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Show it with feeling: performed emotions in critical sensemaking

Aromaa, Eeva

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SHOW IT WITH FEELING:

PERFORMED EMOTIONS IN CRITICAL SENSEMAKING

Eeva Aromaa, Päivi Eriksson and Tero Montonen

Business School, University of Eastern Finland, P.O. Box 1627, FI-70211 Kuopio, Finland

Abstract

This article draws attention to emotion in sensemaking within small entrepreneurial organisations. More specifically, it illustrates how performed emotion is related to enactment of a formative context, sensemaking and agency. The article also enriches the critical sensemaking heuristic by exploring a conversation between a leader and employees concerning adoption of a new online service. The analysis is based on videotaped data gathered from a two-year study of a franchise-based rental and real estate company. The contributions of the article are twofold: (1) it argues that performed emotions are important because they may have an influence on the sensemaking of others and the possibility of exercising agency and (2) it demonstrates that videotaped material is a fertile source of data for studies on critical sensemaking in small entrepreneurial organisations.

Keywords: emotion, critical sensemaking, formative context, agency, franchising, video

1. Introduction

Organisations can be defined as meaning systems (Daft and Weick, 1984) in which sensemaking is central (Weick, 1995). Several recent reviews suggest that many studies consider sensemaking to be a more or less emotionless process (Holt and Cornelissen, 2014; Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). It has also been argued that the lack of understanding of emotion is due to the cognitivist tradition in sensemaking research, which has led researchers to tend to focus on individual cognition at the expense of the broader social and institutional contexts of sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

Critical sensemaking (CSM) is an alternative to Weickian sensemaking (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) that focuses on the macro-social dimensions of sensemaking, such as formative context, discourse, power and organisational rules, in addition to the social-psychological micro-social dimensions (Helms Mills, 2003; Helms Mills et al., 2010). Despite CSM's broader understanding of sensemaking, little attention has been paid to emotion in CSM studies (Aromaa et al., 2019a; 2019b). CSM scholars have explored language in sensemaking, particularly the role of discourse and narratives (Hilde, 2013; 2017; Hilde and Mills, 2015; Palo-oja, 2018; Ruel, 2018; Thurlow, 2007), but while language is an important aspect of emotion, it is not the whole picture (Liu and Maitlis, 2014). Besides verbal expressions and vocabulary, emotion is associated with a range of bodily performances, including tone of voice, gesture and body language (Stivers and Sidnell, 2005).

In this article, emotions are not approached from a cognitive-psychological perspective or defined as inner conditions to which others have no easy access. Rather, emotions are defined from a sociological constructionist perspective, and thus attention is paid to the way emotions are performed to others in interactions and social life (Goffman, 1959). It is suggested that organisational actors are capable of evoking, shaping and suppressing feelings in themselves based on their interactions with others (Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983).

The performative aspect of emotion is important because it relates to people's ability to employ a range of emotions as social practices, express feelings for a specific purpose (Aromaa and Palo-oja, 2017; Harding and Pribram, 2009) and influence the sensemaking of others. From this perspective, emotion is something that has to be enacted, portrayed, and realized in performance (Goffman, 1959). Performed emotions are directly linked to CSM as they are shaped by the formative context, which in turn shapes the cultural conventions and rules concerning which emotions are appropriate to perform and which vocabularies can be used (Goffman, 1959).

This article begins by theoretically framing CSM, and then it discusses emotional performance and its function in social life, interaction and sensemaking. Next, the franchising context and company context are presented. Afterwards, the research methodology is explained. Then, the empirical case, data, process of analysis and findings are presented. The article concludes by suggesting that this study offers organisation researchers one method of exploring emotions through the lens of CSM.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Critical Sensemaking

The CSM heuristic was developed for studying agency in the context of the relationships between the micro-elements of actors' sensemaking and the macro-elements of formative context, rules and power (Helms Mills, 2003; Helms Mills et al., 2010). In the context of CSM, agency refers to a person's ability to act, choose and take action (Hilde, 2017). The majority of empirical CSM studies focus on agency in various organisational contexts (Aromaa et al., 2019b).

