

Which behaviours do shipbrokers use to create interpersonal trust and relationships with clients?

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to observe which behaviours shipbrokers possess and use to create an adequate level of trust and appropriate relationships with their clients. This study attempts to answer the following questions;

Which behaviours do shipbrokers use to create and maintain interpersonal trust and relationships with clients? Shipbrokers possess five trustworthy behaviours including: acting with discretion, ensuring frequent and rich communication, engaging in collaborative communication, sharing personal information with clients, giving away something of value (giving trust and good faith). Shipbrokers possess behaviours such as proactive service performance, customer orientation and market orientation.

In what way may this behaviour build trust and relationships? Shipbrokers acquire these behaviours to serve their clients' needs. Shipbrokers are professionals and constantly updating themselves on new information which may suit their customers' needs, which promotes competence-based trust. To develop trust, having a business-related relationship is not enough. Therefore, shipbrokers attend recreational activities with clients to bond on a personal level. They make contact with the client frequently - nearly every day - to create relationships, which can be characterised as creating a strong tie with the client. Shipbrokers also show that they are willing to be vulnerable, providing benevolence trust.

Within communication behaviour, which communication channels are utilized and why? To be able to create trust and relationships, shipbrokers need to choose between different communication channels such as telephone, E-mail and face-to-face, but also between digital communication platforms such as Skype and WhatsApp - among others - to facilitate the flow of information.

Keywords: shipbroker, interpersonal trust, behaviour, relationships, communication, social science

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The shipping industry can be divided into four sectors; the freight market, the sale and purchase market, the newbuilding market and the demolition/scrap market (Stopford, 2009). This study explores the shipbroking function in the transportation segment of the freight market. Operating in a global industry with a strong heritage, shipbroking is an essential function of the maritime service industry (Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, n.d.), where it became a recognized service back in the early twentieth century (Panayides, 2014). It is a known fact that vessels need cargo and cargo needs vessels. Meeting these demands requires the services of a shipbroker. Shipbrokers are committed to securing the optimal solution for their clients (Gorton, Hillenius, Ihre, & Sandevärn, 2009) and to operate efficiently between the vessel party and the cargo party, brokers require good client liaison. Shipbrokers usually operate in a stressful environment where work revolves around people, something which undermines the amount of time spent per day communicating with clients. Shipbrokers will try to get the highest rate possible for the vessel, and after successful negotiations a contract (known as a charter party) is signed, also known as a “fixture”. The shipbroker is then rewarded with a commission, known as “brokerage”, which is usually a percentage of the gross freight or charter hire when the shipbroker is able to fix a vessel (Gorton et al., 2009). Brokers are usually highly specialized in their own fields, focusing on a specific market or segments of that market (Gorton et al., 2009)

Mutual trust is crucial for creating business relationships. The higher the level of trust established between shipbrokers and clients, the more efficient service they can provide (Gorton et al., 2009). Achieving interpersonal trust and relationships requires a certain type of behaviour. Abrams, Cross, Lesser and Levin (2003) present a framework consisting of two types of interpersonal trust, namely competence and benevolence, seen at work with ten types of trust builders divided into four different categories; trustworthy behaviour, organizational factors, relational- and individual factors. Shipbrokers work towards an optimal level of trust.

Relationships between shipbrokers and clients can be measured by its ties, i.e. weak or strong ties, which prompts us to see whether strong or weak ties create the best relationship. Relationships between brokers and clients take time to develop (Panayides, 2014). Hinner (2012) argues that “good business relationships actually have a positive impact on team work,

leadership, goal setting, and overall performance” (p.18). Concepts such as proactive service performance, customer- and market-oriented behaviour are likely components of shipbrokers’ behaviour, and hence they will be scrutinized in this study.

In the maritime service industry, communication is a crucially important tool to create trust and relationships, especially between shipbroker and client (Gorton et al., 2009). New market information emerges every day, and shipbrokers need to inform their clients. They retrieve this information from multiple sources, either written or verbal. With the introduction of new communication channels, shipbrokers rely more on digital communication platforms, which has notably changed the way they operate. How we communicate is part of our behaviour. To communicate with clients and colleagues, shipbrokers may use many different methods such as face-to-face, or impersonal such as e-mail and telephone (Buelens, 2011). Communication in Norway is often performed not in the speaker’s native language but in English, which “may act as a barrier to effective communication” (Buelens, 2011). This study investigates shipbrokers’ behaviour when creating an adequate level of interpersonal trust and appropriate relationships with their clients.

Stranden (2000) argue that there is a lack of research about shipbrokers in general. Some research exist on relationship building within the banking industry - focusing on b2b relationships, i.e. Hamzah, Othman, & Hassan (2016), but very little concerns the maritime industry. Working alongside shipping finance professionals, shipbrokers could be compared with employees working on a business-to-business level within a financial institution: Both parties are concerned with fulfilling their clients’ requests. Studies on how shipbrokers create trust and relationships with their clients is however not a topic explored in-depth in today’s academic literature.

Most of the literature available on behaviour in general focus on the motivation that activates the behaviour or its outcome, rather than on the actual behaviour itself. Behaviour studies are therefore needed.

1.2.Problem statement and research purpose

This study aims to elaborate on the way shipbrokers work to create interpersonal trust and relationships with their clients. Key behaviours will be identified that may foster trusting relationships between the shipbroker and the client. It is also interesting to observe whether the common ways of communicating are chosen (spoken or written communication), and which type is the most efficient (Buelens, 2011). Efficiency is defined as “realising a certain

output with a minimum amount of input” (Buelens, 2011, p. 725). This study addresses the following research questions;

1. *Which behaviours do shipbrokers use to create and maintain interpersonal trust and relationships with clients?*
2. *In what way may this behaviour build trust and relationships?*
3. *Within communication behaviour, which communication channels are utilized and why?*

To answer these questions a qualitative case study is performed. The selected case is a shipbroking organization in Norway and the data are collected from interviews and observation, mostly shadowing.

1.3. Outline of the thesis

First, an introduction to the role of a shipbroker will be presented to explain the concept of shipbroking and common behaviours. Then, a literature review of the three main topics will follow: trust, relationships, and behaviour. A section on methodology and findings will follow. The final chapters contain a discussion of the findings and a response to the research questions.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1. The role of a shipbroker

The multiple roles of a shipbroker can be classified as an owner's broker, a charterer's broker and an intermediate broker (Gorton et al., 2009; Panayides, 2014). An *Owner's broker* is appointed by an owner to secure charters (vessel or cargo) for their tonnage (Panayides, 2014). A *charterer's broker* is under instruction of the charterer: The broker circulates the order for tonnage to secure a fixture for the cargo interests (Panayides, 2014). *Intermediate brokers* are known as brokers who have neither owner's tonnage nor orders from a charterer, but attempt to insert themselves as intermediaries in a transaction (Panayides, 2014).

The market as a whole is normally divided into two main areas, the liner-bound market and the open freight market (Gorton et al., 2009). "It has been calculated that about 50 per cent of the world volume of goods transported by sea is fixed in the open market" (Gorton et al., 2009, p. 17) The open freight market is also known as the *spot* market, where many shipbrokers work. Other shipbrokers may work with projects or long-term contracts.

Shipbrokers spend their working day receiving, retrieving, and forwarding information provided by different sources. These sources may be direct - i.e. from clients, but they may also be e-mails, market reports, trade journals, personal information from colleagues, etc. Information is normally transmitted either electronically, by telephone or face-to-face. Brokerage houses, or firms, are often placed in one or more of the world's shipping finance capitals, e.g. London, Oslo, New York, Singapore or Shanghai (Jakobsen, Mellbye, Osman, & Dyrstad, 2017). The reason for having multiple offices is to cover a larger share of the global trade.

It is the job of the shipbrokers to analyse the market and advise clients. Shipbrokers need to amass a network of clients and constantly analyse the market for changes. Shipbrokers spend most of their working day on the computer and on the telephone, updating themselves regarding vessel positions and future needs of their clients. It is also important to rely on reliable connections and colleagues, as one broker cannot cover the whole sector with his or her network alone (Gorton et al., 2009).

Brokers should have their principal's interest in mind when negotiating. A broker should act trustfully in the following way; (1) keep owner and charterer informed about the market situation, (2) act strictly within given authorities, (3) work loyally for his principal and (4) not withhold any information from his principal nor give wrong information, i.e. reveal the principal's "secrets" (Gorton et al., 2009). In addition, brokers should safeguard the

principal's reputation. Since personal relations and networks are becoming increasingly important, "A broker's function to create personal relations is today a matter of basic relevance" (Gorton et al., 2009, p. 50). Shipbrokers work in the service sector of the maritime industry, where human capital and knowledge is considered key strategic assets. Human capital can be defined as the knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals (Becker, 2002).

There are different behaviours brokers should take on or be aware of. Behaviours such as proactive service performance, customer- and market orientation will be explained in the following section.

2.2. Interpersonal trust

In shipping, interpersonal trust between the parties is considered vital (Gorton et al., 2009). Research suggests that within individuals there is some baseline of trust that they are willing to extend to others whom they interact with, as well as a tendency to make positive attributions about others' intentions (Rotter, 1954, 1967). Gamble and Gamble (2005) define trust as "a reflection of how secure we are that a person will act in a predicted and desirable way" (p.250). Interpersonal trust can also be defined as "the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, words, actions, and decisions of another" (McAllister, 1995, p. 25). Burke et al. (2007) argue that to decide to trust, individuals must compare the trust target (in this case the client must trust the shipbroker) against some referent (i.e. their trustworthiness or willingness to share information).

Developing and maintaining trusting relationships in organizations for managers and professionals is considered highly important (McAllister, 1995). In addition, trust is a moral good and people should try to cultivate trusting relations and seek to be considered trustworthy (Wicks, Berman, & Jones, 1999). In addition to representing a desirable moral quality, trust should also be sought after by individuals and organizations because it may create economic benefits for oneself and others (Baier, 1994). "The trust literature provides considerable evidence that trusting relationships lead to greater knowledge exchange: When trust exists, people are more willing to give useful knowledge and are also willing to listen and absorb others' knowledge" (Levin & Cross, 2004, p. 1478). This principle has been proven to hold true both on an individual and an organizational level of analysis (Levin & Cross, 2004).

Trust is either strengthened or weakened depending on the experiences, interactions and context within the relationship, while it may also develop differently between the different levels (Burke et al., 2007). Trust may vary in form - such as state, trait, or process where important behaviours, attitudes, and relationships are either bolstered or weakened (Burke et al., 2007). According to Burke et al. (2007), a process-like perspective (as opposed to trait and state) describes a more dynamic view of trust.

Trust could be considered multidimensional, consisting of multiple forms of trust (Costigan, Ilter, & Berman, 1998), including cognition-based and affection-based trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; M. R. Williams & Attaway, 1996; Zand, 1972). This study will focus on two important dimensions of trust that promote knowledge creation and sharing (Abrams et al., 2003); these are (1) benevolence (large affective component) and (2) competence (large cognitive component). Both are key trust dimensions in a knowledge-seeking context, and act as mediators between establishing strong ties and receiving useful knowledge : “Benevolence-based trust consistently matters in knowledge exchange and (...) competence-based trust matters most when the exchange involves tacit knowledge” (Levin & Cross, 2004, p. 1487). “Benevolence-based trust improves the usefulness of both tacit and explicit knowledge exchange”(Levin & Cross, 2004, p. 1486).

Hinner (2012) argues that “information is shared in trustful relationships, which helps reduce behavioural uncertainty” (p.20). Good relationships are vital for human survival (Erlich, 2000). Hinner (2012) argues that this also applies to business relationships since humans are the core of businesses. Therefore, managers may miss opportunities to create trust and other benefits if they are not biased toward trust (Wicks et al., 1999).

2.2.1. Optimal level of trust

Trust improves a firm’s ability to adapt to complexity and change, which plays an important role in economic life. Due to recent interest in trust, managers are willing to create mutually trusting relationships as part of their strategy (Wicks et al., 1999). Through their behaviour, they can determine the level of trust between the organization and stakeholders, including the employees (Wicks et al., 1999). Wicks et al. (1999) argue that it is possible to over- and underinvest in trust, both predicaments being unwanted from a moral and strategic point of view. Instead, the concept of *optimal trust* should be emphasized. It builds on Aristotle’s (1986) ethics about finding the “golden mean” between over- and underinvesting in trust. Even though the article by Wicks et al. (1999) focuses primarily on managers’

decision making regarding the firm's relationship with stakeholders, this concept could be meaningfully applied to the relationship between shipbrokers and their clients, on the grounds that both managers and shipbrokers are solely responsible for creating such relationships on behalf of their firm. The *golden mean* refers to having a stable and ongoing commitment to trust; at the same time, judgements regarding trust should be made carefully, realistically and prudently (Aristotle, 1986).

Trusting relationships may fall into different categories, from minimal trust to high trust, depending on the individual and/or the situation: "Knowing whom to trust, how much to trust them, and with respect to what matters" (Wicks et al., 1999, p. 102). Relationships with mutual trust, i.e. when one feels that others can be trusted and that one is worthy of trust in return, provide a basis for self-esteem and a sense of security (Baier, 1994). People should strive to cultivate trusting relations and to be perceived as trustworthy because of moral good. These objectives are considered a mean between trusting too much (being naïve) and trusting too little (being cynic), as described by Aristotle (reported in Wicks et al. (1999): "For it to be morally good, trust should not perpetuate or facilitate evil, should be self-strengthening, and should produce metatrust: trust in trust-involving relationships" (Wicks et al., 1999, p. 103).

Wicks et al. (1999) define optimal trust in the following manner:

Optimal trust exists when one creates (and maintains) prudent economic relationships biased by a willingness to trust. That is, agents need to have stable and ongoing commitments to trust so that they share affect-based belief in moral character sufficient to make a leap of faith, but they should also exercise care in determining whom to trust, to what extent, and in what capacity. (p. 103).

