	Head of Research and Development	Top	50/10	Yes
9	Male	Head of Innovation Development	Middle	45/15	No
10	Male	Developer	No	45/15	No
11	Male	Head of Laboratory	Middle	50/30	No
12	Male	Marketing Manager	Middle	30/6	No
13	Male	Marketing Manager	Middle	40/10	No
14	Female	Purchaser	No	35/10	Yes
15	Male	Marketing Manager	Middle	50/20	No
16	Female	Marketing Manager	Middle	33/6	No
17	Male	Product Manager OEM	No	35/8	No

Data collection consisted of three different stages: 1) In-depth semi-structured interviews. 2) Follow-up interview sessions with some staff to increase the relevance of emerging data from the first interview sessions. 3) Autoethnography based on retrospective participant observation aimed at confirming or disconfirming the emerging interview themes in relation to the previous experience of one of the researchers who had been with the company for 9 years before studying for a higher degree, and returning to this company to work on a special project, while gathering the data for this study. Retrospective participant observation based on pre-understanding also helped in drawing meaningful conclusions with relevance to the comments made by interviewees.

Data analysis was supported with insights from three rather similar and complementing doctrines: 1) hermeneutics, going in circles from theory to practice to theory, to identify and understand common themes, 2) symbolic interactionism, understanding meaning in the context construed by informants and 3) a phenomenological attitude, which meant to be prepared for the unexpected. In other words, the data needed to be approached as openly as possible, without more pre-assumptions than necessary, and to be conscious of unexpected but meaningful findings.

Data analysis and findings

Data were transcribed and initially coded with the aid of Atlas ti software (1). The initial codes were derived from theory found in the initial literature. In a following hermeneutical cycle (2), data were recoded relying on autoethnographical retrospective participant observation, followed by another coding wave (3) which was based on follow up interviews. Each coding process was aided by additional literature and continued until the researchers found code stability, that is, no new codes emerged from data, nor that data were able to be

assigned different codes. In reporting this research, quotes accompanying findings are in English, however the original data were gathered in German. Quotes were translated by the principal researcher and afterwards reviewed by an English-German language expert.

Data were analyzed with a focus on emotions, seeking connections with relational marketing concepts such as value co-creation and value-in-use. Because of the constant re-assessment of data, new symbols, with relevance to emotions, have been utilized and blended with marketing symbols to generate meaning relevant to the research question. The analysis process started with 40 marketing symbols/concepts, leading to the 11 emerging themes/constructs abridged in table 2.

Table 2. Theoretical and Data-Grounded Themes

Theory Driven Symbols	Data Grounded Symbols
Symbols based on existing marketing knowledge and emotions literature	Emerging Themes
Empathy (Interconnectedness, Co-Creation, Value-in-Use, Listening) **Static Understanding** (Complexity, Dynamism, Continuity and Change, Service, Passive Emotions) **Separateness** (Interdependence, Money, Firm-Centric, Neoclassical Perspective, Ego-Primacy) **Sustainability** (Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Operant Resources) **Emotional Exhaustion** **Consciousness** (Listening, Holistic Marketing, Network Perspective) **Time Perspective** (Dynamism, Continuity and Change) **Trust** (Communication between, Marketing within) **Work and Private Life** (Network Perspective, Systems Perspective, Integrity) **Hierarchies** (Network Perspective, Systems Perspective, Emotional Reactiveness) **Dominant Logic** (Egocentrism, Customer-Centrism, Worldview) **Mutuality** (Dialogical Interaction, Cooperation and Competition, Relationship, Behaviors and Attitudes) **Relational** (Multilateral, Multidimensional) **Emotions** (Value-in-Experience, Reactivity) **Ontological Humility** (Emotional Perception, Sender/Receiver Model)	1. Static Reactive Behavior and Expectations 2. Egocentricity 3. Personal Emotional Background 4. Emotional Exhaustion 5. Emotional Superiority 6. Pseudo Empathy 7. Static Time Perception 8. Sustainable Interactions 9. Unconsciousness 10. Emotional Separation of Social Structures 11. Emotions and Hierarchy

An explanation and illustration of these 11 themes follows.