CSM provides a way to analyse power in organisations and the effects of this power on individuals' agency. Rather than understanding power directly, CSM draws upon the definition proposed by Foucault (1982), who studied resistance and struggle for power and suggested examining circumstances in which a power relationship is evident, such as between leaders and employees in business firms. Concerning power and agency, CSM scholars have been especially interested in how sensemakers' formative context shapes and is shaped by agency (Helms Mills et al., 2010). According to Mills and Helms Mills (2004/2017), Unger (1987) defines the formative context as the broader social framework that gives order and structure to social life and interactions. It links activity at the local level with dominant social assumptions about the character of social life, explaining how people come to reproduce existing practices. Formative contexts are important because they are deep-seated and pragmatic in their effects on everyday life (Blackler, 1992), limiting what can be imagined and done.

Some formative contexts are prioritised above others and restrict individuals' enactment of meaning and agency (Mills and Helms Mills, 2004/2017). Previous CSM studies (see, e.g., Thurlow, 2010) emphasised that discourse produces and is produced through formative contexts, which shape ordinary deals, arguments and conflicts. However, the way emotion shapes and is shaped by formative contexts has not been empirically studied in the context of CSM.

2.2. Performed Emotion

According to sociological and social constructionist approaches, emotion is guided by cultural conventions and performed by individuals. Social constructionists refute cognitive definitions in which emotions exist primarily within people and therefore are not easily accessible. Instead, social constructionists are concerned with how our sensations, thoughts and feelings are expressed and displayed to others (Sturdy, 2003) and how these processes are guided by social and cultural conventions (Fineman, 1993). Emotions are viewed as intersubjective products of the way systems of meaning are created and negotiated between people (Parrot and Harré, 1996). According to the sociological approach to emotions, both the content of beliefs, values and norms (i.e. culture) and the organisation of relationships (i.e. structure) influence the emotions that individuals display in social situations (Smith-Lovin and Thoits, 2014).

To explain this phenomenon, Gordon (1990) uses the concept of emotion cultures, which are complexes of expectations, standards and ideals surrounding emotion. For Goffman (1967), cultural scripts guide actors' strategies and techniques for performing according to the appropriate 'lines'. These lines define the patterns with which one presents oneself, one's emotions and one's sense of a situation via verbal and non-verbal acts (Goffman, 1967).

Turner and Stets (2005) suggest that Goffman (1959) views people as strategists whose 'given' expressions consist of consciously produced signs and who can modify their emotional expressions by adjusting their performance and affect others' impressions in order to achieve a preferred reality. In a similar way, organisational actors can reflexively deploy emotion through the use of narrative and expressive devices, such as a well-turned phrase, tone of voice, look or posture, to advance their situational agenda. Similar to actors in a theatre, who must put on convincing performances, organisational actors must make their social performances credible and persuasive if they are to be effective. An effective persuasive performance is one in which the audience is sincerely engrossed in the performance and considers it to be real (Goffman, 1959).

According to Goffman (1959), people are aware of their circumstances and have the relevant cultural background knowledge to act in each situation. Moreover, people do not habitually engage in deliberate calculation or manipulation of their emotional expressions. They understand the meaning and content of others' emotional expressions based on the guidelines for socially acceptable emotions within a given culture. Although Ng and Kidder (2010) emphasised that the meaning-making aspect of emotional expressions is a promising topic of sociological inquiry, it remains understudied.

In this article, we understand emotions as intersubjective and reflexive micro-level performances guided by social (i.e. relations between organisational actors) and cultural (i.e. the emotional culture of an organisation) elements of the formative context. Emotions are conceptualised as an integral part of the formative context, which is deep-seated and pragmatic in its effects on everyday life as well as the meaning-making and agency of organisational actors.

3. Methodology

The data for this study were collected from 2012–2013 as part of a wider action research study. The company studied in this article (hereafter referred to as the Firm) was one of the organisations studied in a two-year project on managing and measuring innovation in Finnish small and medium-sized enterprises. The research methodology of this article involves videography and interpretive analysis of video-recorded interactions that links focused ethnography and video analysis (Knoblauch, 2006). According to Knoblauch and Tuma (2011), videography is different from standard video analysis. The objective of videography is to reconstruct the methods used by actors in everyday life to make sense of their world (vom Lehn 2014) because, based on the assumption of any interpretive social science, actions are guided by meanings and cannot be merely observed.