Different levels of trust entail different benefits, costs, and risks. "When trust and interdependence levels are matched, trust is optimal" (Wicks et al., 1999, p. 107).

2.3. Building Relationships

Dyadic relationships are significant in shipbroking. A dyadic relationship is defined as "a committed 2 person relationship (Nugent, 2013). It is important for professionals to have created and to maintain relationships with their clients. In business, relationships play an essential role in the way we perform our daily work. We may for example look at *social penetration theory*, which revolves around how many interests the partners share and how deeply one can penetrate the other's inner personality (Hinner, 2010): It explains how

relationships start and evolve. “Relationships between brokers and clients take considerable time to develop” (Panayides, 2014, p. 20). Gorton et al. (2009) argue that in order to maintain and expand the contact with customers, visits are important. It is also common for the broker who assisted or made the contact to attend visits where two clients meet (Gorton et al., 2009).

When relationships are created and established, it is possible to do business together. In Cross, Brashear, Rigdon, & Bellenger's study (2007), values such as positive relationship experience and responsiveness offered by employees are highly relevant in the relational exchange process. Researchers have also found that having relationships is important for acquiring information as well as for learning and solving complex problems (Levin & Cross, 2004). As Abrams et al. (2003) maintain, relations are central to promote knowledge creation and sharing in business.

The closeness of the relationship between shipbroker and client, often measured by tie strength, may also be of relevance here. “Tie strength – a concept ranging from weak ties at one extreme to strong ties at the other – characterizes the closeness and interaction frequency of a relationship between two parties” (Levin & Cross, 2004, p. 1478). Granovetter (1973) defines tie strength as “a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy, and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie” (p. 1361).

Levin & Cross (2004) studied whether weaker or stronger ties provide useful knowledge and why. There is no coinciding agreement of which level of closeness is best. Hansen (1999) concludes that weak ties are less costly to maintain, therefore having a network of only weak ties is advantageous for projects relying mostly of explicit knowledge. Conversely, Granovetter (1985) argues that strong ties offer multiple benefits: they are cheap, more trustworthy (because of communication richness) and, more economically reliable (from a continuing relationship). Jack (2005), however argues that strong ties are less beneficial than weak ties. This is because information is likely to flow in the same social circles, while weak ties may be a part of other social circles (Burt, 1992). Strong ties develop over time on the basis of knowledge, experience and trust (Jack, 2005).

People who trust someone's competence are more likely to listen, absorb and take action based on that knowledge (Levin & Cross, 2004). Individuals may have greater trust in the competence of strong ties for two reasons: (1) both parties “calibrate” on the other's skills and expertise, and then seek information from those fields in which the other party is competent (Rulke & Rau, 2000); and (2) strong ties may develop a similar way of thinking

and communicating. Other elements include shared goals and jargon, both of which are associated with greater trust (Levin & Cross, 2004). According to Levin & Cross (2004), competence-based trust is important for tacit knowledge exchange. Moreover, individuals can benefit from developing weak, not just strong ties, for instance by focusing on how to increase trust in an inexpensive way in order to improve the flow of knowledge and advice. As Jack (2005, p. 1254) concludes: “. . . when building and forming a relationship it is the function of tie and how that tie can be utilized that is important rather than frequency of contact”.

2.4. Behaviour

Explaining human behaviour is a difficult task (Ajzen, 1991). One definition is that behaviour is “an ongoing process of learning and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected results of actions” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 353). McKenna (2012) argues that there is no single behavioural position among researchers, but there is a coinciding view that the main source of behaviour is found in the environment the individual is in, and not within the person. McKenna (2012) states that since behaviour is influenced from our childhood and onwards, the environment becomes a powerful influence of our behaviour.

Organizational behaviour (OB) is the field of study that seeks to understand, predict, explain and change human behaviour in an organizational context (Buelens, 2011; McKenna, 2012). It is also concerned with the relationship between individuals and groups, and how they interact with the organization (McKenna, 2012). The organizational behaviour of emotion regulation is of interest for this study. *Emotion regulation* may be one organizational behaviour shipbrokers experience from time to time. It is concerned with the ability to regulate one’s emotions by identifying and modifying what one feels from something negative to positive (Koole, 2009; Wadlinger & Isaacowitz, 2011). The market may change for the worse and/or negotiations may fail, yet shipbrokers still need to act professionally and regulate their emotions. In organizational behaviour, an important concept is emotional contagion – the matching effect between the employee’s and the customer’s emotion, i.e. the possibility that the shipbroker’s emotions are transferred onto the client (Pugh, 2001).

In order to obtain trust, certain behaviours should be applied (Abrams et al., 2003). In turn, the use of *trust-building behaviours* affects interpersonal trust (Abrams et al., 2003). An outcome of trust is knowledge exchange, which is crucial in relationships between

professionals. There are two dimensions of knowledge sharing and knowledge creation, known as benevolence-based and competence-based trust, also referred to as interpersonal trust (Abrams et al., 2003). Each of Abrams et al.'s. (2003) trust builders promote benevolence trust, competence trust, or both. *Benevolence trust* is defined as “the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to be good to the trustor, aside from an egoistic motive” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718). Abrams et al. (2003) describes it as follows: “You care about me and take an interest in my well-being and goals” (p.65). *Competence-based trust* “. . . allows one to feel confident that a person sought out knows what s/he is talking about and is worth listening to and learning from” (p.65). Before the establishment of relationship, or in the very initial stage, trust is based on cognition, i.e. ability, benevolence and integrity which is likely to be externally available information (Gausdal, 2017).

The ten different behaviours are categorized into four categories; (1) trustworthy behaviours, (2) organizational factors, (3) relational factors, and (4) individual factors.

Trustworthy behaviours consist in turn of five trust builders (Abrams et al., 2003); (1) Acting with discretion, which is concerned with the individual keeping information confidential and not violating a person’s trust; (2) Showing consistency between word and deed, which is why people should “walk the talk”: Those who demonstrate such consistency are more trusted than others who – for instance- frequently forget to plan. (3) Ensuring frequent and rich communication is important to keep information available for others in order to assess intentions, behaviours etc. within a relationship. (4) Engaging in collaborative communication lets others seek out and trust each other. (5) Ensuring that decisions are fair and transparent is important when communicating with colleagues to foster a trusting relationship (Abrams et al., 2003).

Organizational factors consist of two factors; (6) Establishing and ensuring shared vision and language, which is important to promote trust, and (7) holding people accountable for trust is more relevant for managers and colleagues working closely (Abrams et al., 2003).

Relations factors deal with: (8) Creating personal connections, which is important in order to establish relationships and foster trust. Examples could be sharing personal information and looking for things in common. (9) Giving away something of value without looking for anything in return, for instance sharing sensitive information, i.e. tacit knowledge or sharing a personal network (Abrams et al., 2003).

Individual factors entail only one behaviour: (10) Disclosing your expertise and limitations. It is important to assess one's own limitations, but also to find out who knows what.

The framework made by Abrams et al. (2003) was made for managers so not all behaviours may be relevant for shipbrokers. Behaviours such as consistency between word and deed, ensuring that decisions are fair and transparent, the establishment of a shared vision and language, holding people accountable for trust and disclosing your expertise and limitations were decided not to be included in this study.

2.4.1. Proactive service performance behaviour

One of the shipbrokers' behaviours could be referred to as *proactive service performance (PSP)*. PSP is defined as "individuals' self-started, long-term-oriented, and persistent service behaviour that goes beyond explicitly prescribed performance requirements" (Rank, Carsten, Unger, & Spector, 2007, p. 363). It involves many aspects, such as providing superior service beyond customers demand, and includes forward thinking behaviour in pursuit of customer satisfaction (Hamzah et al., 2016). As a behavioural outcome, PSP is considered highly important in sectors which are decentralized, and where customer needs are constantly changing (Hamzah et al., 2016). One indicator of PSP is *proactive social behaviours* (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997) which is defined as "taking initiative in improving current circumstances; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting present conditions" (Crant, 2000, p. 436).

Both PSP and customer orientation are closely linked because both are considered unselfish acts. Unselfish employees tend to take on more work than expected. Hamzah et al. (2016) argues that customer orientation (including customer-oriented attitude and behaviour) plays a mediating role in building the relationship between individual market orientation and proactive service performance.

2.4.2. Customer orientated behaviour

It is natural to believe that shipbrokers must be customer-oriented, since they are trying to serve their customers' needs. Customer orientation is defined by Saxe & Weitz (1982) as "the marketing concept by trying to help customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs" (p.344). Boles, Babin, Brashear, & Brooks (2001) clarify that customer orientation is a considerable approach in business-to-business (B2B) selling

environments, because customers have different needs and they require information before making decisions. Furthermore, customer orientation may be regarded as ‘concern for others’ (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014). Shipbrokers should also practice/follow moral values when assisting clients, i.e. provide the service the customer *needs* instead of maximizing profit by offering additional, unnecessary services (Gorton et al., 2009).

Customer orientation is analysed by researchers at two levels: the organizational and the individual level (Stock & Hoyer, 2005). The *individual level*, relating to the interpersonal contact between a shipbroker and its client, is especially interesting for this study. A key aspect of individual customer orientation relates to the ability to help the client and the quality of the ‘customer-salesperson relationship’ (Saxe & Weitz, 1982): “In this context, customer orientation refers to the employee’s behaviours that are geared toward satisfying customers’ need adequately” (Stock & Hoyer, 2005, p. 536).

Customer oriented behaviour (COB) is about the ability to help customers by acting in such a way that will increase customer satisfaction (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). COB has been found to have a positive effect on sales performance (Boles et al., 2001; Brown, Mowen, Donnavan, & Licata, 2002), customers-perceived service quality (Brady & Cronin Jr, 2001), building buyer-seller relationships (Williams & Attaway, 1996) as well as customer satisfaction (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Garland, Reilly, & Westbrook, 1989; Goff, Boles, Bellinger, & Stojack, 1997; Ramsey & Ravipreet, 1997). On an individual level, COB includes job satisfaction (Bateman & Organ, 1983; Hoffman & Ingram, 1991), leader behaviour (Jones, Busch, & Dacin, 2003), organizational control (Joshi & Randall, 2001), market orientation of the company (Jones et al., 2003; Mengüç, 1996), personal traits (Brown et al., 2002) and employee’s affect (Peccei & Rosenthal, 1997, 2000).

An important aspect of customer orientation is the ability to capture signals from customers. Sharma (1999) argues that customers can “pick-up” the emotions and attitudes of salespeople independently of specific customer-oriented behaviours, which means that having the right attitude and behaviour can help built trust and relationships. It is important to read the customer and know what service they want and the anticipating needs (Hamzah et al., 2016).

2.4.3. Individual market orientation behaviour

In the service sector, it is critical to understand and meet long-term needs of customers through effective interactions between employee and customer (Schlosser & McNaughton,

2009). To be able to assist their clients, shipbrokers need to know the market first-hand, and should acquire an *individual market orientation behaviour*. This concept, known as MARKOR, was developed by Kohli & Jaworski (1990). Market orientation behaviour or *market intelligence* refers to (1) customer knowledge concerning new and future customer needs, and (2) market-related knowledge concerned with the development and offerings by competitors and industry (Hamzah et al., 2016). A modified version of MARKOR was developed by Schlosser and McNaughton (2009), focusing on the *individual* rather than the organization, called I-MARKOR. It includes dimensions such as (1) information acquisition, (2) information distribution and (3) coordination of strategic response (Hamzah et al., 2016). I-MARKOR is concerned with *acquiring information* from customers and the environment, and it is also known as *information acquisition behaviour*. “The term ‘information’ refers to customers’ needs, ongoing development and also future expectations” (Hamzah et al., 2016, p. 111). I-MARKOR also includes retrieving information about customers across internal departments. *Information distribution* internally could help the company sustaining their competitive advantage. *Coordination of strategic response* refers to the individual’s ability to utilize customer knowledge (Hamzah et al., 2016). This may produce responsive actions, which in turn will maximize customer value and relationship quality. Individual market orientation may be beneficial to the firm in terms of increased sales, positive reputation and behavioural loyalty, but only if it is managed properly by employees (Hamzah et al., 2016). Market-oriented behaviour could provide information resources that are important to an organization’s success (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002). The competitive advantage in service organizations “relies upon strong, customer-oriented services provided by individuals throughout the organization” (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2009, p. 237).

It should be noted that there is a difference between customer and market orientation: “Market oriented individuals are those who are able to acquire and disseminate customer and market knowledge, before utilizing them in achieving mutual and beneficial relationships. Meanwhile, customer orientation reflects the employees- tendency to put customers’ interest over own self-interest” (Hamzah et al., 2016, p. 112).

2.5. Communication

In this study, communication is considered an important part of shipbrokers’ behaviour. Communication as a tool may be considered as another dimension of behaviour (Penrose, Rasberry, & Myers, 2004). There are different ways of communicating: verbal and

written communication, nonverbal using new technology, as well as different kinds of communication networks (McKenna, 2012). Business activities such as transactions would not occur without some sort of communication (Hinner, 2010).

Communication facilitates four functions within an organization: control, motivation, emotional expression and information (Scott & Mitchell, 1976). Communication *control* means that behaviour can be controlled by, for example, formal guidelines that employees must follow. Communication also clarifies the job description, what employees must do, what they are doing now and how to improve their performance, which has a *motivational* function (Robbins & Judge, 2013). When it comes to *emotional expression*, employees may socially interact by sharing frustration and satisfaction. The last function, *information*, facilitates decision making. Communication provides the necessary information for an individual or a group to make a decision (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Young and Post (1993) list a number of factors associated with effective communication in organizations. The most relevant are: (1) firm commitment to communication, (2) words backed by action, (3) commitment to two-way communication and (4) emphasis on face-to-face communication.