Static reactive behavior and expectations

Emotional reactiveness has been observed in organizations and described as a chain reaction that goes from one person to another (Giuffra, 1980). It can be characterized as the event of getting unconsciously and automatically emotionally aroused in response to an external event, such as an important upcoming management presentation, a salary negotiation with the superior, or even an unpleasant verbal comment made by a colleague.

Interviewees express a viewpoint or perspective towards their own emotions (reactive emotional understanding), which reveals how the participants of this study understand their emotions in relation to interpersonal interactions. This emotional lens can be related to the theoretical framework provided by the concepts of relational marketing. To illustrate interviewees' reactive emotional understanding, a few sample quotes found in the data follow here. The number at the end of the quote represents the number assigned to each interviewee.

"It gets unpleasant when we are in Italy, for example, and we are talking about quality issues and our quality manager in Strasbourg (company site in France) has different expectations then an Italian (supplier) … Accordingly the feelings run high."[2]

The above situation described by this interviewee might be considered natural and legitimate. At the end of her narrative, the interviewee uses the expression "accordingly" to underline the irrevocable relationship between the described situation and the emotional reaction in form of an unpleasant arousal. Later on, she adds:

"There are very different issues during a project that come up again and again, which postpone deadlines and quality matters, and accordingly the mood is tense. And this is an uncomfortable situation, because the discussion gets louder and at some point, because some kind of limit is reached, you better stop, because it almost comes to a fight, because people verbally attack each other. This is the worst case of uncomfortable interaction."[2]

From the first quote of interviewee 2, it is assumed that she uses the term "accordingly" with relevance to her past experiences. Based on her past experiences, she describes an upcoming business meeting and extrapolates her experiences to "forecast" emotional conditions, and subsequent "re-actions." She further states:

"In the moment when somebody attacks you [verbally], you are not going to say: 'Well, ok, let's stay calm and talk about it,' but you automatically yell back."[2]

From a relational marketing perspective, companies mutually co-create value, which is realized in-use. Likewise, part time marketers are supposed to mutually co-create intellectual property based on the input (i.e. information exchange) from both parties in the interaction. From a relational perspective, value is determined by the beneficiary (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). From an internal perspective, however, interviewee 2 shows a reactive understanding in relation to the beneficiary. Yelling back, from an external perspective, appears to be irrational based on the assumption that value is determined by the beneficiary.

From the perspective of the researcher, the findings presented in theme 1 describe the existing reality in large industries. It has been observed by the researcher that the high specialization and hierarchical structures found in most multinational corporations lead to some sort of blame towards the environment and a feeling of separateness, which is strongly related to individual expectations. Retrospectively, a number of situations can be described based on such expectations.

The initial theoretical framework suggests a common core of relational marketing, comprising, among other characteristics, a dynamic and complex specification of the market place. Terms such as holistic and dynamic are frequently used to characterize the marketing environment from a relational perspective. In relation to emotions, and on an internal level, the first theme reveals that participants show a rather static emotional understanding of interpersonal interactions based on a general reactive emotional understanding. While marketing scholars have supported a dynamic understanding of the external market place, the internal market place can be characterized as rather static as it is based on a reactive emotional understanding that determines respondents' thinking and lived experience.

Egocentricity

The term egocentricity expresses a certain perspective on the world, which refers to the belief that the highest state of consciousness is within the context of ego cognition (Koltko-Rivera, 2004). In other words, an egocentric thought is self-reflective and used to maintain or balance the psychic system (Luhmann, 1995). This second theme outlines the general nature of mental models among participants, which have their root in a rational understanding of the world in a Cartesian sense of the word, that is, the knower (subject) observes and critiques the known (object). Rather than recognizing interdependence as suggested by complexity theory, egocentric self-reflectivity is blind to its own bounded rationality. The same interviewee was asked about the importance of her objectives.