Importantly, videography involves sequential analysis of video recordings of naturally occurring interactions (Knoblauch et al., 2015) based on the researcher's understanding of the wider social context. This understanding is derived from ethnographic data collection (Knoblauch and Tuma, 2011), which allows the researcher to gain subjective knowledge of the field. The first author of this paper conducted ethnography with conventional fieldwork (Heath and Hindmarsh, 2002) prior to video analysis in order to better understand actors in the field.

During the study, the first author performed participant observation in the Firm for one week and conducted four interviews with the entrepreneur-CEO (hereafter referred to as the Leader) and one interview with all of the employees (hereafter referred to as the Employees). She also conducted

two business development workshops (both lasting two days for four hours per day) intended to enrich the research data and allow the participants to reflect on the innovation practices of the company. The first author participated in 11 office meetings (each lasting two hours), 7 of which were videotaped and transcribed verbatim. The large amount of collected research data was analysed for the purposes of this research and discussed with the Leader of the company. The prolonged fieldwork and close relationships between the first author and Leader of the company enhanced the researchers' understanding of the field and enabled them to use videography as a research methodology.

In the first phase of the analytical process, the three authors agreed to perform more detailed analysis of a 20-minute conversation during an office meeting regarding the adoption of a new online customer service platform, LiveChat (LC). This conversation was chosen because of the differences in sensemaking between the Leader and Employees. In 2012–2013, when the data was collected, LC was a new platform that was sold as a software package. In a franchising chain meeting held in February 2013, the CEO of the franchising chain suggested that every company in the chain should take turns providing real-time support through LC for the entire chain's clients. In the following office meeting, the Leader of the Firm suggested that they should offer LC as a new service for their customers. In the conversation that follows, which is analysed in this article, the Leader makes repeated efforts to sell her idea to the four Employees who participated in the office meeting. However, the Employees resist adoption of LC.

In the second phase of the analysis, after watching the video and reading the transcripts, seven short episodes from the conversation were chosen for detailed analysis to illustrate emotion in sensemaking. Detailed interpretive analysis of the dynamics between expressed emotions, sensemaking and formative context was based on videography (Knoblauch, 2006). Based on the contextual and cultural understandings of emotional expressions in the Finnish context, the emotions performed as sayings and doings, including postures, gazes, gestures and tone of voice (Stivers and Sidnell, 2005), as well as the meanings attached to emotions in the seven episodes (four of which involved the Leader and three of which involved the Employees) were analysed in detail through the lens of CSM. Using the extensive set of ethnographic data and their familiarity with the research participants, the authors could understand and analyse the interactions and situationally constructed meanings of participants' sayings at the micro level. To gain a triangulated understanding of the findings, the authors engaged in reflexive dialogue and wrote analytical memos (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016) on the dynamics of emotional performances, meaning-making, formative context and agency enacted in reciprocal face-to-face interactions between the Leader and Employees.

4. Findings

4.1. Organisational Formative Context

The Firm is a franchise of a micro-sized rental and real estate company that has been led by the same owner-CEO since 1999. During our 2012–2013 research project, the Firm was a typical Finnish franchising company with four full-time Employees and the Leader, who participated in the daily operations of the Firm. Then—and today—the Firm was the largest and most profitable

unit in the franchising chain, which consisted of eight micro-sized companies located in different parts of Finland. The Leader was well aware of her Firm's role in the chain.

During our study, the Leader introduced several new service products that were adopted by the other franchises. She was also keen to adopt new services introduced by the franchising chain, such as the online service examined in this study. In the interviews, the Leader considered herself to be a creative and innovative person, and she stated that she engaged in on-going production of new ideas with business development potential as well as continuous development of the service procedures as a matter of pride.