Over the time-span of 10 years, social media have transformed how people communicate in their personal lives; such transformation has also begun to reach our work lives (Turco, 2016). The younger generation, known as millennials, have grown up on social media (with Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc.), and they are now part of the fastest-growing portion of the labour force (Turco, 2016). They are used to the constant connection and the swift information access, and engage in more open sharing than previous generations (Turco, 2016). They are now bringing with them the same habits and expectations into the workplace (Turco, 2016). In this study, the choice of style and channel (richness) to communicate with clients is significant.

The theory of *information richness* refers to the amount of information that can be brought forward through a communication medium (Poole, Shannon, & DeSanctis, 1992; Purdy, Nye, & Balakrishnan, 2000). Communication channels may differ in terms of information richness, which is based on four factors: (1) multiple cues, (2) immediacy of feedback, (3) language variety, and (4) personalization (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987; Daft & Wiginton, 1979; Dennis & Kinney, 1998). Some researchers suggest that communication performance is related to the information richness employed (Dennis & Kinney, 1998; Purdy et al., 2000).

Communication is considered rich when it provides substantial new understanding (Barry & Crant, 2000). Face-to-face is considered the richest medium because of immediate feedback, usage of both audio and visual channels, potential for personal messages and linguistic forms: In other words, it entails the highest level of “carrying capacity” (Barry & Crant, 2000). The second-best medium is telephone, followed by written personal messages. It has been suggested that the richness of e-mail is placed somewhere between telephone and written messages (Barry & Crant, 2000; Palvia, Pinjani, Cannoy, & Jacks, 2011). I would argue that today e-mail has replaced the use of written messages. Over the last ten years, it has been maintained that e-mail has become a richer medium than before, due to the immediacy of feedback and the variety of cues, thus e-mail should be re-evaluated for richness (Palvia et al., 2011).

Lo and Lie (2008) suggest that instant messaging (IM) provides richer information than e-mail, since while people do not check their e-mail constantly, IM provides instantaneous cues. Less rich media is employed for well-understood issues where rapid feedback and high-variety information signals are less essential (Barry & Crant, 2000): “. . . the selection of communication technology tools depends on how well its level of information richness fits the equivocality of the communicating task” (Lo & Lie, 2008, p. 148). The list of communication channels ranked from high to low in information richness is face-to-face, telephone, IM and e-mail.

When people choose a communication channel, the level of equivocality often affects their choice. Equivocality is defined as the extent to which multiple and conflicting interpretations of information exist among participants, i.e. sender and receiver in a conversation (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Equivocality may be challenging when individuals have different backgrounds, roles, and cultures (Rönnerberg Sjödin, Frishammar, & Eriksson, 2016). Highly equivocal tasks may utilize communication channels which produce high information richness to ensure that the transfer of knowledge is sufficient and reduce likelihood of conflicting interpretations (Lo & Lie, 2008).

Lo and Lie (2008) argue that the level of trust towards the communication partner will affect the choice of communication medium. If the two parties trust each other, a communication channel with a lower degree of information richness is likely to be chosen, whereas if the two parties do not trust each other, a channel which conveys more information (higher degree of information richness) is preferred (Lo & Lie, 2008).

For unclear tasks, the communication tool with the greater information richness is preferred, to ensure clarity when sharing information (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft et al., 1987). When communicating about simple tasks, a channel with lower levels of information richness is used, taking cost-information exchange capacity into the equation (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Rice, 1992).

The development of revolutionary communication tools has had a fundamental effect on human communication behaviour (Kleinrock, 2001; Lyytinen & Yoo, 2002). This technology possesses different names such as apps, online communication platforms, digital communication platform, instant messaging, social media apps (SMA) among others. The technology has led to the ability to communicate with others (even strangers) through the internet in real time by way of multiple instant messaging programs (Lo & Lie, 2008). In addition, with the introduction of webcams, online communication can be facilitated with instant imaging to support human interaction behaviour. The use of both text and images (video) provides a richer source of information (Lo & Lie, 2008). Over the years, such communication tools have become easier to use and operate, which is one of the factors that affect user adoption (Kelleher & O'Malley, 2006).

Digital communication platforms – e.g. Skype, Facebook and WhatsApp - are used to facilitate individual communication. Such platforms, or apps, can be defined as highly synchronous as they can be used to create and share content of i.e. video, audio, or text (Wang, Pauleen, & Zhang, 2016). In addition, they may enable simultaneous communication with multiple participants, which may facilitate efficient communication (Kim & Zeelim-Hovav, 2011; Wang et al., 2016).

Companies have increasingly adopted digital communication platforms over the last few years (Wang et al., 2016). They use such apps to “. . .communicate with customers and suppliers, to build relationships and trust, and to identify prospective trading partners (Shih, 2009)” (as cited in Wang et al., 2016, p. 4). Digital communication platforms may improve SMEs (Small and medium enterprises) performance in b2b communication (Wang et al., 2016). Wang et al. (2016) argue that companies use digital communication platforms because of the capabilities to effectively communicate and enhance business performance, a fact highlighted also by Turco (2016): “Social media tools allow more open communication up, down, and across the corporate hierarchy” (Turco, 2016).

In long distance communication, communicators prefer the use of ‘computer-mediated communication’ rather than the traditional face-to-face communication due to the costs involved (Reinsch & Beswick, 1990; Trevino, Webster, & Stein, 2000; Webster & Trevino, 1995). However, they will still choose the necessary communication tool which provides the highest level of information richness, especially for highly equivocal communication tasks (Lo & Lie, 2008). In short distance communication, communicators will choose the tool that minimises delay in terms of response time, such as face-to-face communication if the two parties are located closely to each other (i.e. colleagues) (Lo & Lie, 2008). Digital communication platforms allow fast information transmission, which makes it suitable for continuous communication and quick feedback between the two parties (Dennis, Fuller, & Valacich, 2008).

Through digital communication platforms, companies may gain insights into industry trends and identify market gaps (Stockdale, Ahmed, & Scheepers, 2012), as well as develop the ability to adapt to new market conditions (Pardo, Ivens, & Wilson, 2013). Such platforms may also be important to facilitate collaborations: “SMA can encourage effective content and knowledge sharing between trading partners, thus enabling and enhancing collaboration (J. V. Chen, Chen, & Capistrano, 2013; Swani, Brown, & Milne, 2014)” (as cited in Wang et al., 2016, p. 6).

Lo and Lie (2008) argue that new technology does not necessarily replace old technology but acts instead as an additional choice: for instance, the introduction of e-mails did not replace the telephone, and IM has not replaced e-mail (K. Chen, Yen, & Huang, 2004). People tend to use more than one communication medium at any time, e.g. sending documents per e-mail while discussing the content of the e-mail over the phone simultaneously (Lo & Lie, 2008).

2.5.1. Communication behaviour

Active listening and communication competence are considered important communication skills (Buelens, 2011). “It is claimed that effective listeners adopt the following patterns of behaviour (Robbins & Hunsaker, 1996): (1) Establish eye contact, (2) show and interest in what has been said, (3) avoid distracting actions or gestures, (4) ask questions, (5) paraphrase, (6) avoid interrupting the speaker, (7) do not overtalk, and (8) make smooth transitions between the roles of speaker and listener. According to Buelens (2011), most people are not very good at listening. Manning, Curtis, & McMillen (1996) and Pearce

(1993) argue that only 25 per cent of communication is comprehended in general. It is partly due to the fact that people process information faster than they can talk. Poor listeners tend to “wander off” and daydream, missing important aspects of the conversation. Therefore, listening involves more than just hearing someone talk: One has to actively decode and interpret verbal messages, in addition to using cognitive attention and information processing (Buelens, 2011). This enables the listener to recall factual information and draw accurate conclusions from a verbal message (Buelens, 2011).

The term *communication competence* is defined as the performance-based index of a person’s ability to use “effectively the appropriate communication behaviour in a given context” (Buelens, 2011, p. 171). It is determined by three components: (1) the ability to communicate (i.e. active listening, cross-cultural awareness, aggressiveness), (2) situational factors (i.e. organisational climate, company philosophy on openness, policies, and procedures) and (3) the individuals involved (i.e. a superior, friend, someone you do not trust). In addition, it is important to know which medium you want to use to communicate in a given situation (Buelens, 2011). Hinner (2010) argues that without communication, there would not be any relationship.

The way individuals talk may also impact trust and relationships. Table 1 illustrates *communication styles* categorized into three groups: assertiveness, aggressiveness, and non-assertiveness (Waters, 1982). Based on the table, choosing an assertive style over both aggressiveness and non-assertiveness can be beneficial in most environments.

Table 1

Communication styles

Communication style	Description	Non-verbal behaviour pattern	Verbal behaviour pattern
Assertiveness	Pushing hard without attacking; permits others to influence outcome; expressive and self-enhancing without intruding on others	Good eye contact Comfortable but firm posture Strong, steady and audible voice Facial expressions matched to message Appropriately serious tone Selective interruptions to ensure understanding	Direct and unambiguous language No attributions or evaluations on other’s behaviour Use of ‘I’ statements and co-operative ‘we’ statements
Aggressive	Taking advantage of others; expressive and self-enhancing at other’s expense	Glaring eye contact Moving or leaning too close Threatening gestures (pointed finger, clenched fist) Loud voice Frequent interruptions	Swear words and abusive language Attributions and evaluations of other’s behaviour Sexist or racist terms Explicit threats or put-downs

Non-assertive	Encouraging others to take advantage of us; inhibited; self-denying	Little eye contact Downward glances Slumped posture Constantly shifting weight Wringing hands Weak or whiny voice	Qualifiers ('maybe', 'kind of') Fillers ('uh', 'you know', 'well') Negators ('It's not really that important', 'I'm not sure')
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Note: Waters, (1982), retrieved from Buelens, (2011, p. 176)

2.6. Summary

Shipbrokers. It is important that shipbrokers act according to the needs of their client. They retrieve and share information from the market, colleagues, other shipbrokers and clients, and use that information to support their client when fixing vessels. They should act in a trustworthy and sincere manner and create personal relations with their client.

Trust. Trusting relationships may foster certain benefits in business. Trust often revolves around the concept of information and vulnerability. Both benevolence- and competence-based trust are part of interpersonal trust, which is important in the shipbroker-client relationship. One could argue that shipbrokers and their client seek to obtain an optimal level of trust, where both parties trust each other.

Relationships. To establish a relationship with a client or a customer is considered important. As the relationships between brokers and clients may take considerable time to develop, it is crucial that trust between the two parties is present. The tie strength of the relationship indicates its closeness, where both strong and weak ties may yield certain benefits.

Behaviour. Shipbrokers may display many types of behaviour, but one organizational behaviour is likely to be of particular importance: it is essential to master emotion regulation, as emotion contagion may be destructive for the relationship or the current negotiations.

Trustworthy behaviours. In order to establish relationships, shipbrokers need to act in a trustworthy manner. By using Abrams et al's. (2003) framework as a guideline, one can measure shipbrokers' behaviour accordingly. *Proactive service performance* is likely to be a relevant behaviour for shipbrokers. It states that PSP is highly important in decentralized sectors and customer needs are changing rapidly. As for shipbrokers, they tend to be located in finance capitals, where markets may change overnight.

The same applies to both *customer-* and *market orientation behaviour*. A key aspect of customer orientation is the customer-salesperson's relationship (i.e. how close they are), which in turn could be linked to how weak or strong their ties are. For shipbrokers, it is necessary to have a relationship with the client, where the shipbroker tries to serve the needs

of the customer. It is important that shipbrokers have knowledge of the market they are serving and forward that information to the client.

Communication. Shipbrokers may use different kinds of channels such as verbal or written communication and new technology such as Skype and other digital communication platforms. The aim is to provide the client with rich information; the shipbroker must select the appropriate channel to do that. Furthermore, their communication style also defines how the relationship may evolve. Shipbrokers may want to be assertive to some degree and employ a high degree of skills to be able to actively listen and interpret the tone of the conversation. At the end of the day, the shipbroker works for the clients and seeks to provide them with useful information allowing them to negotiate a deal.

Figure 1 it meant to illustrate how shipbrokers' behaviours may create trust and relationships when communication is used as a tool.

Figure 1.

A conceptual model of the connection between shipbrokers' behaviours and the creation of trust and relationships with clients (Authors design)

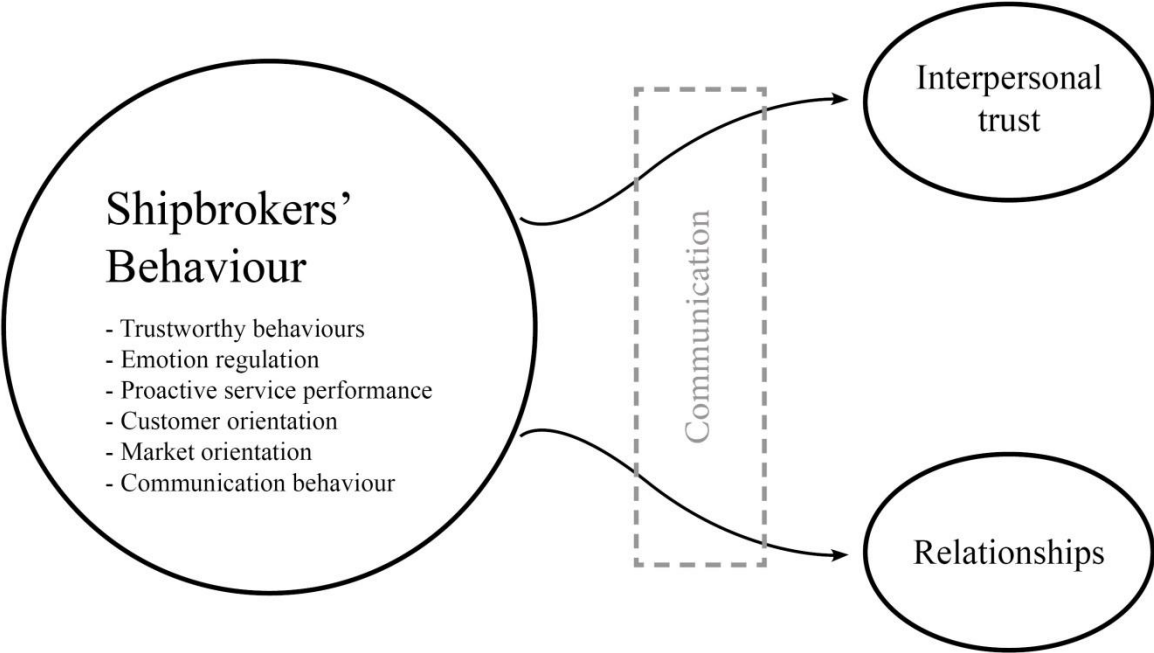


Table 2 attempts to bring together trust- and marketing theory in comparison with shipbrokers' roles by Gorton et al. (2009). Not all behaviours have been given their own column, mainly because they fit well within one of the others.