"It plays a very important role (the individual expectation). The expectation, my objective, which I want to reach today, plays a significant role. First of all, I want to achieve my own target… and if this is not possible, then we have to see if we can reach a common denominator."[2]

The company often induces personal targets, for instance, through incentive systems and company goals. On an individual level, these targets become personalized and are related to specific emotional reactions in the case of interviewee 2, which implies that the value of information is assessed one-sidedly, or egocentrically. Another interviewee states:

"I need to earn money. I need to support my family."[14]

Ego-transcendence has been described as stepping out of one's self and joining something, in this case the network, beyond or outside the normal ego boundaries (Kasparow & Scotton, 1999). It has been noted that consciousness does not only enhance self-awareness, but can also enhance other-awareness. Consciousness does not just apply to the individual, but can be developed in an organization (Schmidt-Wilk, et al., 1996) and, as such, it supports ego-transcendence. To be more specific, being conscious of 'the other' can prevent individuals getting caught up in emotional reactions and enhances existential self-reflection, which goes beyond ego boundaries and is necessary for staying interconnected with the environment (Korthagen, 2005). The egocentric paradigm seems ingrained in the participant 2's mind. It is here assumed that this builds the foundation of her emotional understanding, which is passive and reactive and based on personal, or egocentric, expectations.

From a relational marketing perspective, scholars discuss co-creation (Ramaswamy, 2008) and value-in-use (Ballantyne & Varey, 2008), and refer to customer-centricity (Brodie, Glynn, & Little, 2006) and balanced-centricity (Gummesson, 2008). An egocentric behavior impedes the co-creation of ideas and information critical to new product development and services.

Personal Emotional Background

How a recipient of information determines the value of that information should not be related to emotional reactions shown by the supplier of that information and, in particular, should not be acknowledged as directed towards the beneficiary. It has been noted earlier that emotional reactions can interrupt the self-reflection cycle and prevent holistic, or ego-transcendent, decision-making. Hence, it is necessary to understand the nature of emotional reactions in order to transcend an egocentric perspective and perceive value from the perspective of the beneficiary. Interviewee 10, for example, is convinced that:

"We are all the product of our experiences. That means that you have made specific experiences and that your reactions to these experiences are in a certain way."[10]

The above comment also relates to the preceding sections on expectations, reactions and egocentricity. Interviewee 10 characterizes himself and his emotional reactions as a product of his interpersonal environment. It leads him to the assumption that emotional reactiveness is unavoidable. Moreover, his understanding can be described as passive, as he "surrenders" himself to his emotions.

The narratives indicate that the interviewees do not only have a paradigmatic, or passive, emotional understanding such as outlined in theme 1, but they also appear to lack the necessary background of emotional knowledge to engage emotional passiveness (e.g., where do emotions come from? How can I engage them?).

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is a foreseeable consequence to emotional reactiveness. This theme outlines that the participants of this study report a "waste of energy" or "loss of energy" in relation to unpleasant emotions. One participant was asked to describe an unpleasant interaction. He narrates:

"That I have an unpleasant feeling in my stomach; it seems that I am burning a lot of energy. That means once I come out of such a negotiation I am really tired. Even if I have reached my target it takes me a while to be happy, simply because I am exhausted. Hence, you are using a lot of energy and this is exactly what makes it unpleasant."[4]

Another participant states:

"There is a certain point where I am simply tired. After a 2 hour phone call with this supplier I want nothing but a cup of coffee and a dark room to relax. There is a point where all the energy is simply gone."

Emotional exhaustion is not directly related to the initial theoretical framework populated by concepts from relationship marketing. It only became apparent as a meaningful contribution to this study during the data analysis process. In relation to the preceding topics it has an overarching relevance for this study, as it emphasizes some consequences of a reactive

emotional understanding. Retrospectively, and based on the principal researcher's experience, participants describe a rather common situation in business where different targets and expectations can lead to emotionally unpleasant interactions, which are characterized as tiring for the participant. While themes 1 and 2 (see Table 2) highlighted how one reaches this point, theme 3 outlined that the participants of this study do not seem to possess the necessary knowledge of emotions to avoid emotional exhaustion.

Interviewees appear to subconsciously accept emotional exhaustion, by intuitively assuming a reactive emotional understanding, which has also been characterized as a paradigmatic understanding of emotions (see theme 1). The process of expectations leading into emotional reactions, which then results in emotional exhaustion, appears to be supported by a passive, emotional understanding. This appears to be related to the belief that individuals are independent and detached from each other (see theme 2 Egocentricity).