The Employees were also keen to develop ideas with the Leader. However, they openly stated that there were too many ideas to be implemented, and there was some tension in the office meetings between the Leader and Employees regarding how the ideas should be dealt with. The Leader preferred to share preliminary ideas quickly and refine them in joint discussions with Employees, while the Employees preferred ideas to be justified with facts and relevant background information before they were shared. Further, the Leader believed that others' ideas should be welcomed, encouraged and quickly implemented through testing (e.g. with one client), but the Employees believed that all ideas, including their components, risks and consequences, should be carefully and deeply considered before trying them out with clients. Additionally, the Leader assumed that the adoption of new service products would be handled by Employees during their work. The Employees, however, preferred new tasks to be pre-planned and well-organised.

During the research project, the researchers noted that emotionality was a key issue in the Firm. Especially when dealing with the Employees regarding new ideas about services, marketing and work procedures, the Leader preferred it when all emotions were expressed in face-to-face discussions. She pointed out that it was honest to show one's real emotions and believed that nobody should mask negative emotions; in her mind, all issues should be raised and discussed. This mindset supports the work of Lindell and Sigfrids (2013) and Myers et al. (1995), who found that, in business settings, Finns tend to be outspoken and expect that others will be as well.

4.2. Selling and Contesting LiveChat

The conversation at the office meeting regarding the adoption of LC illustrates the tension and emotionality of sensemaking between the Leader and Employees. As mentioned above, in the franchising chain meeting in February 2013, the CEO of the franchising chain suggested that every company in the chain should take turns providing real-time support through LC for the entire chain's clients. In the following office meeting at the Firm, the Leader suggested that they should offer LC as a new service to their customers. The Leader made repeated efforts to sell her idea to the four employees, but the Employees challenged the Leader's plan.

In the following sections, we illustrate how both the Leader and the Employees tried to influence the sensemaking of others through performed emotion.

4.2.1. Autonomy and Unfairness

> The Leader slightly straightens her posture and addresses the Employees with a calm and decisive tone of voice: 'The chain manager suggested that we would take turns so that each company takes care of the chat for one week at a time. To me, it sounded like an incredibly bad idea. I never want [other companies] or someone else to start advising our clients how to do things with us. That idea was dead before it was born'.

At the beginning of the conversation, the Leader assigns meaning to LC: it is a symbol of the autonomy of the Firm within the franchising chain. In her emotional performance, she appeals to the Employees, arguing that they should take implementation of the new online service into their own hands. Speaking with a calm and decisive tone of voice but using strong emotional expressions, she says, 'To me, it sounded like an incredibly bad idea' and 'I never want', expressing the drastic difference between her plan and the chain CEO's plan. Engaging in prospective sensemaking, she outlines a threatening vision of the near future in which other companies in the chain would start advising their clients on how to make rental commissions with the company. 'The idea was dead before it was born' dramatises the Leader's sense of the situation and emphasises the criticality of proactiveness in making the new service the Firm's own.

> Looking at the Leader, one of the Employees poses her questions quickly, one after another, with a doubtful tone in her voice: 'Well what do you think, how much time would we be able to invest in it? How does this service... how much does it cost and how much time do you think we can invest in it, so it is actually beneficial for us, so do we really have time for it?'

Retrospectively, the Employee constructs LC as one of the Leader's ideas that requires the Employees' attention, implying that the Leader has a habit of introducing new ideas. The Employee believes that the Leader does not always think about or explain the function, value and feasibility of her ideas to the Employees but expects them to embrace and implement the ideas. By asking the Leader, 'Well what do you think', the Employee indicates the unfairness of this recurring situation for the Employees. She performs worry about the practicality of adopting the new service in daily work, questioning the plausibility of the Leader's sensemaking story: 'so do we really have time for it?'

4.2.2. Image and Accountability

> Opening her hands towards the Employees, the Leader persuades them with a gentle tone of voice: 'I see this as, this being online as really a question of image. We're trying something new. We pride ourselves on being progressive…'.