Table 2

Similarities between relevant concepts

Trustworthy behaviors (Abrams et al., 2003)	Role of a shipbroker. (Gorton et al., 2009)	Customer oriented behaviour	Market oriented behaviour	Communication
Act with discretion	Not withhold any information from his principal nor give wrong information preserve the principal's reputation Act strictly within given authorities			
Ensure frequent and rich communication	Keep owner and charterer informed about the market situation		Shipbrokers need to provide rich and useful information to its client, but also colleagues (Hamzah et al., 2016).	
Engage in collaborative communication				Closely linked to Active Listening (Buelens, 2011)
Create personal connections	Work loyally for his principal	Having relationships may be crucial to meet customer expectations (Stock & Hoyer, 2005)		
Give away something of value	Providing what the customer needs instead of maximizing profit	Similarities between acting faithfully and being customer oriented (Saxe & Weitz, 1982).		

Note: Information revised from Abrams et al. (2003), Buelens (2011) Gorton et al. (2009), Hamzah et al. (2016) Saxe & Weitz (1982) and Stock & Hoyer (2005)

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter will discuss research strategy, research design, data collection, data analysis and research ethics and quality. A research method “is simply a technique for collecting data” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 41).

3.1. Research Strategy

Research strategy means “. . . a general orientation to the conduct of business research” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 26). Based on the research question(s), one needs to decide which research strategy is best suited: either quantitative, or qualitative, or both, i.e. mixed methods (Howe, 2012). The distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is “. . . that quantitative researchers employ measurement and qualitative researchers do not” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 26). Rather than testing theory (with quantitative research), qualitative research aims at generating theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A qualitative research strategy was most suitable for the research questions in this study because of the necessity for rich and insightful data of shipbrokers’ behaviours (Anderson, 2010). The terrain is unknown, which makes a quantitative strategy unsuitable for this type of study. Research within shipbrokering is limited, especially about their behaviours; therefore, a strategy which allowed to observe their behaviour in order to collect in-depth data in their natural environment and explain how they work was preferred. In addition to choosing the desired research strategy, two other decisions had to be made: choice of research design and research method (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Though seemingly similar, these two issues are yet distinction their own way: Research design provides the researcher with a framework, while research method is the technique for collecting data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.2. Research design

Research design is a framework for the collection and the analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It enables the researcher to be guided through the various stages of the research and come up with possible solutions to the following questions; (1) whom shall I study? (2) what shall I observe? (3) when will I be observing? and (4) how will I collect data? (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWard, 2015). Bryman and Bell (2011) list the five common research designs: (1) experimental design, (2) cross-sectional (or survey) design, (3) longitudinal design, (4) case design and (5) comparative design.

The most appropriate design for researching a single organization and the behaviour of individuals in the organization is *case study*. What distinguishes a case study from other designs is the focus on a limited situation or system. “. . .Case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Stake, 1995)” (as cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 59). A reason for choosing a case study design is that several qualitative methods can be used (Knights & McCabe, 1997), thus avoiding too much emphasis on one single approach.

While Yin (2003) distinguishes between five different types of cases, the case in question here is a *typical case*, as it seeks to explore an everyday situation within an organization. Stake (1995) argues that the selection of the case(s) should be based on the anticipation of the opportunity to learn. Therefore, the researcher chose the case which he thought would afford the greatest opportunity to learn (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To help answer the research questions in this thesis, a typical single case study is conducted, with shadowing, interview, and observations as the chosen methods for gathering qualitative data.

3.3. Observations

Ethnography is used where the author immerses himself in a group to observe behaviour, listen to conversations and ask questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Observations enable the researcher to study behaviour in real time (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). The term ethnography is preferred over “participant observation” as the researcher does more than just observing (Bryman & Bell, 2011); for instance, the researcher can ask questions during observations.

First, the researcher *shadowed* the group (McDonald, 2005) of brokers by following one or more shipbrokers in their daily work to see how they behave towards clients in their objective of creating trust and establishing relationships. Shadowing is considered to provide richer and more comprehensive data than other methods based on its unit of analysis (McDonald, 2005): “Shadowing is profoundly suited to investigation of the nature of managerial work” (McDonald, 2005, p. 468), and it allows the researcher to closely follow an individual or a group/team on how they interact with clients, which is ideal for recording behaviour (McDonald, 2005). McDonald (2005) lists three different forms of shadowing, depending on the purpose of the study; (1) to learn for themselves, (2) to record behavior to discover patterns, and (3) to investigate roles and perspectives in a qualitative way. In this study, the aim is to discover patterns and investigate the roles of the shipbroker’s behaviours

towards establishing trust and relationships with clients, hence form 2 and 3 were suitable here.

The second round of observation was not shadowing, but observation. The researcher did not closely follow an individual, neither did he intervene or ask question, limiting himself to observe them acting as a group from a distance. The observation guide was used as a pattern, but data was collected from the group rather than from individuals.

3.4. Interviews

Data was later gathered through *semi-structured interviews* to gain a better understanding of the elements observed during shadowing. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of their flexibility to the purpose of obtaining in-depth data, compared to structured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The data retrieved from such observation “. . .lead one to be more informed within the interviews to ask the right questions and understand the context from within the interviewees’ answers” (Martela, 2012, p. 109). In semi-structured interviews the researcher makes a list of questions referred to as an *interview guide*, but is flexible in how to reply to answers given by the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This gives the flexibility to ask additional questions, not following the outline of the schedule if the interviewee shares useful information. However, the wording will be similar from interviewee to interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interview guide in this research is based on the theory chapter and the data collected during shadowing.

3.5. Sampling

The (finite) *population* in question is shipbrokers working in shipbrokering organizations. To gain access to a case organization, an acquaintance was approached where the researcher presented the research question and the possible options of collecting data. The researcher was granted access into the organization and was given full insight into daily work. The organization allowed for both shadowing, interviews, and observation of relevant shipbrokers.

The informants were selected by *convenience sampling* within the chosen organization (Bryman & Bell, 2011). During the shadowing phase, the researcher chose whoever was available in the same department. As for the interview phase, the sampling method was a combination of convenience sampling and *purposive sampling*, which aims to sample

participants in a strategic way (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The reason for this combination was that the researcher was aiming to interview as many informants as possible, but preferred the individuals already shadowed. The researcher chose his interview objects on the basis of availability, but also with varied working experience in mind (Anderson, 2010). During observations, the informants were selected by convenience sampling where the researcher observed all shipbrokers present acting as a group.

A sample is known as a subset of the population which serves as the basis of generalizations (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). This study has two levels of sample, the case and the informants. In this study, brokers are divided into two categories pending on their working experience as brokers. Junior brokers have less than three years working experience, and senior broker has more than three years of experience. First, eight shipbrokers (eight sampling units) from Norway (one or more of the shipbrokers was not originally from Norway but spoke fluent Norwegian) with age ranging from the mid-20s to the mid-60s were shadowed. Of those eight, three were junior brokers and five senior brokers. Four were interviewed, two juniors and two seniors. During the group observation, a total of ten brokers were observed: Three junior brokers and seven senior brokers.

Although the intention was to shadow and interview more brokers, this did not prove feasible within the project's time-frame, due to sick-leave and travelling. The first round of shadowing took place during a slow week due to Chinese New Year, while the group observation was performed during what seemed like a normal, dynamic working environment. The selected instruments for collecting primary data were shadowing of individual brokers using an observation guide including field notes (see appendix B), a group observation and semi-structured interviews using an interview guide (see appendix A).

3.6. Data collection

Shadowing and observations lasted about 40 hours (24 hours shadowing and 16 hours observation). Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. Shadowing was conducted in February 2018 and observations/interviews in March 2018, one month apart due to national holidays and availability of the respondents. The physical placement of the observer was at a desk at the end of a row of desks in an office landscape. The role chosen by the researcher was "participant-as-observer" which implied to act as a fully member of the social setting, while the observed participants are aware of the researcher's role as a researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This was achieved by spending the first 30 minutes just talking and getting to know the

participants and informing about the purpose of the study. Shadowing was conducted behind or on the side of the individual, but never closer than 1-2 meters, and lasted for 1-2 hours per broker. The researcher occasionally changed the geographical position so that the shipbroker was not feeling watched. If appropriate, the researcher asked general questions and showed curiosity about their working day while writing down field notes during the period of shadowing in form of *jotted notes* (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Interviews were conducted in a meeting room where the interviewer and the interviewee sat opposite each other. The purpose of the study was explained, and information about audio recording and anonymity was given. The interviewed were audio-recorded with an application on a smart phone. When conducting interviews, a variety of different questions were asked: Some were open-ended, while others were more definite. As the degree of trust may differ between individuals, it was interesting to have the brokers measure the importance of trust, where 1 was considered “not important” and 10 “very important”. This would give an impression of *how* important trust is. The same applied to the usage of different communication channels, as knowing *how often* different channels were used was of significance for this study.

The researcher informed the participants about the possibility to decline or stop being shadowed at any time. They all knew that they would be shadowed sometime during the three days. As an observer, there was an attempt to establish a situation where both were “ignored and continually informed” (McDonald, 2005, p. 459). Therefore, the researcher did not explicitly tell each broker when they were being observed so that they would not act differently or unnaturally. The observer effect, also known as Hawthorne effect (Shipman, 1997), could be an issue, because it is difficult for the researcher to know if the individual acts naturally or not. Nevertheless, the shipbrokers did not seem to be bothered by the researcher’s presence: They were rather focused on the task at hand and constantly monitoring the computer screens or communicating with colleagues and/or clients.

Although the use of shadowing as a method worked out very well, it would have been difficult without an observation guide, which enabled the researcher to “check off” each item underway. However, it was also time-consuming, and the data collected - which had to be decoded to fit with the observation guide - was vast. During and after shadowing, some reflections were noted down.

Concerns. The amount of data gathered through shadowing could be immense, and difficult to handle (McDonald, 2005), but this was more or less taken care of by the observation guide (see appendix B). The observation guide was created from the basis of Abrams et al. (2003)'s framework including other elements such as other behaviours, communication channels, frequency of contact etc. There is also an additional page where the researcher wrote comments about observations not found in the guide. There might be concerns about the chosen variables as the observer could be biased and be on the outlook for certain behaviours rather than just observe. In addition, the physical placement of the observer meant that it was difficult to observe conversations on the computer screens and without invading their personal space at the same time. Some reflections were made after each day of shadowing, while most of the reflections were written down during shadowing. Another important aspect to be considered was that the relationship between the shadower and the shadowed individual may change over time (McDonald, 2005); however, with the limited time available this was not considered an issue. During the interview phase, it was discovered that some of the questions were unclear, especially when the respondents were asked to rank different communication channels. In addition, the researcher forgot to mention e-mail as an option. The main challenge was that no interviews were scheduled ahead regarding a specific time, which meant that the researcher was forced to stay at the office until everyone had some time to spare.

Another problem that may have arisen was that “managerial work is extremely hectic and complex and frequently comes in short, dense bursts” (Mintzberg, 1970, p. 104). This was experienced in an opposite way during shadowing with the normal workload reduced due to the slow week. Another concern is “staged performances” (Monahan & Fisher, 2010) by the respondents. The only “staged performance” observed was the slow market, not likely to give the correct impression of the normal working environment. The problems of biases, which some researchers - such as LeCompte & Goetz (1982) and Spano (2005) - argue may invalidate research findings, were not registered.

3.7. Data analysis

To be able to quantify the data collected, it is important to categorize the transcripts from the observation guide and interviews and give codes to the categories (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). This is done by using either a deductive- or inductive approach, or a combination of the two (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). A *deductive approach* means that

the researcher has certain definitions of concepts, specific indicators of the behaviour to be observed, and places them in a predefined category during observations (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). On the other hand, the *inductive* approach constructs conceptual definitions after the first stage of data collection (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). All interviews were transcribed and anonymized where names or companies were mentioned. First, an inductive approach was used to discover suitable parameters, i.e. behaviours to look for, which was found in social science theory in the field of trust and marketing. Then a mostly deductive approach was chosen for both shadowing, interviews and observations aimed at exploring shipbrokers' views.

Both approaches entail risks, but the chosen approach made it difficult to see beforehand whether the chosen categories and definitions were sufficiently precise (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). It was also important to observe body language and moods of the person observed, including (1) nonverbal behaviour, (2) spatial behaviour, (3) linguistic behaviour and extralinguistic behaviour (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015).

Data was analyzed by comparing notes from each observation and checking whether something coincides with each other and with scientific theory. Then, the researcher compared each answer to the other respondents, searching for similarities and important keywords. There was no use of computer-aids or codes when analysing data. During analysis, the researcher attempted to look for important keywords that fit within each concept. Respondents was not asked to check the data from the interviews. As the interviews were conducted in Norwegian and translated when transcribing, some meaning may have been altered or lost, making the data less rich.