Emotional Superiority

This theme outlines that interviewees intuitively characterize good feelings as the foundation of good and benevolent interpersonal interactions. The success of business however, is still largely assessed with measurable variables such as turnover, profit or contribution margin. A participant was asked about the ingredients of a good interaction. Her answer is:

"The prevailing mood should be relaxed. It also depends on the topic. But yeah, a positive basic attitude on both sides."[2]

The first aspect mentioned by this participant is a pleasant atmosphere. What she refers to is a friendly and comfortable emotional environment. She narrates about a certain feeling that resides within her when being in an interactive situation. From her comment, it can be assumed that she perceives this feeling as predominantly triggered by external circumstances (pleasant partners, pleasant facilities, etc.), even though the feeling originates inside her.

Addressing the same question another interviewee says:

"Social relationships, relationship networking, especially for me this is important. A relationship-type of person lives off relationships. I feel more fulfilled. In a positive relationship environment, I am able to deliver a good performance."[3]

The first two interviewees claim that emotions build the foundation of successful interpersonal interaction and, as such, emotions might also be described as a higher order concept compared to the rational aspect of an interaction, at least from the perspective of these participants. The following participant also refers to the importance of a solid social basis in interpersonal interactions, which he describes in the form of a harmonic network of relationships in the workplace.

"Interaction is obviously vital for our job. Without interaction we couldn't make it. That is why it is really important. And, of course, there are a lot of things that can go wrong. And that is why it is important to treat each other well…Emotions play an important role for me –

unfortunately. I am a very emotional person. My boss is not an emotional person, he can be very factual."[5]

Interviewee 5 notes that emotions are passively created and dependent on the (re-) action of other part-time marketers. She feels unwell in this situation and uses the term "unfortunately" in relation to her emotional reaction, which implies that she would influence her reactions, if she could.

"That I like my [business] partner as a person. The first thing is always whether he understands his business, what he can offer. But then the understanding on an emotional (human) level is important [too]. It is going to be more and more difficult when the emotional (human) side is not working."[8]

The emotional foundation of an interpersonal interaction, similar to the service-oriented network perspective, could be characterized as a higher order concept. Interactions with conflict potential are usually emotionally tense and are often avoided. It is an unwritten rule in multinational corporations that interpersonal interaction should preferably be face-to-face. If that is not possible, the telephone is the next option and only then, emails should be used. This rule addresses specifically difficult or important topics. It has been observed that part-time marketers avoid personal contact (face-to-face, phone), especially in cases where bad emotional experiences have been made and are then projected into the next meeting or even a specific person. This sort of behavior is an indicator of the influence of emotions on internal interactions. Based on retrospective observations, this implies that emotions have a significant influence on the internal efficiency of information flow.

'Pseudo' Empathy

Interviewees relate to empathy as a precondition for good interaction. They refer to empathy as a passive construct, which is more or less apparent, but cannot be actively manipulated. Participants do not know enough about their own emotions to actively influence and influence empathetic behavior. Therefore, this theme is called 'Pseudo' Empathy. Examples of participants' utterances about this topic are:

"I try to communicate certain things to him in a different way than I would do with other colleagues; to evaluate his reaction on certain things in advance."[1]

 "For me it is important to be tolerant towards the one who thinks differently. This is one of the fundamental arguments for me. To accept the other one, the way he reacts."[10]

 "It would be nice if one had empathy; that one realized whether it [the words spoken] got through to the other person or not and that one shows interest. I think showing interest is really important for the other person."[14]

Empathy is essential for relational marketing, as it involves the ability to view the situation from the other's perspective (Sin et al., 2002). Empathy is considered to be one of four behavioral components in a relationship marketing orientation, besides bonding, reciprocity

and trust (Yau et al., 2000). Empathy has been characterized as an active behavior and the ability to understand the current feeling of an individual, and not the feelings of yesterday and before (Kalisch, 1973).

Static Time Perception

Medlin (2004) noted that time cannot be perceived as being static but is a dynamic construct. There is only a continually moving present, and future and past have only meaning in the present. While the space-time relationship is eternally dynamic people like to hold fast onto what are perceived fixed truths or conditions. Interviewees' comments about their perception of time include:

"I cannot make a plan for 10 years, at least not here [this company, this environment]. But I have to be able to offer the employees some security for about 1 to 2 years."[8]

"Once I know that this is my target for the next 5 years then I will plan that way, because I cannot continue to put too much energy into it. I need to find a way to do things once and then just keep going until the end. If you always need to invest additional energy, that is not good."[10]

Although the business environment is characterized by ongoing change and dynamism, the current perspective of the internal market place is related to a static understanding of time. More importantly, this time perspective is related to inherent and predetermined emotional reactions in a dynamic environment whereby present and future situations are understood by using feelings that have been learned in the past. This Wittgensteinian tautology prevents people from appreciating the present or future situations on their own merits.