The Leader refers to LC as something that affects the image of the Firm in the franchising chain. The Employees talk about the relevance of the new service from the customer's point of view, but the Leader looks at it from a different perspective: 'I see this as, this being online as really a question of image'. Using this selling argument, the Leader connects the adoption of LC to the Firm's organisational identity as a pioneer in the franchising chain in terms of innovation and

renewal. At the same time, she wants to adopt LC due to her identity as Leader; 'being online' indicates the innovative spirit of both her company and herself.

> One of the Employees protests loudly, with an irritated tone of voice: 'But I definitely think that before we take it [LC] on, we need to see when people actually use it [rental e-commission]. If it's in the evening, then it's useless for us to be available all day on the chat'.

In her contesting argument, one of the Employees constructs LC as an add-on service and claims that its usefulness should be evaluated before deciding whether adopt it. Frustrated by the Leader's earlier comments about the non-relevance of the lack of statistical information about customer visits on their e-commission (not shown in the previous episodes), the Employee insists, 'But I definitely think that before we take it on, we need to see...'. Arguing that they need more facts about customer behaviour—'when people actually use it'—the Employee indicates that the Leader is accountable in this situation. The Employee finishes with a dramatic black-and-white statement that dramatises the Leader's non-rational behaviour of not understanding customer behaviour: 'If it's in the evening, then it's useless for us to be available all day on the chat'.

4.2.3. Problem-solving and Anticipation

> The Leader explains: 'This whole idea that I have… that's why I am so excited about this….' She then points her finger towards the computer screen and her voice turns desperate: 'Open the rental e-commission… This form of ours is so outrageous and dreadful. I know we'll lose numerous clients because of this awful form. Of course, what I would do if it was possible, is just weed out several things in it… I think if customers fill this out on their computers at home, they might easily ask some questions about it [using LC]…'

The Leader re-constructs LC as a problem-solving tool for customer service. She appeals to the Employees by voicing her enthusiasm for implementing LC within the Firm for its own clients. Illustrating the problem-solving capacity of LC, the Leader dramatises a long-term problem with the Firm's customer service: 'This form of ours is so outrageous and dreadful'. In this way, she re-builds the plausibility of her sensemaking without any direct reference to the franchising chain context. Emphasising the difficulty of redesigning the rental e-commission form—'what I would do if it was possible'—the Leader asks the Employees to consider LC a win-win compromise that will solve this persistent problem.

> Looking at the Leader, one of the Employees expresses her worry about their conversation with a serious face: 'I feel like, if no one is given the responsibility for taking care of it now, then it won't, as we've seen with many other things, get done by anyone, if we don't give it to someone for real'.

One of the Employees constructs LC as extra work that needs to be managed and organised. Earlier in the conversation, the Employees asked how the Leader planned to organise the extra work that the new service requires. The Leader gave some suggestions that the Employees deemed non-functional. Retrospectively, one of the Employees anticipates what might happen with LC: 'I feel

like, if no one is given the responsibility for taking care of it now…'. Performing worry as a cue for sensemaking, the Employee argues that, 'as we've seen with many other things', nobody will take care of disorganised ideas such as LC.

> Giving a small laugh, the Leader says with a light tone of voice, 'I'm thinking, my wish would be that we would make the decision to try. Let's try it for a while and if it doesn't work, so what, we will bury it. It didn't work, but we tried…'.

Towards the end of the conversation, the Leader re-constructs LC as an experiment that the Firm can stop at any time. Still doubtful of the plausibility of the Leader's sensemaking, the Employees express their worry about the work arrangements needed to accommodate this new service. Trying to re-build the plausibility of her story concerning LC, the Leader appeals once more with a light tone of voice: '…my wish would be that we would make the decision to try'. This suggestion implies that there is no risk of trying to implement LC as a service for clients of the Firm. According to the Leader's sensemaking, experimenting with LC as soon as possible would help maintain the Firm's autonomy and identity as the most innovative company in the franchising chain.

A number of issues were raised in the conversation between the Leader and Employees concerning LC, including the role of LC in customer service and the work arrangements required to accommodate it. Both the Leader and Employees made sense of LC in many, often different ways. The main difference was that the Leader made sense of LC within the formative context and social practices of the franchising chain, but the employees believed that the Firm's formative context and social practices were more important.