3.8. Ethical considerations

It is important to prevent the researcher's presence from becoming an intervention or causing any harm; similarly, it should be avoided that the people studied change their behaviour or activities (Monahan & Fisher, 2010). Since the anonymity of the individuals and organization was prioritized in this study, all participants were protected from being recognized. A notification-test on the webpage of NSD was completed, and there was no need for a notification. During observations, all participants were given a random number on the observation guide so that the researcher could keep control of the paperwork. All names or resemblance of individuals and/or companies were anonymized during transcriptions of the interviews, and all audio-recordings was labelled with a random number.

As for gender, since one or more shipbrokers were females, they all were analyzed as male shipbrokers. Data which may show differences between the genders and/or nationality may be lost, but this was necessary from an ethical standpoint. Anderson (2010) suggests that age and gender should be stated after each quotation during the presentation of the research findings, but it will not be used in this study due to the anonymity clause.

3.9. Research quality

Both reliability and validity are concerned with the measuring instrument (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). *Reliability* pertains to whether the results of a study are repeatable or not (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Can the same research provide the same answers? In this study, the measurement of behaviour may yield different answers from time to time, as human behaviour is subject to change. Elements such as mood, distraction and motivation may have been altered due to unforeseen events such as a rapid change in the shipping market the shipbroker is operating in. The same is true for the new communication channels, which may provide new and different data. As behaviour differs on the basis of national and corporate culture, it may be difficult to achieve the same results from company to company. The researcher still argues that, should the present study be repeated within the same context (a Norwegian shipbrokering company in 2018), the results will be more or less the same. Even though external elements may change, the importance of establishing trust and creating relationships is not likely to change.

“Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 42). In qualitative research, according to Frankfort-Nachmias et al. (2015) there are three kinds of validity: The main types are (1) internal validity, (2) external validity, and (3) ecological validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In this study, the researcher only studied one side in the relationship between broker and client, not both sides. Bias, i.e. the author’s own thoughts and assessments during observation may provide different results from researcher to researcher. There might be a difference in behaviour depending on their status as spot broker or project broker. This may also differ according to different segments.

Internal validity is concerned with whether a conclusion of a causal relationship between two variables holds water. An example is the casual impact, i.e. behaviour (independent variable) and the effect, i.e. trust (dependent variable). There is no guarantee that these behaviours automatically will create trust.

External validity is concerned with whether the results can be generalized beyond the context of the research. This study is difficult to generalize as only a small group is the object of scrutiny. Yin (1994) argues that case studies have not “always been recognised as a proper scientific method” (p.554). This study takes advantage of the recommendation by Weick, (1979) who advocates trying harder in order to “make interpretations specific to situations” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 554). As the main objective is to confront theory with the empirical world, the researcher here has used a “systematic combination” by switching between theory and the empirical world to learn as much as possible (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Pfeffer (1982) argues that theory should be parsimonious, to prevent ending up with weak theory which might be complex and “say very little about very much” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

Ecological validity is concerned with whether the “. . . social scientific findings are applicable to people’s everyday, natural social settings” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 43). One would be inclined to think that the behaviours needed to create trust and relationships between shipbroker and client are the same for people outside of shipping as well, since trust and relationships are an important part of everyday life.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1. Shipbrokers' behaviours

One broker argues that today young shipbrokers need to be educated and serious. "You need to know what you are talking about and have a factual conversation". One broker says that education and knowledge is key. He continues;

More experienced colleagues did a lot of "wining of dining" with their clients, became friends that way, and went on to do business that way. Today, I feel that with the younger generation now taking over leading positions, things have become more serious and they [the brokers] are more educated. If you want to function as broker today it doesn't work with only a high school diploma. Now, you need to know what you are talking about and have a fact-based conversation.

Another broker maintains that you need to be trustworthy and show it by sharing information. Due diligence about the client is important to know what they are doing, who they are and how they think. Brokers should be selective when giving advice and think things through before approaching a client. The same broker argues that those factors may develop trust. Another important factor is the ability to fix vessels as some clients may "test" the shipbroker to see if s/he is able to negotiate. It is also important to be representative, and keep a low profile regarding "p and c" stuff" (private and confidential). It also appears that most brokers work with a few close clients, so there seem to be a consistency of broker-client relationships. It seems that brokers act as both owners' and charterers' broker, albeit not simultaneously. Senior shipbrokers seem to have a large network of clients, or at least a larger contact base than junior shipbrokers. Junior shipbrokers appear to focus on creating relationships to a larger degree than senior shipbrokers. One informant summarizes the necessary qualities a broker ought to possess: "Good behaviour, be aware of the customers' needs, gladly involve others and create a friendship which goes beyond strictly business".

4.2. Interpersonal trust

It seems that clients (i.e. shipowners) in turn have preferred clients (i.e. cargo owners) whom they normally do business with, in an atmosphere characterized by mutual trust (i.e. fixing between friends) and display of benevolence trust.

During interviews, the importance of trust was ranked as 9,5 in average, showing that all shipbrokers are aware of its importance. One broker highlighted that sharing of

information between the two of them, the client expects that the information is not misused in any way. Another broker pointed out that the constant focus on creating trust has given him opportunities to be involved in projects which otherwise would be inaccessible: “In this business you cannot afford to do mistakes, and your clients need to trust you 100 per cent”. One broker told of situations where clients have lied, which may have caused damage to the broker, other clients and – eventually- to the client itself: “If you don’t behave, you don’t have much to offer in this business”.

One broker claimed that the word trust means “everything”. Others reflect that trust is about knowledge-sharing, that the broker knows what he is talking about. One broker said that “experience is also an indication that you have knowledge, which may create trust”. In addition, “sharing, showing and sending information” is of importance, that information shared is not misused by both parties is a concern, and sometimes brokers need to take a risk and hope that the client is trustworthy. They seem to be aware that they should not openly share sensitive information provided by clients. One broker argues that “trust is not ranked at the top for brokers’ working spot, as it is all about fixing a vessel as quickly as possible and be first in line”.

Keywords concerning the achievement of trust creation include being knowledgeable (competence-based trust), getting to know clients and becoming friends, frequent communication, travelling and meeting face-to-face and give of one ‘self, all signs that indicate benevolence trust. One informant argues that a physical meeting makes it simpler to communicate electronically in the future and that the clients seem to appreciate them taking the time to visit: “You get to know them personally, about the family, girlfriends etc. Those things help develop that relationship. It helps them trust each other”. He continues: “I have experienced that the best way to achieve trust is to meet them in person. I had to prove to them that I was on their side”. One broker summarizes how to achieve trust: “Tell your client 110% what should be done and how to do it”. An example from one broker was that he helped a client through a tough period and had no further intentions or ulterior motives; he wanted to help him as a friend, a friendship which started out as broker and client.

My best client lost his lifework to an operator. He was depressed. I invited him up to Norway and lent him my cabin and took care of him as a friend. I don’t think there was anyone else who did.

Most shipbrokers seem to have an opinion regarding how to achieve trust from a client. One argues that brokers should be better at forwarding clients to other, more suitable shipbrokers around the desk or global office to best serve the customers' need. The problem arises as brokers do not want to give up on a client who potentially may provide work opportunity in the future.

Not all shipbrokers seem to have a deliberate strategy for creating trust; some prefer to just act naturally. One broker pointed out that knowing what the client is looking for may increase the level of trust. One has to interpret information to know what to offer the clients, gain knowledge and know what they appreciate in terms of communication (frequency). They also tend to learn from other brokers regarding what certain customers want, and their personality.

One brokers' strategy is "acting honestly and sincerely, and having knowledge of what they need". Another broker says that business trips to meet clients face to face is part of his strategy. In addition, some brokers pointed out that they need to behave properly as there are lots of "gentlemen's agreements" and a constant need for mutual trust. The same applies to companies doing business together: "If you are known for being a kind of crook or sneaking money around, that reputation will run ahead of you and no one will do business with you".

4.3. Relationships

All brokers seem eager to increase their network and/or achieving a closer relationship with clients. They tend to ask each other about who knows whom and how they can get in touch with them. They find information about new companies they want to approach, they try to understand which companies their competitors are working closely with, and whether they might be able to get in touch with them. One broker said "I wish I had a broader client base than I have today. You are quite vulnerable as a broker if you lose one of your close clients".

There was no evidence of the shipbrokers' openly practicing *social exchange theory*, where information is exchanged to get something in return. The one occasion when the client openly shared sensitive information in order to get the rate that he needed may fit under social exchange theory but seems to fit better under trustworthy behaviour. It was not observed that any shipbroker shared sensitive information to get something in return.

It seems that clients prefer to collaborate with other clients with whom they normally do business, where they trust each other (i.e. "fixing between friends"). In such situations,

information sharing between the two parties is likely to be present, but there is no evidence of such.

Frequency of contact. Most brokers talk to their clients every day, depending on their relationship. One broker said that he talks to some clients on an ad hoc basis: Frequently when they do business and not so often the rest of the time. “They [the clients] receive updates in writing every day, but I don’t call them”. He argues that some clients appreciate that he does not call to talk about the weather, as ‘time is money’. There might be a link between the activity level in the segment and the frequency of contact.

4.4. Behaviour

Some brokers are more outgoing and expressive than others, which makes it easier to interpret their level of motivation. However, this does not necessarily mean that the other brokers are less motivated. There seems to be a strong sense of organizational commitment: Strong team spirit and close collaborations are two keywords describing the department. The brokers share openly information about who they are representing and details about the vessel/cargo. In addition, they seem to work well as a team; they spend time with each other outside of work, participating in recreational activities and talking about personal topics.

Emotion regulation was observed when two stubborn clients tested the patience of the brokers. In one situation, the broker was frustrated because of the client’s unwillingness to negotiate. The shipbroker showed his frustration by raising his voice in an assertive style, trying to get the client to forward a rate to his superior, which he seemed unwilling to do, even though the broker acted in a highly professional manner. In the same situation, the shipbroker acted with humility and understanding towards the corresponding client, sharing their frustration of the counterparty. In the second situation, the broker acted as a mediator when two clients argued about a few cents, whereby the shipbroker showed compassion to the “loosing” party and shared the frustration over the lack of willingness to alter their rate. During the slow week the brokers had to work with their emotions when trying to conduct business at a time when no-one seems willing. The lack of in- and outgoing phone calls made it difficult to measure their level of motivation. The same applies to *job involvement*. The brokers tried to do business, but the activity level was low due to lack of fresh cargo or tonnage.

The subject of *trustworthy behaviours* by Abrams et al. (2003) was difficult to measure without researching both the shipbroker and the client. Nevertheless, certain

situations and actions show that there is a level of trust between some shipbrokers and their clients, and again between shipowners and charterers. Judging from the way in which the brokers talked to, and acted towards their clients, they all seemed to be acting in a trustworthy manner. They were using an assertive communication style, yet in a humble way, sharing their knowledge to the client about the present market. They did not gossip, or misuse information provided by others nor by the clients themselves.

Because most of the brokers seem to work closely with the same clients, it is important to act with discretion. In one situation where a client openly displays his earnings for a particular vessel, there seems to be a great level of trust between the three parties. The client, who appears to work closely with the shipbroker and the corresponding client, wanted to share information about *why* he requested that particular rate. This enabled the shipbroker and the client to understand the reason. However, looking at just one side of a relationship makes it difficult to verify whether there is a consistency between *word and deed*, therefore this behaviour is not measured.

Ensuring frequent and rich information and collaborate communication seem to be present in most brokers. They openly share information and are keen to learn more about the client personally as well as the organization s/he is representing. Brokers also share information about themselves and what they may offer as a service. They are skilled in their communication to both their clients and fellow colleagues. All brokers notified each other when sensitive information was retrieved as well as with regards to whom they may share it with. “You also talk to other brokers around the desk and get their input. If you take over a client on behalf of another broker, they know what that person is like”. There appears to be a trusting relationship between all brokers at/around the desk insomuch as they are sharing information with each other. They use Skype and WhatsApp to inform each other in group chats including the whole desk and they also have group chats for all divisions globally. As a company, they seem to be updated on relevant new information.

When communicating, the brokers tend to start with one or two personal customary questions before asking a business-related one. When communicating verbally, they all *create personal connections* by sharing some sort of personal information, and they seem up-to-date on what the client is up to (i.e. out for lunch, meetings, travelling etc.). The Olympics was a hot topic that week, which also served as an icebreaker when starting a conversation.

It seems that brokers *give away something of value* such as acting trustworthy and in good faith as they all want to fix vessels for their clients. They try to mediate between the two parties in situations where they are arguing about rates and clauses in charter parties. During difficult times, negotiations may stop due to arguing over cents; in such cases, it is important for the client to feel that the shipbroker is fighting their cause. An argument of this type was observed when the shipbroker went back and forth trying to get the two parties to agree on a rate which was only a few cents apart - the shipbroker was trying to draw both parties closer together. In addition, demurrage is a hot topic to argue about before signing the contract. Shipbrokers seem to be familiar with the negative consequences of acting dishonest and they try to avoid causing conflicts. They seem to act as mediators, bringing the clients to an agreement where both parties are satisfied. This was observed for instance during an argument over a demurrage rate as one party demanded a high rate, which the counterparty was unwilling to concede. They both seemed to agree somewhere in the middle thanks to the shipbroker's mediation.

Brokers also call just to "check up on" their client without offering any business, which may give the client a sense that the broker actually cares about them. "I also think it is important to be something more than just broker and client. Not friends per se, but something more. Acting like friends, having chemistry makes business simpler. It helps us understand each other". During observations, several lunches and business trips were planned to further develop the relationship with the clients. On one occasion, a shipbroker approached a client working in the same city, suggesting that they come to their office for lunch the next day.