Sustainable Interactions

Before the participants were asked to discuss sustainable interactions they were invited to describe what comes to their mind when they hear the term sustainability.

"I am not sure this is [sustainability] is a different topic after all [we have been discussing before and different to interaction]. But sustainability has its source in good interaction."[1]

"The same as I said in relation to communication and interaction, that I pay attention not to leave others behind [with what I am doing], and to show that I care about them. It is important to involve the others and to be considerate towards others. Because I want to work together with them in the long run."[2]

While the general interview situation framed respondents' minds, 'sustainability' tended to be immediately related to an emotionally pleasant atmosphere in the context of interpersonal interaction. Also, clear and open ways of communication were highlighted, which relate to integrity in interactions. Emotions and feelings, as such, could therefore offer a starting point for future research to define a sustainable interpersonal interaction concept within a dynamic interpersonal environment.

Unconsciousness

Interviews also revealed that the participants perceive consciousness as a passive state of being. That is, consciousness, similar to empathy, is sometimes understood as somehow static and context-dependent. While consciousness has no memory (Luhmann, 1995) it requires an active state of mind (Korthagen, 2005; Louis & Sutton, 1991) in order to be emotionally aware, and the belief that emotions can be controlled. The interviews revealed that some of the respondents (4 and 6) are aware of this, while respondent 9 exemplifies those who are struggling with this need and ability.

"I have to pay attention to what happens around me, and I have to integrate these thoughts into my daily life. Then I make my decisions accordingly. I think some do not even have these thoughts. Some have them, but they leave them at the main gate and pick them up again in the evening…"[4]

"You have to be more or less free, also in your mind. If nothing distracts me, then I can focus on what I am doing."[6]

In the following example, thoughts appear unconsciously (Rinpoche, 2002), and so do emotional reactions related to those thoughts. Participants of this study often perceive themselves as being helplessly exposed to these emotional reactions as they become aware, for example, of mistakes being made due to a lack of presence of mind in communications.

"Energy gets lost in communication when the mode of communication is inaccurate. For example, when you change tooling, you can still have a nice product at the end. Could be that one needs 10 changes because he forgot something or because he was working under time pressure, I don't know, and then again, it could need another 20 or 30 changes, this is where the energy gets lost. This is where money gets lost."[9]

A state of conscious awareness has been described as dynamic and necessary in order to adjust to constantly changing circumstances (Korthagen, 2005). It can be assumed that more conscious part-time marketers are less emotionally surprised by changing circumstances. Active consciousness, i.e., being aware of one's awareness, is necessary in order to relate an individual to his or her environment (Mead, 1934), just as a node needs to be perceived in relation to the network. Such a state of consciousness also implies that one can become aware of unity (Natsoulas, 2000).

Emotional Separation of Social Structures

The emotional separation of work and private life is another theme, which emerged during the analysis of interviews. During this process it became clear that the separation of work and private life includes an emotional aspect, which is of relevance to this study as it impinges on a holistic understanding of marketing.

"And many do not have a problem with that [separation], because they see it as two worlds; the work world and the private world. And these people, who can make a clear cut between them are those who can be nice in their private life and at work they are a real jerk."[4]

While interviewees describe an emotional harmony in their private life, work life appears to be emotionally more difficult. Moreover, participant 4 refers to varying behaviours and attitudes ("… and at work they are a real jerk") of the same person depending on work and private life, which exemplifies that this perception is related to integrity.

"I also have to be awake and fresh in my mind as well, and that is something that I can only reach through a balanced private life. And those are the two pillars [work and private life] that are necessary to sustain the situation better."[5]

Gummesson (2007) refers to competition and cooperation from a yin and yang perspective. In another work, Gummesson (2000) also outlines that yin and yang are not opposites that belong to different categories, but are extreme poles of a single whole. What is good is not yin or yang but the dynamic balance between the two of them. From an emotional perspective, the previous examples suggest that even though private life and work life are perceived as separate, this does not necessarily imply an emotional tension between both. Rather, it is argued that they are part of a single reality. Nevertheless, data suggest that work and private life, instead of being considered as part of a single pleasant reality are emotionally loaded and thus, participants like to keep them separated.