5. Discussion

During the conversation about adoption of LC, the Leader tried to sell her sensemaking to the employees, but the Employees contested this. Both made efforts to influence the other party through emotional performances involving both verbal and non-verbal elements. The conversation concerning LC highlights not only differences in sensemaking but also the power dynamics that exist within and around the organisation. This is common in situations of change in which one sensemaking story may dominate over others (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Helms Mills, 2003; Thurlow, 2007) and in which key artefacts, such as LC, may become vehicles for power. In particular, this study revealed the uses of emotional performance in relation to sensemaking and agency within the organisational power dynamic.

Table 1 illustrates how the changing emotional performances of the Leader were involved in the construction of different meanings for LC and how the Leader exercised her agency to maintain strategic control of the Firm in the franchising chain and operative control of the organisation in relation to adoption of LC.

Table 1. Formative context, Emotion, Sensemaking and the Leader's Agency

Formative Contexts	Emotional Performances	Meanings of LC	Agency
Franchising chain	Calm and decisive tone of voice and strong verbal expressions to highlight the drastic difference between her plan and the chain CEO's plan	Symbol of the Firm's autonomy	Maintaining the Leader's strategic and operative control of the Firm
	Gentle tone of voice and persuasive gesturing to convince the Employees to think about the Firm's image	Symbol of organisational and personal identity	
Operative environment of the Firm	Verbal enthusiasm for adoption of LC, a desperate tone of voice and dramatisation of the current problem regarding the Firm's customer service	Problem-solving tool	
	Light tone of voice and light laughter to appeal to Employees and cause them to decide to try LC	No-risk trial	

In the Leader's first two performances, her preference for adopting LC as a service provided by the Firm for its own clients became connected to the autonomy and identity of the Firm within the formative context of the franchising chain. For the Leader, adopting LC was a strategic action through which she could exercise her agency regarding the social practices of the franchising business. The Leader performed emotions to emphasise that LC was a strategic issue for the Firm in two different ways, in line with Rouleau (2005), who found that there are several ways of performing emotions in the context of strategic communication. The Leader initiated the conversation about LC with contrasting emotions, expressing strong negative opinions with a calm voice. Rafaeli and Sutton (1991) found similar contrasts in their study of bill collectors. Later in the conversation, the Leader used a gentle tone of voice and persuasive gestures. However, the Employees were not convinced of her sensemaking of LC as a strategic issue because they did not enact the same formative context as the Leader.

In the last two performances, the Leader enacted the operative environment of the organisation and connected her preferred way of adopting LC to the Employees' understanding of the social practices that were relevant to them. In her third emotional performance, similar to the participants in Patriotta's (2003) study, the Leader dramatised the problems concerning the Firm's customer service and suggested that LC could solve them. In her fourth emotional performance, the Leader tried to improve the plausibility of her sensemaking by re-constructing adoption of LC as a no-risk trial through a worry-free emotional performance.

Research shows that the relationship between franchisors and franchisees can be paradoxical as both may experience dependence and autonomy in relation to the franchising chain (Dant et al., 1992; Dant and Gundlach, 1999). For instance, the role of the franchisee may vary between an

initiator or a follower in relation to the franchising chain. Dealing with the competing forces between dependence and autonomy seemed to be a key management challenge for the Leader, who had a strong entrepreneurial orientation (Dada et al., 2015). When discussing the CEO's suggestion to become an implementor or re-duplicator, the Leader preferred to become an actor or initiator.

Table 2 illustrates how the changing patterns of emotional performances by the Employees were involved in the construction of different meanings for LC. It also shows how the Employees exercised their agency to maintain control over how LC could fit into their daily work.