Proactive service performance behaviour. During shadowing, shipbrokers' superior service was observed in 7 out of 8 brokers, while forward thinking behaviour was observed in all brokers. The brokers seemed to keep their clients up to date about all the details during negotiations and provided them with necessary information. During observations, the brokers appeared to encourage each other in forward thinking and superior service, with the senior brokers encouraging the junior brokers.

Customer orientation behaviour. During shadowing, four of eight shipbrokers seemed likely to have *satisfied their customers' needs* based on the outcome of the verbal communication. The reason why only fifty per cent of the brokers satisfied their customers' needs was probably the lack of fresh cargo or tonnage.

Job satisfaction was difficult to measure during both shadowing and observations, where it was attempted to read the brokers' body language and tone towards colleagues. Both during shadowing and observations, the shipbrokers were polite towards clients and colleagues, they seemed interested in fixing vessels and were constantly on the outlook for opportunities. They seemed relaxed rather than stressed, and there was a professional, yet casual atmosphere in the office.

The *ability to capture signals from customers* was observed in six out of eight brokers during shadowing. The shipbrokers followed up on charter parties and acted as (assumably) honest intermediaries when "fixing between friends" (broker talking to a client). In that context, one party seemed willing to ease up on their demands in order to come to an agreement with the other party – showing some sort of relationship between the two clients. In another situation, a client was willing to give a known counterpart a "fair deal" before moving on to other clients because of their history of doing business together. The two clients appeared to have a mutual relationship where the shipbroker assisted both parties. The shipbrokers came across as customer-oriented, trying to capture the signals and to fix vessels. During both shadowing and observations, the brokers discussed in pairs or in small groups about past fixtures and possible solutions for the task at hand.

Market orientation behaviour. All bulletins concerning (1) market related knowledge, (2) information acquisition, (3) utilizing market knowledge and (4) retrieving information internally were performed by all brokers during shadowing and observations. Being updated about the market and constantly on the outlook for new information, distributed between clients and colleagues, is a part of their job description. Brokers use this market knowledge to inform their client and give them their best advices. Brokers retrieve information not only from clients and colleagues, but also from sources online such as trade exchanges. Brokers shared information with each other and acted as a group to serve their clients' needs. It was observed that one broker, looking for a vessel, acted as charterers broker and believed that a colleague might have a suitable ship for his client. By constantly telling each other whom they are representing, and in addition knowing what network the other broker possesses, they might help each other out.

4.5. Communication

Physical face-to-face communication with clients was not directly observed, but some brokers were out visiting clients, and others made visitation plans, talking to their client on

the phone agreeing on details about their upcoming meeting. At least three face-to-face skype meetings were observed. In many of the observations, not a single phone call was made or received, which is considered unusual according to one of the brokers. This was confirmed during later observations, as the activity level was a lot higher and the frequency of calls increased. Telephone or audio calls via Skype were used frequently. During shadowing and observations, six out of eight brokers made or received at least one call either on Skype or telephone. In- and outgoing phone calls were performed in Norwegian or English, at a ratio of 50/50. Emails were used to receive fresh cargoes and tonnage, and then forwarded to selected suitable clients – these were visible for all the brokers - while digital communication channels, i.e. WhatsApp and Skype, were also frequently used by all to communicate with clients. “Every morning, we call our clients to learn what’s new and then we call others to retrieve information regarding what has happened in the market. Then you post that on the WhatsApp group so that everyone sees it”. One broker said that WhatsApp had been the most commonly used channel for the last couple of years. Brokers use digital communication platforms to communicate with their offices globally, keeping themselves more up-to-date about their daily work. It seems customary to send information electronically before choosing a verbal communication channel to negotiate and confirm information. Overall, WhatsApp and Skype were the most common ways of communicating, especially preferred by the junior brokers. They used email and digital communication platforms to present fresh cargo and tonnage, with a supplementary phone call to close clients to make sure that they had received the email and to enquire whether they wanted to move forward.

One broker argued that the use of digital communication platforms has increased and become more popular over the last couple of years. Some of the brokers stated that they prefer having everything in writing so that they do not misunderstand each other: “We have groups on WhatsApp that we use a lot, where we talk about more than just business. When business opportunities arise, we change over to a more formal tone”. The junior shipbrokers seem more familiar with digital communication platforms than some of the more senior brokers, who tend to prefer the telephone. Overall, all the brokers tend to prefer telephone when communicating to (very) close clients, but they also use digital communication platforms. Procedures such as retrieving and forwarding information electronically, negotiating either electronically or verbally and finalizing the fixture verbally seem to be the norm. Final negotiations over details if often performed via telephone and email with the broker as a mediator.

When observing *communication styles*, it was clear that they all used an assertive, rather than aggressive or non-assertive style. They used the appropriate industry language which both parties understood: it conveys details about ship, ports, terminology in contracts (charter parties) and phrases used in shipbroking such as guidance, fixing, subs, and more. The brokers seemed to adapt to the behaviour of the client and were clear about the objective of serving the client's needs.

Information richness. All the brokers agree that face-to-face communication provides the greatest richness, then telephone or audio calls and finally information in writing. They tend use digital communication platforms for everyday communication and prefer telephone or audio calls during negotiations.

One broker argued that face-to-face communication was “alfa and omega to meet your clients”. Other than being rich, face-to-face communication also facilitates trust and business opportunities. “It [trust] is sooo important. It is much easier to do business when you have met someone”. One client argued that the use of the “cold call” was not much appreciated by clients, and that he felt an effect after meeting the client in person. They all seem to prioritize travelling and are encouraged by their employer to travel. One broker used those trips to take an active part in recreational activities with his clients, not only for business meetings. Brokers are eager to create relationships with their clients. In addition to travelling on their own initiative, they are invited by their clients to join them on business trips to visit other clients.

Digital communication platforms. Most brokers seem to use digital communication platforms in one way or another. One broker prefers the use of Skype or Skype for Business to see his client face to face so that he can read his body language. “If I trade, I tend to use the telephone, but if I only want to submit general information such as freight rates, I use Skype”. One broker argues that you can communicate with more people over the course of a day with digital platforms.

There seem to be some challenges in connection with the use of digital communication platforms. One broker points out that some of their clients have a young staff, who prefer the use digital communication platforms; this force some of the senior brokers to adapt, which might be perceived a problem for senior brokers. A senior broker made the following comment about the challenges entailed by digital communication platforms: “Age.

Technology evolves to fast". On the other hand, some companies do not use Skype at all, so they are forced to call.

One broker argues that some of the "buzzing" around the desk is gone due to the increased use of computers. There used to be more action over the phone and e-mail; now they strive to keep online group chats updated to provide an overview of what is happening. One broker observes that some of relationship may be lost if you don't talk on the phone and rely heavily on digital platforms. The same informant argues that a combination of phone and digital platforms will provide the best outcome. Technology has made the flow of information much faster, according to another broker: "It makes it even more difficult being a spot broker". In addition, more clients make direct contact with vessel owners or exclusive brokers.

The broker continues;

"Over the course of one and a half year, WhatsApp has been increasingly used. We are using the web-based version, but you also have it on your phone. There, we have groups of several brokers from this office, acting towards large companies. We all have the same information all the time and new cargo is covered towards that customer."

There was no evidence of use of Facebook, nor was this social platform mentioned as a communication channel during the interviews.

Communication behaviour. When observing communication skills, the following bulletins were used as a guide; (1) active listening, (2) decoding and interpreting messages, (3) information processing, (4) Drawing accurate conclusions and (5) competence (using appropriate behaviour in a given context). It was observed that all the shipbrokers had the appropriate communication skills and were able to listen, process information, draw conclusions and use the appropriate behaviour during a conversation.

Active listening was observed when they communicated with a client verbally. They listened and asked questions to interpret and understand the client. In one situation where a broker and client misunderstood each other, the broker asked two or three times if the client could confirm the rate that was given by the other party during a negotiation.

Some brokers seemed to have close relationships and had a humorous tone with their client, laughing and talking about more or less personal matters before moving on to business.

Trust, friendship, chemistry, communication, information-sharing and knowledge emerged as significant factors when creating a relationship between shipbroker and client. Although they appear to be interested in “talking about more than just business”, one broker argued that “to do business” is their main priority. Besides that, having a “positive vibe” and having “something more than just a business relationship” are considered important factors. In relationships where the shipbroker and the client know each other after years of collaboration, they seem to share information with each other, updating each other with new information. The brokers were also eager to understand the psychology of the counterpart by asking questions to interpret the strategy chosen by the client. It could for example be a preferred destination, making the ship available in an area of the world where they are likely to find new cargo; or it could also be that the shipowner believes that rates will increase, so he does not want to negotiate at the current moment. In some situations, clients may try different tactics to push rates up and down, and it is the broker’s role to understand their strategy and fulfill the clients’ needs. At the same time, the client will not provide the broker with more information than necessary. Here, the *decoding and interpreting messages*-part plays an important role, as there seems to be a fine line between making or losing the deal due to clients being inflexible. In this case, the shipbrokers used their communication skills to bring both parties closer to each other. If the shipbroker is not able to do so, the negotiation fails. This predicament was detected at least once during observations.

It is difficult to measure how shipbrokers *decode and interpret messages* on digital communication platforms without looking at the history of the conversation (log) online.

Information processing is likely to take place as the brokers need to understand before *drawing accurate conclusions*. They seem to ask additional questions or repeat given statements so that both parties understand each other. It is hard to find evidence for both behaviours without doing a larger study containing both shipbroker and client.

When they communicate verbally with their client, all the brokers use appropriate behaviour, showing a great deal of *competence*. Changing behaviour through a digital platform, however, might be difficult.

4.6. Summary of main findings

The table summarizes the most important findings, separating senior and junior shipbrokers to illustrate where the findings differ. Both senior and junior shipbrokers display the same behaviours with two exceptions: emotion regulation and satisfying customers’

needs. As for the use of communication channels, senior and junior shipbrokers use different methods.

Table 3

Summary of main findings

Themes	Main findings	Senior shipbrokers	Junior shipbrokers
Interpersonal trust	Benevolence trust	Yes	Yes
	Competence-based trust	Yes	Yes
	Trust on a personal level	Yes	Yes
Relationships	Personal relationships	Yes	Yes
	Social Exchange theory	No	No
	Collaborations	Yes	Yes
	and information sharing		
Frequency of contact	Two times a week of more often	Yes	Yes
Organizational behaviour	Emotion regulation	Yes	No
Trustworthy behaviours incl. integrity (the two first ones)	Act with discretion	Yes	Yes
	Ensure rich and frequent information	Yes	Yes
	Collaborate communication	Yes	Yes
	Create personal connections	Yes	Yes
	Giving away something of value	Yes	Yes
Proactive service performance	Superior service	Yes	Yes
	Forward thinking behaviour in pursuit of customer satisfaction	Yes	Yes
Customer orientation behaviour	Satisfying customers' needs	Yes	No
	Job satisfaction	No	No
	Capturing signals from customers	Yes	Yes
Market orientation	Information acquisition/distribution	Yes	Yes
	Utilizing market knowledge	Yes	Yes
	Retrieving information internally	Yes	Yes
Communication types	Face-to-face	No	No
	Telephone	Yes	Yes
	Email	Yes	Yes
	Digital communication platforms	Yes	Yes
Which is used most often?	Face-to-face	Not used	Not used
	Telephone	Most used	Not so frequently
	Email	Frequently	Frequently
	Digital Communication Platforms	Frequently	Most used
Communication behaviour	Active listening	Yes	Yes
	Decoding and interpreting messages	Yes	Yes
	Information processing	Yes	Yes
	Draw accurate conclusions	Yes	Yes
	Competence	Yes	Yes
Communication style	Assertive	Yes	Yes
	Aggressiveness	No	No
	Non-assertive	No	No

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1. Shipbrokers' behaviours.

The shipbrokers in this study tend to take on the common roles as owners', charterers' or intermediate broker as presented in Gorton et al (2009) and Panayides (2014). It will only be possible to verify which of the roles the broker obtains by looking at each contract. The shipbrokers in this study seem to act according to Gorton et al.'s (2009) list of appropriate behaviours. They constantly keep their client up to date, act loyally, and keep track of the flow of information. They seem to be fully aware of the importance of creating personal relations and constantly look for opportunities to expand or further develop a relationship, which finds a correspondence in Gorton et al. (2009). There are signs that shipbrokers work efficiently with close clients as they know each other and therefore trust each other, coinciding with Gorton et al. (2009). Based on shadowing and observations, senior brokers seem to possess a large network of clients, while junior shipbrokers do not appear to possess the same quantity or quality, which corresponds with the views of (Panayides, 2014). While it is not possible to generalize, as this factor depends on the individual shipbroker's past working experience and personal network, it is still possible to argue that relationships take time to develop.

5.2. Interpersonal trust

All the shipbrokers appear to know the importance of cultivating trust (McAllister, 1995; Wicks et al., 1999). Having a trusting relationship between shipbroker and client is considered vital to conduct business, which was verified by all respondents and corresponds to Gorton et al. (2009). The shipbrokers seem to be willing to be vulnerable while searching for trust (Gamble & Gamble, 2005). They hope that perceived trustworthiness is achieved, as this moral quality may create economic benefits for both companies. One could argue that the shipbrokers perhaps must be the one who seeks trustworthiness from the client, as the latter is not likely to share information with the shipbroker until the shipbroker has earned that privilege (trust target) (Burke et al., 2007). Shipbrokers seem to both validate and be validated on the basis of trustworthiness and information-sharing when both shipbroker and client decide to trust each other, which resonates with Burke et al. (2007). Shipbrokers demonstrate a will to try to earn the client's trust by investing in visits and frequent communication. This study shows that developing and maintaining trusting relationships is very important in the organizational context (McAllister, 1995). As brokers rely on trusting relationships, it is easy

to say that they have economic benefits (Baier, 1994). It is possible to view trust as a process which is constantly strengthened or weakened depending on the behaviour of the two parties (Burke et al., 2007).