"You always need two worlds, you need a balance. Once you have your dream job, then you are going to make it so miserable for yourself and you don't have a place to retreat to anymore. You need a job that you enjoy, no question, but it should not be your dream job. You always need an opposite pole. The individual always needs the possibility to break free from what she likes."[9]

Rational boundaries are necessary to surviving in an otherwise meaningless chaos (Luhmann, 1995). Emotional boundaries appear to be a consequence of the positivist or Cartesian understanding of the world. The interviewees of this study describe work life more as a must and private life more as a pleasure. Emotionally, they do not appear to belong to one, single, balanced reality. One interviewee raised the issue that contact with other staff or suppliers in private life could influence one's work life in such a way that business decisions are influenced by emotional conflicts.

Emotions and Hierarchies

This theme outlines that participants not only express an emotional tension between work and private life, but also in interactions between different hierarchical positions inside the company.

"With superiors, it is a little bit different. With Thomas, [first name of] my direct superior, it is not like that, because we know each other. But when I talk to X [surname of superior of

another department] or Y [surname of superior of the interviewee's immediate superior], if I look at that relationship, it is maybe a bit more distant."[1]

The term distant characterizes the relationship as emotionally less pleasant compared to other interactions with colleagues on the same hierarchical level.

"And just because he is one step up in the hierarchy, he thinks he needs to say something extra. I think this is an area where much can be done to have a more sustainable interaction, this hierarchy thinking and job [career] thinking."[5]

In this case, this interviewee demonstrates an extremely reactive attitude towards her supervisor, apparently because her expectations about her supervisor's behavior were different.

Other participants refer to hierarchies as a barrier to interaction. The consequence of this emotional understanding of hierarchies is an emotional reaction, in which participants feel hampered, patronized and less liberated. The status of superiors in respondents' mind is often inherently related to certain feelings that are demonstrated to be passive and reactive.

Discussion

Throughout the interview analysis it became apparent that emotions in interpersonal interactions play an important role in this study. More interesting than the actual emotional situations described by part-time marketers, is how the participants address and understand their own emotions in relation to their environment and with relevance to an external marketing perspective. This phenomenon has been called emotional understanding and will be abbreviated as 'EmUn' here. Independently of how participants actually (re-) act emotionally in interpersonal interactions (revealing their arousal), they all share a similar or common understanding of how emotions work. This understanding has been identified and characterized as a passive, or paradigmatic, and reactive emotional understanding henceforth abbreviated as 'REmUn', in relation to the theoretical framework based on relational approaches to marketing.

The concepts of co-creation and value-in-use have been applied to ideas and information, which are seen as products and services, and are exchanged between part-time marketers. It has been assumed that an idea is only a value proposition, or service to other part time marketers, while the beneficiary or receiver of this idea determines its value. Ideas and information reside *between* part time marketers, who jointly co-create an idea to become a product or service. The emotional understanding of the participants often indicate that part time marketers claim the value of an idea based on an egocentric emotional understanding, which can be compared to a firm-centric (transactional) perspective on an external marketing level. A reactive emotional understanding does not appear to support the idea of co-creation, as this requires a multi-perspectival assessment of value.

An outstanding characteristic of a dynamic environment is the unpredictability of future events, which makes any rational planning process rather difficult. In fact, studies reveal that

rational decision-making strategies struggle to reach the 50% success mark (Sinclair & Ashkanasy, 2005). The future therefore becomes unpredictable not only as a consequence to the fast changing environment but also because there may be emotional interdependencies co-determining commitments that are not being managed

On an interpersonal level, emotions are perceived as static and reactive. It could be observed in the interviews that emotions are related to rational assumptions about the world. For instance, if a meeting was perceived to be unpleasant in the past, it is predicted that the next will be unpleasant again. This understanding appears to be naïve, considering the complexity and dynamics of networks which permit degrees of determinacy to the extent that its communications can be managed (Luhmann, 1995). Rationality is necessary in order to navigate a complex environment. However, it is argued that a reactive emotional understanding does not necessarily have to follow a rational, egocentric logic.

