

THE INFLUENCE OF GROUP INTERACTIONS AND EMOTIONS ON SATISFACTION CHANGE AND INTENTION TO RECOMMEND

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ABSTRACT

This paper develops and tests a conceptual model of how group interaction dynamics affect individual emotions among members of the customer organization and how those emotions relate to individuals' satisfaction change and intention to recommend a service provider. The authors conduct a scenario-based role-play experiment to simulate the group interaction process. They manipulate three characteristics of group members: service experience, experience homophily, and power. Individual satisfaction with the service provider was assessed before and after individuals engaged in group discussions. Intention to recommend a service, negative emotions, and positive emotions were assessed after the group discussions. The data were analyzed, and hypotheses were tested using analysis of variance and structural equation modeling techniques. The study results suggest that experience homophily (vs lack of homophily) is the primary driver of individuals' positive and negative emotions during interactions with group members. The direct effect of experience homophily on positive emotions is stronger when the service experience is favorable (vs. unfavorable). The inverse effect of experience homophily on negative emotions is stronger when the service experience is favorable and when the individual has more power (e.g., managers vs. employees). Further, positive and negative emotions directly influence satisfaction change after group interactions and a mediated influence on recommendation intention through satisfaction change.

INTRODUCTION

Business-to-business (B2B) companies attempting to manage the customer experiences of their business customers face some distinctive challenges compared to business-to-consumer (B2C) companies (Witell, 2020). While individual consumers typically base their post-purchase evaluations and behaviors on their personal product and/or service experiences, business customers are organizations comprised of multiple employees. An individual employee of this business customer has product and/or service experiences that are both personal and inclusive of the shared experiences of other colleagues, which provide greater context and holistic understanding (Witell, 2020). As such, the group dynamics among the business customers' employees may affect how they evaluate and behave towards suppliers. This study utilizes a role-playing experiment to examine how individual employees' satisfaction with a service provider is affected by interactions with colleagues and how this change in satisfaction ultimately influences the intention to recommend. We argue that emotions are essential to this process.

Business-to-business (B2B) exchanges are generally thought of as being highly rational and calculated, leaving little room for personal feelings to interfere. After all, business buyers are generally concerned with their firms' bottom line, so they make decisions with return on investment (ROI) in mind. However, this view of how business decisions are made is being challenged by research demonstrating the importance of emotions in this context (e.g., Saxby et

al., 2015). Senior executives commonly use emotionally charged words to describe the purchasing process, such as “overwhelming,” “awful,” “painful,” and “frustrating,” (Toman et al., 2017). Studies have shown that individual emotions have a meaningful influence on business-to-business (B2B) relationships and decisions (Bourguignon et al., 2023; Bagozzi, 2006). While the role of emotions, and affect in general, may be smaller in B2B settings relative to business-to-customer (B2C) exchange (Pansari & Kumar, 2017), business suppliers seeking to foster higher levels of engagement should become aware of their customers’ emotions and account for the potential influence of these emotions on customer satisfaction and behavior (Kemp et al., 2018).

B2B service research reflects this changing perspective. Earlier research generally considers rational considerations like service performance and value to be the main motivators satisfaction and repurchase behavior in the context of business services (Khan et al., 2012; Lam et al., 2004; Taylor & Hunter, 2003). More recent B2B service research supports the notion that emotions will have a meaningful influence on satisfaction (Candi & Kahn, 2016) and recommendation behavior (Anaza et al., 2020; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Recommending or referring a service provider is an aspect of engagement that is more susceptible to emotional influences than direct indicators of engagement, such as purchasing behavior (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). The current study builds upon the research connecting emotions to recommendation behavior in B2B service contexts by developing a model that considers the group interactions of a buying center and changes in individual satisfaction.

B2B studies focusing on the buying process typically emphasize the steps before or during the exchange, rather than accounting for interactions that occur after a purchase has been made (Molinar et al., 2008; Patterson, 2000). Many studies that consider post-purchase behavior mainly discuss the effects from a single individual’s perspective (deLeon & Chatterjee, 2017; Lam et al., 2004; Tikkanen et al., 2000). However, in most B2B service situations, more than one person in the customer organization uses and benefits from the service being provided. Burger and Cann (1995) discuss the marketing implications of a situation like this in the context of information technology services. The completed sale of a technology solution generally initiates a complex integration process within the customer organization that motivates extensive communication about the benefits and costs of the purchase decision. These interactions and the users’ experiences are conceptualized by Burger and Cann (1995) as the main determinants of satisfaction with the service. While this conceptualization is notable, the interactions that take place post-purchase have not generally been accounted for in the academic literature, especially in empirical investigations. As a result, there has been little progress in our understanding of how intrafirm post-purchase interactions affect satisfaction change and behavior (Bohlmann et al., 2006; Lucero, 2008).

One reason for this gap in the literature is that conceptualizations regarding interactions within a customer organization are difficult to formally test due to business customers' limited availability and willingness to participate in these structured research experiments. As such, there is a tendency to construct conceptual models that are constrained by available data or that rely heavily on qualitative analyses to examine research questions in an exploratory manner. However, when examining topics that relate to psychological or group processes relevant to judgments and decisions, another possible approach is to conduct experimental investigations with subjects who play the role of actors in business settings (Rungtusanatham et al., 2011). This approach can alleviate conceptual constraints while allowing for the collection of data that enables some preliminary examination of formal study hypotheses. In this study, we apply this approach to examine the influence of individual emotions during group interactions on satisfaction change and recommendation behavior at the post-purchase stage of the business decision process.