Shipbrokers seem to know the importance of both benevolence- and competence-based trust in the relationship between shipbroker and client. Brokers are keen to get to know each other on a personal level, which according to McAllister (1995) may provide a basis for trust. It is common that shipbrokers prove that they possess knowledge, that they are dependable and willing to invest in clients, showing both benevolence- and competence-based trust – thus coinciding with (McAllister, 1995). All shipbrokers seem to know how important it is to be competent, responsible, reliable and dependable (McAllister, 1995). There seems to be little difference between how senior- and junior shipbrokers act towards trust creation. Both groups are aware of the importance of bonding on a personal level, but also of possessing relevant information and knowledge. They argue that perhaps the affection-based trust is more important than cognition as it is less superficial, and they experience economic benefits to a larger degree after bonding on a personal level.

Brokers are interested in figuring out whom to trust and how much to trust them, coinciding with (Wicks et al., 1999). Whether or not shipbrokers and the clients have an optimal level of trust is unknown. It is tempting to believe that shipbrokers strive towards creating trust also for the basis of security (Baier, 1994), as exemplified in one broker's comment that he wished he had a broader network because you are vulnerable if something happens. Comparing against Wicks et al. (1999), there seems to be a moderate level of trust as close clients could be considered preferred trading partners.

5.3. Relationships

There are indications of dyadic relationships between some shipbrokers and clients (Nugent, 2013). There are also indications that shipbrokers seek to constantly increase their network and gain new clients, which resonates with social penetration theory (Hinner, 2010). Gorton et al. (2009) argue that visits are important to maintain and improve the contact with customers, which we confirm in this study. Visits serve not only to build or maintain a relationship between the broker and the client, but also to create or maintain relationships between clients where the broker acts as a mediator. The purpose of establishing relationships is to acquire information; it was not observed in this study whether shipbrokers also enter relationships for the purpose of learning or solving complex problems (Levin & Cross, 2004).

It is legitimate to believe that eventually a shipbroker may create a relationship with the sole purpose of learning and/or solving a complex problem. The relationships also appear to promote knowledge creation and sharing (Abrams et al., 2003). Clients appreciate that shipbrokers do not cold-call them as this is perceived as negative, which the brokers seem to be aware of (Hersch, 2014). As to creating relationships, senior shipbrokers seem to be more focused on scheduling meetings than junior brokers. Most of the junior shipbrokers work more in the spot market and may not have the time to visit clients as they are constantly on the outlook for new tonnage or cargo. Senior brokers, on the other hand, might work more effectively and take time off to travel.

The tie strength of the relationship between shipbroker and close clients is considered strong, especially given the frequency of contact: They talk daily to update each other with new information. Shipbrokers and their close clients seem to know each other's skills and expertise - as maintained by Rulke & Rau's study (2000), or at least it is the desired outcome. In addition, when working closely with clients over several years, they seem to develop a similar way of thinking and communicating. The shipbrokers that were observed working with close clients seemed to know what the client wanted in advance. The fact that one broker invited a client over for lunch shows that shipbrokers, if located in close proximity of each other, tend to use a communication channel that limits delay, coinciding with Lo & Lie (2008).

There are indications that in trusting relationships with clients, shipbrokers may experience greater knowledge exchange. Shipbrokers and clients know each other and both parties are willing to provide useful information and listen and absorb each other's knowledge, as pointed out by Levin & Cross (2004). It seems like the relationships that brokers have with their clients may have an impact on the overall performance of the relationship. as argued by Hinner (2012); the reason is that working with close clients whom they have a personal relationship with might increase their motivation and goal setting.

Based on the closeness and the interaction frequency it is fair to say that shipbrokers have a strong tie with their clients: They communicate frequently, but also strive to bond on a personal level, corresponding to Granovetter (1985). Since a shipbroker's objective is to create a trustworthy environment between the two parties, a strong tie might provide the best result. It could be inferred that shipbrokers wish clients to make decisions based on the knowledge (competence-based trust) the shipbroker possesses, something that coincides with

(Levin & Cross, 2004); broker and client then “calibrate” on each other’s skills and expertise and develop a similar way of thinking (Rulke & Rau, 2000). One could argue that the shipbroker at the outset has to adapt to the clients’ way of thinking, showing some degree of customer orientation. According to the shipbrokers, constantly communicating with their client helps developing a stronger relationship. At least one broker seems to acknowledge that “what you do for and with your client” is what counts rather than frequency of contact. The shipbrokers provide them with daily updates, but ultimately they want to do business with them, not just sending updates, coinciding with Jack (2005).

5.4. Behaviour

Emotion regulation is one organizational behaviour which some shipbrokers experience from time to time. They seem to be skilled in modifying their negative emotions into something positive, which finds a correspondence in Koole (2009) as well as in Wadlinger and Isaacowitz (2011). One could argue that it depends on the coping capabilities of each individual and cannot be generalized to all shipbrokers. They should at least know how to modify their emotions so that their behaviour will not hurt the relationship with the client, i.e. emotion contagion (Pugh, 2001). Perhaps experience also has an impact of the coping capabilities. In the two situations where the brokers had to regulate their emotions, both were experienced shipbrokers. It may be concluded that more experienced shipbrokers who know their client well might be willing to raise their voice, while less experienced shipbrokers would choose a more accommodating communication style.

Trustworthy behaviours. Most of the relevant behaviours and factors in Abrams et al.'s (2003) framework of trustworthy behaviours which affect interpersonal trust were observed in this study, showing that shipbrokers seem to be aware of the importance of trust and how trust promotes knowledge sharing and creation. The shipbrokers appear to act with discretion, ensuring the exchange of frequent and rich information, engaging in collaborative communication, creating personal connections (and sharing personal information), and they are likely to give away something of value (trust and good faith). Both senior and junior brokers seem to act in the same way. Senior shipbrokers may have an advantage in that they might have *more* to offer their clients based on years of experience. Therefore, it is important that junior shipbrokers are aware of these behaviours in order to be efficient when reaching out to clients.

Proactive service performance. This study finds that shipbrokers possess a *proactive social behaviour* (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997), as they constantly look for opportunities. They seem to offer superior service to their clients and display a forward-thinking behaviour to assess their needs. There does not seem to be any difference between senior and junior shipbrokers. Being proactive is in the backbone of a shipbroker, to the extent that it could be argued that such behaviour might be fostered within the organization and taught to new shipbrokers. The location of the organization is considered to be decentralized from normal trading routes and the customer has to face constant change depending on the market, which illustrates the importance of being proactive (Hamzah et al., 2016).

Shipbrokers are considered to be *customer oriented*, as they are geared towards satisfying their clients' needs – which resonates with Saxe & Weitz (1982) and Stock & Hoyer (2005). It is the job of the shipbroker to provide the clients with the necessary information before agreeing to a charter party. It could be argued that shipbrokers have a “concern for others” (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014) as they possess a *customer oriented behaviour* (COB) (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). A part of COB is job satisfaction, which was not detected either by senior or by junior shipbrokers. It was observed that only the senior shipbrokers were able to satisfy all their customers' needs during the study: They were proactive and seemed to come to agreements with their clients. The junior shipbrokers, on the other hand, were busy forwarding information to clients and looking for fresh cargo or tonnage. None of the observed conversations made the researcher believe that they also satisfied any customer's needs.

An important part of customer orientation is the ability to capture signals from customers, as argued by Hamzah et al. (2016 and Sharma (1999)). Both senior and junior shipbrokers seemed to have captured signals, but this was more visible in the senior shipbrokers as they frequently used audio- or video calls and seem to be clear about what they planned to do next. Junior shipbrokers appeared to focus more on digital communication and looking for suitable tonnage and/or cargo. Customer orientation revolves around the concept of putting customer's interest over one self. Although there were no indications of shipbrokers putting their customers' interest over their own or the organization's, they still came across as customer oriented.

Market orientation revolves around the concept of utilizing market information to achieve mutual and beneficial relationships (Hamzah et al., 2016), which would seem to apply to the shipbrokers in this study. Shipbrokers seem to focus on market orientation, where relationships are prioritized; this is considered vital in order to conduct business, coinciding with Stock & Hoyer (2005). Shipbrokers retrieve information and share it with clients, utilizing their market knowledge; at the same time, they gather internal information to get a better understanding of the market to serve their clients. They seem to own an *information acquisition behaviour* (Hamzah et al., 2016). No notable difference emerges between senior and junior shipbrokers in how to retrieve and utilize market knowledge: Brokers are observed to discuss with each other, process information together and act as a team, showing some degree of organizational commitment. The department works closely with their research department in addition to retrieving information from other colleagues (Schlosser & McNaughton, 2009), trade exchanges and media. Overall, the brokers display a stronger behaviour of market orientation in comparison with customer orientation.

5.5. Communication

Shipbrokers use different kinds of communication channels (McKenna, 2012). As communication is the shipbrokers' primary tool for conducting business, transactions would not occur without it (Hinner, 2010).

From the perspective of Young and Post's study (1993), there appears to be effective communication in this organization. The organization seem committed to communication as communicating is their primary job: Words are supported by action as they are customer oriented. In addition, the organization is committed to two-way communication and has a clear emphasis on face-to-face communication, since shipbrokers can use parts of a large traveling budget in order to meet clients. One could argue that effective communication *within* the organization has nothing to do with the creation of relationships and trust with clients; however, it is my stance that working closely with a team will retrieve useful information which the shipbroker may forward to his client. Therefore, choosing a shipbroker who is part of a team might provide better information comparing to an independent shipbroker working alone. Some differences were observed between the choice and use of communication channels. As clients are globally distributed, meeting them face-to-face is both expensive and time-consuming. While senior shipbrokers tend to choose "traditional" channels such as telephone and e-mail, junior shipbrokers are more inclined to use digital

solutions, coinciding with the views of Turco (2016). All brokers seem to use every available channel, but the frequency differs.

Information richness. When they trust each other, shipbrokers seem to use communication channels with a lower degree of information richness, coinciding with research by Lo & Lie (2008). This is true especially in situations where daily information is sent as customary service to minimize the cost-information exchange capacity, as pointed out by both Daft & Lengel (1986) and Rice (1992). Shipbrokers tend to utilize communication channels that yield high information richness in situations where they need to be sure that information is transferred and understood without causing conflicts, corresponding to Lo & Lie (2008). They prefer face-to-face conversations and understand that it provides the richest information and the highest level of “carrying capacity” (Barry & Crant, 2000). The findings support the theory by Abrams et al. (2003) insofar rich and frequent communication is highly present as a way to build trust.

Digital communication platforms. Research shows that the use of digital communication platforms has increased in recent times (Turco, 2016). This particular organization has adopted digital communication in the course of the past few years (Wang et al., 2016), which has had a noticeable effect on communication behaviour (Kleinrock, 2001; Lyytinen & Yoo, 2002) within the shipbrokering industry, as information is more transparent and information travels faster. The assumption by Reinsch & Beswick (1990), Trevino et al. (2000) and Webster & Trevino (1995) that communicators prefer to use ‘computer-mediated communication’ rather than face-to-face due to the costs involved does not seem to apply to shipbrokering. There is evidence that, through the use of digital communication platforms, shipbrokers may gain insights into industry trends and identify market gaps (Stockdale et al., 2012) and adapt to new market conditions (Pardo et al., 2013). They are constantly on the hunt for new information. As argued by Robbins & Hunsaker (1996), not all behaviours are relevant when using digital communication platforms or the telephone. Nevertheless, shipbrokers seem to show an interest in what has been said: They ask questions, paraphrase, avoid interrupting the speaker, do not overtalk, and make smooth transitions between the role of speaker and that of listener. While there were no experiences of shipbrokers being poor listeners, there seem to be a difference in user adoption (Kelleher & O’Malley, 2006) related to age, as senior shipbrokers seem to have difficulties adapting to new technology at the same speed as junior shipbrokers. As the fact that shipbrokers now use group chats to efficiently keep colleagues up to date (Kim & Zeelim-Hovav, 2011; Wang et al., 2016) might cause

problems as senior shipbrokers are likely to possess a lot of information which may be relevant to others. Nevertheless, communication now seems to be more open, coinciding with (Turco, 2016). Findings show that new technology has not entirely replaced the old one (Chen et al., 2004; Lo & Lie, 2008). There seem to be challenges in connection with the use of digital communication platforms, such as adoption by senior staff and rapid development of technology. Other challenges are related to information richness and the possibility of misunderstandings. Therefore, one broker chooses to physically observe his client when communicating by using video calls. This corresponds with Lo & Lie's (2008) argument that the level of trust will affect the choice of the communication channel. It appears that most shipbrokers use digital communication channels alongside conventional channels such as face to face and audio calls to make sure that there is a mutual understanding as well as to foster the relationship (Hinner, 2012).

Communication behaviour. Most shipbrokers seem to possess communication competence (Buelens, 2011), as the observed shipbrokers used the appropriate communication behaviour when communicating with clients. Shipbrokers are also observed to choose an *assertive* communication style (Waters, 1982) when communicating with clients. Small deviations emerge between senior- and junior shipbrokers in how assertive they are. Senior shipbrokers are likely to be more experienced and more confident in their arguments, while junior shipbrokers may be in a situation where the client has more experience than them.

5.6. Summary of discussion

In this study, the author has attempted to use a combination of theories from different concepts such as trust, relationships, marketing and finance to investigate trust and relationships between shipbroker and client. The combination of behaviour found in finance and marketing with the trust literature helps us understand how shipbrokers actually work.

The discussion is summarized in table 4. The table is organized according to the different concepts and its contribution to theory.