The main insight of this study is the overarching impact of a reactive emotional understanding among the participants, which can be approached from a relational marketing network and systems perspective. Analyzing the narrations of the interviewees from a network perspective, it is assumed that part-time marketers understand emotions from a certain angle or through a certain lens. This lens has been characterized as passive and reactive.

From a neoclassical view of business, the firm's competitive advantage is created in isolation and behind closed doors. Conversely, relational marketing scholars claim: Collaborate with your competitors – and Win (Hamel, Doz, & Prahalad, 1989). Industries appreciate the idea of permeable boundaries and of bundling resources with competitors (Chesbrough, 2003). On an external marketing and business level, there is an active understanding of interdependencies and fuzzy boundaries between business actors. Relational approaches to marketing are paradigmatic (Grönroos, 1994) and have been characterized as lenses (Vargo, 2007). Similarly, it has been argued that emotions can be approached from a certain perspective and with a certain paradigmatic understanding. The current understanding expressed by the participants of this study emphasizes the emotional boundaries between part-time marketers. It remains unclear as to whether or not there is a different perspective on emotions available, that supports the idea of relational approaches to marketing, and how it might affect behaviors and attitudes of part time marketers.

Marketing scholars claim it is time for a new marketing worldview (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Worldview dimensions are based on opposing poles, similar to emotions. To illustrate a possible conceptualization of a relational marketing worldview based on the findings, an excerpt of worldview dimensions is outlined hereafter. This sample of worldview dimensions stems from Koltko-Rivera's (2004) big tent approach to worldviews. The worldview dimensions are highlighted in the brackets, which follow the worldview options: 1) Ego-primacy vs. ego transcendence (Consciousness); 2) Tolerable vs. intolerable (Otherness); 3) Individualism vs. collectivism (Relation to group); 4) Dependent vs. independent vs. interdependent (Connection); 5) Competition vs. cooperation vs. disengagement (Interaction); 6) Many vs. one (Unity).

Based on this excerpt of worldview dimensions, it is assumed that some of the dimensions coincide with a relational marketing perspective. Relational marketing has been described as interdependent and super-ordinate to exchange. Interdependence requires tolerance towards the different-minded in, and an ego-transcendent understanding of, networks. The tendency that cooperation outpaces competition (Chesbrough, 2003; Hamel, et al., 1989) indicates that marketing takes a collectivist slant. However, a reactive emotional understanding supports an independent environment (e.g. emotional separation of social structures), which is based on ego-primacy, or egocentricity. One-sided value assessment based on emotional reactions expresses an intolerant attitude based on individualistic behavior. The passive emotional understanding demonstrates that participants perceive the interpersonal environment as emotionally fragmented, which Koltko-Rivera characterizes as many. The excerpt of worldview dimensions further highlights the discrepancy between the relational market environment and a REmUn.

Summarizing Reactive Emotional Understanding

Table 3 summarizes the findings based on the idea of a reactive emotional understanding and contrasts it with beliefs and assumptions that stem from relational marketing (initial theoretical framework).

Table 3. Differences in Relational Perspectives between Buyers and Sellers

Relational Marketing Perspective (Seller)	Internal Marketing Perspective (Buyer)
Relationships are dynamic and future oriented	Interpersonal interaction is static and past oriented
The customer is the centre of the value creation process	The value creation process is centred within the company
Value in use is dynamic and interconnected	Value assessment (egocentric) is one sided and fragmented
Value is reciprocally assessed to avoid misdirected investments (monetary exhaustion)	Egocentric assessment of value leads to emotional exhaustion
Service is fundamental basis of exchange	Emotions are the fundamental basis of interpersonal information exchange
Empathy is crucial to understanding a situation for a relational perspective (the other part's perspective); it is an active perspective	Empathy is perceived essential to interpersonal interaction, however it is a passive perspective (degree of empathy cannot be influenced)
Exchange is characterized by a dynamic and open ended time perspective	Exchange is characterized by a static understanding of emotions
Relational marketing is holistic, characterized by the network analogy, and a systems understanding of the market place	Consciousness is a holistic approach of interpersonal interaction, characterized by a dynamic understanding of the internal market place, however, its understanding remains passive
Cooperation and competition are part of a single reality	A reactive emotional understanding leads to a fragmented perception of social structures

Information flows throughout the company and between the firms and customers should be unrestricted	The internal information flow is restricted by a reactive emotional understanding