Table 2. Formative context, Emotion, Sensemaking and Employees' Agency

Formative Context	Emotional Performances	Meanings of LC	Agency
Social practices of the Firm	Doubtful tone of voice and expressions of unfairness and worry about implementation of LC	Another of the Leader's ideas	Maintaining Employees' control of their daily work for the Firm
	Strong and anxious tone of voice and questioning of the Leader's arguments regarding the usefulness of LC	Add-on service for clients	
	Serious face and tone of voice and expression of worry about organising the extra work required by LC	Extra work for the Employees	

The Employees performed their emotions in various ways, enacting the social practices of the Firm rather than the franchising chain. First, they expressed doubt, worry and a sense of unfairness regarding the Leader's introduction of LC as a strategic issue without considering it an investment that requires Employees' time. Second, the employees performed anxiousness, questioning the usefulness of LC as an add-on service with benefits that were unknown to both the Leader and the Employees. Third, the Employees expressed worry about the habitually disorganised way in which new ideas were implemented in the Firm. Through their repeated emotional performances, the employees directed the Leader's attention to LC as not only a strategic but also an operative issue for the Firm in an effort to influence the Leader's sensemaking. In other words, the Employees exercised their agency to try to control how they performed their daily work for the Firm.

Previous studies on sensegiving analysed the emotions managers express when they give sense to strategic change (Rouleau, 2005) and the emotions employees express as a response to those managerial efforts (Mantere et al., 2012; see also Huy, 2002). However, these studies ignored the interactional perspective and did not view Employees as active meaning-makers and actors who aim to influence their Leaders' sensemaking.

This article illustrates how performed emotions shape and are shaped by sensemaking, formative context and agency. The detailed analysis showed how emotional performances frame the senses of organisational actors and their attempts to act in accordance with a formative context and exercise their agency. According to Cornelissen and Werner (2014), issue framing helps one understand how and why issues become constructed in particular ways. In the conversation under study, a negative modality, such as an irritated tone of voice, framed the constructed meanings as resistance, whereas a positive modality, such as a soft voice or light tone of voice, framed the constructed meanings as appealing.

From the Leader's perspective, the findings of our study highlight the complex relations between emotional performances and sensemaking. Through emotional performances, the Leader was able to construct deliberately equivocal meanings in a relatively short-term attempt at selling. During this attempt, the Leader exercised her strategic agency by enacting the formative context in both a restrictive (strong verbal expressions) and enabling (soft voice) manner. The findings also illustrate how the Employees used various emotional performances to influence the Leader's sensemaking. In their performances of negative emotions, the Employees did not enact the formative context of the franchising chain, but that of the Firm. Overall, the study illustrates how performed emotions are used to influence sensemaking in a way that privileges one formative context over another.

The findings suggest that multimodality may be relevant in all sensemaking research. For example, the purpose and meaning of one Employee's emotional performance to express the unfairness of the new service would not be evident if her doubtful tone of the voice was left out of the analysis. In fact, if one read only the transcription and did not watch the video, her performance could be considered enthusiastic for the new service. Thus, all future sensemaking research should employ multimodal strategies to avoid misinterpretation of the data.

6. Conclusions

This article illustrated how performed emotions are connected to the enacted meanings, formative context and agency of organisational actors. The findings show that these emotions are guided by the social and cultural context (Goffman, 1959) and that this context is enacted by sensemakers. Emotions are performed from moment-to-moment in CSM in order to reach a consensus rather than manipulate others (Goffman, 1959). The findings raise questions about the role and function of performed emotions in CSM. For instance, how do societal and organisational emotional rules (Hochschild, 1983) influence sensemaking in different contexts and situations? How are dominance and marginalisation in CSM (Hilde, 2017) affected by the way in which emotional rules are followed or contested by actors? These questions should be addressed by future studies.

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About the authors

Eeva Aromaa is a PhD student of innovation management, who is interested in research areas such as emotions, innovation, circular economy, co-creation, sensemaking and qualitative research methods. She has published her research in international peer-reviewed journals.

Päivi Eriksson is a Professor of Management at the University of Eastern Finland, Finland. Her research focuses on human processes of innovation, university-industry relationships, commercialisation of knowledge and qualitative research methods. She has published her research in international peer-reviewed journals and serves as an associate editor for Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management. Her book on Qualitative Methods in Business Research with Sage (2nd ed., 2016) covers the major qualitative methods used in management research.

Tero Montonen is a university researcher in the Business School at the University of Eastern Finland. His background is in social psychology, which he applies to management and innovation research. His research interests include research-based spin-out companies and the identities of managers with a background in academic research.