Table 4

Summary of main findings and contributions to theory

Concepts	Contribution to theory
Interpersonal trust (benevolence- and competence-based trust)	Supports the importance cultivating trust (McAllister, 1995; Wicks et al., 1999) and figuring out whom to trust and how much to trust them (Wicks et al., 1999). Contributes to new theory by including the importance of benevolence-based and competence-based trust between shipbroker and client (Abrams et al., 2003; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Wicks et al., 1999; Williams, 2001; Zand, 1972); and knowing each other on a personal level which may foster benevolence-based trust (McAllister, 1995).
Relationships	Frequency of contact, that strong ties is more beneficial (than weak ties) in the relationship between shipbroker and client (Granovetter, 1985; Jack, 2005; Levin & Cross, 2004); and how beneficial “calibration” on each other’s skills and expertise and develop a similar way of thinking may be to such relationships (Rulke & Rau, 2000).
Emotion regulation behaviour	The concept of emotion regulation (Koole, 2009; Pugh, 2001; Wadlinger & Isaacowitz, 2011) contributes to new theory. In addition, the study unveils that there seem to be a difference in emotion regulation behaviour between age groups (junior vs senior shipbrokers) in the shipbrokering context.
Trustworthy behaviours	Supports theory of trustworthy behaviours by Gorton et al. (2009). Contributes to the theory and framework of Abrams et al. (2003) and shows that several trust builders – acting with discretion, ensuring rich and frequent information, collaborative communication, creating personal connections and giving away something of value – also fit the context of shipbrokers in addition to managers.
Proactive service performance	Proactive social behaviour (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997) superior service and forward thinking behaviour (Barry & Crant, 2000; Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Hamzah et al., 2016; Rank et al., 2007).
Customer orientation behaviour	Satisfying customers’ needs (Boles et al., 2001; Gorton et al., 2009; Saxe & Weitz, 1982) (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997; Garland et al., 1989; Goff et al., 1997; Ramsey & Ravipreet, 1997) and capturing signals from customers (Hamzah et al., 2016; Sharma, 1999). Reveals a difference in customer satisfaction behavior between age groups (junior and senior shipbrokers) which may contribute to new theory.
Market orientation	Shipbrokers possessing a market oriented behaviour (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Hamzah et al., 2016; Schlosser & McNaughton, 2009).
Communication	The importance of shipbrokers possessing communication competence (Buelens, 2011) including possessing an assertive communication style (Waters, 1982); communication as a way to build trust between broker and client (Abrams et al., 2003) There seem to be a difference between <i>how</i> assertive junior and senior shipbrokers act towards clients.
Communication channels	Different kinds of communication channels used in relation to information richness (Barry & Crant, 2000; Buelens, 2011; Daft & Lengel, 1986; Lo & Lie, 2008; McKenna, 2012; Rice, 1992; Turco, 2016); and adoption of digital communication platforms (Kelleher & O’Malley, 2006; Wang et al., 2016).

5.7. Limitations

Despite its original contribution to the topic of behaviour in the maritime industry, this study has several limitations. *Method reflections.* It was decided to use the same behaviours as in Hamzah et al.'s (2016) study of individuals in the banking industry. Those behaviours consisted of proactive service performance as well as of customer- and market orientation. The reason for this choice was that the researcher compared people in the banking industry serving the b2b-market to shipbrokers working in the maritime service industry, since there

are indications that both bankers and shipbrokers display the same behaviours. The same applies for most of the trustworthy behaviours by Abrams et al. (2003), which showed to be applicable to shipbrokers.

The researcher chose to investigate the factors of both behaviours and communication, which are meant to function as tools to create trust and relationships. The study might have harvested more in-depth data by only focusing on one- or two factors. The time available functioned as a limitation as it was difficult to get a rightful picture of the informants' natural activity level. There is also the risk of the researcher being biased causing an *observer effect* (Monahan & Fisher, 2010). In fact, such risk is always present, especially during the interview process (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). With the aim to be objective, the researcher used a more or less standardized interview guide, avoiding communicating personal views or influencing the respondents in any way (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015).

During observations, it was decided not to intervene with shipbrokers when they were communicating online, and this may be the subject of research in future studies. Overall, the use of both shadowing and semi-structured interviews yielded in-depth data about shipbrokers. Both methods complement each other, as shadowing allowed the researcher to observe their natural behaviour, while interviews afforded an opportunity to obtain their views, thoughts, and reflections about their view of behaviour, trust, relationships. During the interviews, some of the observations were confirmed regarding their behaviour, showing that a combination of shadowing and interview works well in social science.

Research quality. It is likely that the results are *reliable*, given that the study is repeated on the same grounds. Culture and access to digital technology play an important role in answering the question of reliability. Regardless of which communication channel shipbrokers may use, the importance of creating trust and relationships is likely to be the same within the global maritime industry. A more comprehensive study researching multiple organizations around the globe may provide an answer to the question of reliability.

As for *validity*, there is no guarantee that the impact of the independent variable (behaviour) and the effect (relationships and trust) holds water. The *generalizability* of the study is questionable. The present results may not be generalized beyond this study because it is only conducted within one single organization in the maritime service industry. Nevertheless, the use of systematic combination (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) allows us to learn

as much as possible about the behaviours chosen by shipbrokers in the attempt to create trust and relationships with clients.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to observe which behaviours shipbrokers possess and use to create an adequate level of trust and appropriate relationships with their clients. This study attempts to answer the following questions.

Which behaviours do shipbrokers use to create and maintain interpersonal trust and relationships with clients? Shipbrokers possess five of ten trustworthy behaviours as presented by Abrams et al. (2003), including: acting with discretion, ensuring frequent and rich communication, engaging in collaborative communication, sharing personal information with clients, giving away something of value (giving trust and good faith). Shipbrokers possess behaviours such as proactive service performance, customer orientation and market orientation.

In what way may this behaviour build trust and relationships? Shipbrokers acquire these behaviours to serve their clients' needs. Shipbrokers are professionals and constantly updating themselves on new information which may suit their customers' needs, which promotes competence-based trust. To develop trust, having a business-related relationship is not enough. Therefore, shipbrokers attend recreational activities with clients to bond on a personal level. They make contact with the client frequently - nearly every day - to create relationships, which can be characterised as creating a strong tie with the client. Shipbrokers also show that they are willing to be vulnerable, providing benevolence trust. This may be obtained by adopting the different behaviours promoted by Abrams et al. (2003) known to develop benevolence-based trust.

Within communication behaviour, which communication channels are utilized and why? To be able to create trust and relationships, shipbrokers need to choose between different communication channels such as telephone, E-mail and face-to-face, but also between digital communication platforms such as Skype and WhatsApp - among others - to facilitate the flow of information. This helps to increase both benevolence- and competence-based trust. They choose the appropriate channel depending on information richness and efficiency. If trust is low, a channel providing a high level of information richness is chosen. If trust is high, they tend to use channels providing less information, i.e. digital communication channels such as Skype and WhatsApp.

This thesis has implications for both theory and practice. The implications for trust- and marketing theory support the existing literature by identifying behaviours such as

proactive service performance, market- and customer orientation as tools that help develop trust and relationships. In addition, the choice of communication channels and the necessity to possess key communication skills support the existing literature as trust- and relationship builders. This thesis contributes to method theory by using shadowing to observe behaviour. It works well accompanied by an observation guide and a following semi-structured interview. The study carries practical implications for the industry with respect to creating trust and relationships between shipbrokers and clients. If shipbrokers are aware of the behaviours described above, they could take measures to develop the relationship with their clients. The study may also be used in training of new shipbrokers and also highlight differences between junior and senior shipbrokers so both parties can learn from each other. The study may for instance be suitable for workshops where brokers collaborate and share knowledge with each other.

6.1. Future research

Further studies should include (1) the scrutiny of both parties, to confirm whether there is an effect, and if possible observe shipbrokers for a longer period avoiding the volatility in activity levels; (2) researching of online messaging logs to look at written communication; (3) a larger sampling size, as the scope of the study did not allow the researcher to analyse informants from other organizations, cultures, nationalities etc. In addition, the scope of the study could be considered to be too wide. Future studies could include (4) fewer variables to obtain more in-depth data. (5) Further research on behaviour in the maritime service industry is needed to better understand the dynamics of creating trust and relationship with clients.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Informasjon: Takk vedkommende for at de deltar, informere om anonymitet, at intervjuet tas opp og at all informasjon er konfidensiell.

Introduction information (thanking the individual, inform about anonymity, recording and confidentiality):

- 5. Hvor gammel er du, og hvor lenge har du jobbet som skipsmegler?**
How old are you, and how long have you been working as a shipbroker?

- 6. Hvor lenge har du jobbet i dette selskapet?**
For how long have you been working at this company?

- 7. Hva er det viktigste i forholdet mellom deg og dine klienter?**
What is most important in the relationship between you and your client?

- 8. På en skala fra 1-10 - der 1 ikke er viktig og 10 er veldig viktig - Hvor viktig er tillit mellom deg og klientene dine i jobben din?
Kan du utdype litt om hvorfor?**
How important is trust between you and your client? I.e. from 1-10 where 1 is considered not important and 10 is very important.

- 9. Hva betyr ordet tillit for deg?**
What does the word trust mean to you?

- 10. Hvordan jobber du for å skape denne tilliten?
Kan du gi noen konkrete eksempler på hva du har gjort? Og hva du skulle ønske du hadde gjort?**
How do you work to achieve trust? Do you have any examples of what you have done to achieve trust? And what do you wish you had done?

- 11. Har du en strategi for hvordan du skal få tillit hos klienten?
Kan du gi noen konkrete eksempler på hva du har gjort? Og hva du skulle ønske du hadde gjort?**
Do you have a strategy to get the client to trust you? Any examples of what you have done? And what do you wish you had done?

- 12. Hvor ofte er du i kontakt med klienter du jobber med?**
How often do you talk to your clients?

Two times a week or more often

Two times a week – once a month

Once a month – 4 times a year

4 times – once a year

Once a year or more seldom

13. Hvordan synes du en skipsmegler bør oppføre seg for å skape tillit og relasjoner til kundene? Har du noen konkrete eksempler på dette?

How should a shipbroker behave to create trust and a relation to his or her client? Do you have any examples?

14. Hvilke kommunikasjonskanaler som telefon, Skype, Whatsapp osv bruker du mest? (Ranke dem, gjerne måle alle tre på skala fra 1-10 der 1 er aldri og 10 er svært ofte)

Which communication channels, i.e. telephone, Skype, WhatsApp etc. do you prefer to use? If possible, could you individually arrange them in a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is never and 10 is frequently?

1-----5-----10
Aldri Svært ofte

15. Jeg ser at dere bruker mye tid på telefon og data, På en skala fra 1-10 - der 1 ikke er viktig og 10 er veldig viktig - Hvor viktig synes du personlig det er å møte kunden ansikt til ansikt?

Kan du utdype hvorfor?

Har du noen konkrete eksempler?

Hvordan prioriterer du dette i praksis (kom gjerne med eksempler)?

You spend much of your working day on the phone or the computer. How important is it to meet your client face-to-face from 1 to 10, where 1 is not important and 10 is very important? Could you please explain why? How do you prioritize this in real life? Please provide examples if possible).

16. Hvordan opplever du at bruken av Skype, WhatsApp og andre digitale kommunikasjonsplattformer har endret hvordan dere jobber? Har det noen utfordringer? Har du noen konkrete eksempler på dette?

How do you experience that the use of Skype, WhatsApp and other digital communication platforms have changed the way you are working. Do you see any challenges with them? Do you have any examples?

Gi dem din kontaktinfo hvis de skulle komme på mer i etterkant av intervju.

Fortell hva som skjer videre og når/hvordan de får tilgang til resultatene dine.

Thank the recipient for participating

Appendix B

Observation guide

Number:

Date(s):

1. Behaviour	Description	Observed? Y/N	Comments
Proactive service performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superior service • Forward thinking behaviour in pursuit of customer satisfaction 		
Customer orientation behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfying customers' needs • Job satisfaction • Capturing signals from customers 		
Market orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market related knowledge • Information acquisition/distribution • Utilizing market knowledge • Retrieving information internally 		
Organizational behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation • Job involvement • Organizational commitment 		

	(satisfaction/enthusiasm) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotion regulation 		
Trustworthy behaviours incl. Integrity (the two first ones)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act with discretion • Consistent between word and deed • Collaborate communication 		
Organizational behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding people accountable for trust 		
Relational factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share personal information with client • Do they give trust and good faith 		
Individual factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest about limitations • Do they forward the client to colleagues/connections with more experience than you on a certain topic? 		
2. Communication types	Description	Observed? Y/N	Comments
Which types is used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face • Telephone • Email • Social media • Others? 		

Which is used most often?	Measure frequency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face • Telephone • Email • Social media • Others? 		
Why do they use them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information richness theory 		
How do they talk?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry terminology • Common procedures/ways of acting 		
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening (showing interest, ask questions, paraphrase, smooth transitions between speaker and listener) • Decoding and interpreting messages • Information processing • Draw accurate conclusions • Competence: using appropriate behaviour in a given context 		
3. Communication styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-verbal behaviour pattern 	Verbal behaviour pattern	Observed? Y/N

Assertiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, steady and audible voice • Facial expressions matched to message • Appropriately serious tone • Selective interruptions to ensure understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and unambiguous language • No attributions or evaluations on other's behaviour • Use of 'I' statements and co-operative 'we' statements 	
Aggressiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatening gestures (pointed finger, clenched fist) • Loud voice • Frequent interruptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swear words and abusive language • Attributions and evaluations of other's behaviour • Sexist or racist terms • Explicit threats or put-downs 	
Non-assertive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak or whiny voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifiers ('maybe', 'kind of') • Fillers ('uh', 'you know') 	

		'well') <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negators ('It's not really that important', 'I'm not sure') 	
4. Relation ships		Observed? Y/N	Comments?
Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social penetration theory • Social Exchange theory • Collaborations • and information sharing 		
Frequency of contact (to measure ties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two times a week or more often • Two times a week – once a month • Once a month – 4 times a year • 4 times – once a year • Once a year or more seldom 		