Conclusion

Table 3 shows the discrepancies between traditional views of relationship from the marketing side and a reality emerging from studying interaction from the perspective of the internal marketer in which other constructs were allowed in addition to the traditional attitudinal constructs commonly studied in business relationships. Most aspects of relationship generally accepted from a marketing perspective appear to be different, sometimes completely different from the perspective of the other in the dyad, the buyer. The difference between the parties' orientation is significantly affecting the relationship, as marketers have a dynamic perspective pointing towards the future while buyers are rather past oriented and static. Equally important is the difference towards value creation. Marketing's view of value progressed from value in exchange to value in use and sees value co-created between customers and suppliers, whereas from a buyer's perspective, value is defined internally, thus its creation depends only on the company's ability to innovate, and suppliers to exchange their abilities for a monetary payment. Hence, the marketer's focus – which is on avoiding monetary exploitation so as to keep customers, is contracted by the buyer's focus on avoiding lengthy discussions with suppliers, all of which leads to emotional exhaustion and making the whole exchange more difficult.

Implications

Various scholars have claimed that it is time for a new mindset in marketing (Bolton, et al., 2004). However, its conceptualization has been neglected. A reactive emotional understanding, despite appearing disadvantageous not only for grasping a relational marketing perspective, but also from an individual perspective (emotional exhaustion, burn out, frustration, etc.), offers the opportunity to conceptualize a worldview, or understanding, among part-time marketers with relevance to marketing.

This paper proposes a conceptualized structure of emotional understanding that has clear paradigmatic implications and relevance to worldviews and mindsets in marketing. These conceptualizations offer starting points for defining a more relational mindset not only among practitioners, but also among academics who are still in search for a more service-oriented definition of a marketing mindset. The concept of a reactive emotional understanding opens a perspective that allows the analysis of external and internal marketing relationship with the same lens. Gummesson (2008) argues that networks are on all levels. A reactive emotional understanding (REmUn) reveals a perspective that is equally valid on an internal and external level; and it comes with clear implications for every part-time marketer. A REmUn is based on a worldview or an understanding of business relationships that does not differentiate between internal and external business actors. Hence, an emotional perspective contributes to a holistic understanding of marketing. It offers further research grounds to close the gap

between a relational marketing exchange perspective and an interpersonal exchange perspective.

This study suggests that emotions and their understanding in relation to marketing relationships and interactions play an essential role in developing more service-oriented behaviors and attitudes in internal and external marketing. The research also suggests that the current understanding of emotions is related to a worldview that does not favor customer-consciousness and sales-mindedness.

Even though emotional satisfaction is not directly related to a firm's balance sheet, there is agreement that positive emotions contribute to the success of a company, which starts inside the firm with satisfied employees. The interviews of this study also outline that participants perceive emotions as the basis for a good interpersonal interaction. Based on these assumptions, managers are advised to communicate a more active emotional understanding to their teams. Emotional active teams, or departments, are likely to perceive and communicate crises situations as challenges, instead of problems.

Satisfied customers are more important than profit itself in the long run and satisfied employees result in satisfied customers (Abela & Murphy, 2008). From an internal marketing perspective, every employee is a supplier and a customer of information, in relation to other part-time marketers. Gummesson (1987) notes that it is the satisfied customer that counts, irrespective of whether he is external or internal. Part time marketers have contact with customers, or potential customers, for instance, a sales representative, or product manager, who attend a trade fair. Therefore, a satisfied part time marketer influences not only internal customers but, also, external customers.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The overall outcome of this research appears to leave a negative notion on a reactive emotional understanding as it has been influenced by a rational understanding of marketing relationships. This is both a limitation of the study and an opportunity to extend this research orientated towards a conceptualization of active emotional understanding.

More research is necessary to further integrate the findings of this study by way of studying conscious behaviors and attitudes in existing knowledge. It has been suggested that an active emotional understanding could serve as an underlying philosophy of internal marketing. However, this needs more research to integrate existing internal marketing knowledge and the findings of this study. Also, more research is needed to relate marketing and human resources. Conscious behavior and attitudes appear to further blur the boundary between business actors, marketing, and human resources in particular. This research focused on the interface between internal and external marketing. More research, with relevance to behaviors and attitudes is suggested, with relevance to the interface between marketing and human resources.

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