The paper will proceed as follows. First, we explore the theoretical background, grounded in literature on group interaction processes. Then, we develop a conceptual model and derive hypotheses related to the formation of positive and negative emotions, and their influence on recommendation behavior. Next, we explain our research method and report the findings from our empirical analyses. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and managerial implications of the study and proposing future research opportunities.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Psychological processing may be considered from individual or group perspectives (Kerr & Tindale, 2004). In group settings, it is common to consider how the individuals engaged in interpersonal interactions influence one another. Judgments and the usage of information cues tend to differ markedly when considering group processing (Wallace & Hinsz, 2019). People's opinions, behaviors, reactions, and emotions are partly formed through a social learning process that occurs in interactive settings; such as a family, playground, school, or workplace (Bandura, 1977). As work in organizations increasingly occurs within teams or groups that perform specific tasks and share common goals (Kozlowski & Bell, 2012), marketers need to begin accounting for customer interactions at this level.

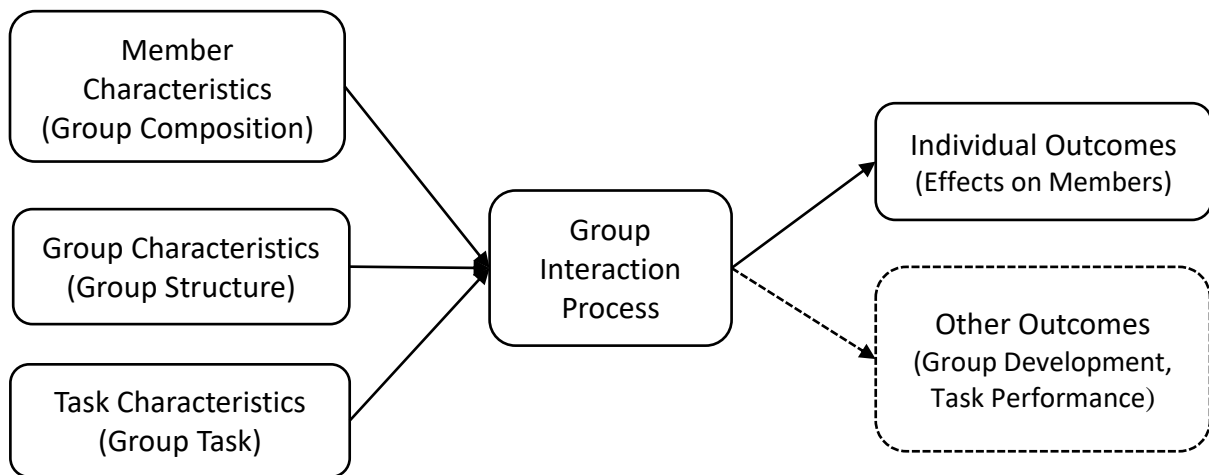
Hinsz et al., (1997, 43) describe processing at the group level as "the degree to which information, ideas, or cognitive processes are shared, and are being shared, among the group members and how this sharing of information affects both individual- and group-level outcomes". The sharing of information, ideas, and cognitive processes involves verbal and non-verbal communication among group members (Stasser & Taylor, 1991; Weick & Roberts, 1993). Groups process the available information to perform tasks such as problem-solving, judgment, inference, and decision-making (Chalos & Pickard, 1985). Group effectiveness depends heavily on what information is shared, and how that information is shared (Stasser et al., 1989).

According to McGrath (1964), the nature of a group's interactions is shaped by the interplay between the group's composition (i.e., the pattern of group members' characteristics), structure (i.e., the pattern of positions and roles), and task (i.e., the group's objective). Group interactions subsequently produce three kinds of outcomes (see Figure 1): effects on individual members (e.g., changes in abilities and attitudes), group development (e.g., changes in roles and positions), and task performance changes (e.g., quantity, quality, speed). The present study relates to the effects of interaction processes on individual customer group members. Specifically, we consider the effects on emotions, attitudes (i.e., satisfaction), and behaviors (i.e., recommendation).

Heretofore, we refer to a service's decision-makers, direct users, and other beneficiaries as the customer group. The composition of the customer group is similar to a buying center (e.g., Johnson, 2023; Johnston & Bonoma, 1981), but the customer group is not tasked with making a purchase decision. Individual members of a customer group interact with one another about services provided to the organization. Their experiences with the service and quality of communications with the service provider might be similar or dissimilar. The individuals in the customer group weigh available pieces of information differently and utilize individualized informational cues to form their judgments about the service and the service provider. However, through conversations individuals' perspectives on their experiences typically move closer to a shared group reality (Bormann, 1982), and this process is accompanied by some changes to these initial judgments (i.e., satisfaction).

Our conceptualization suggests that positive and/or negative emotions will naturally arise as customer group members interact with one another regarding their service experiences (Roy et al., 2019). These emotions would be inextricably linked to the service provider as the focal point. The emotions are then expected to affect how much individuals' satisfaction with a service provider changes after group interactions. In the next section, we discuss characteristics that affect the group interaction process (i.e., group composition, group structure, and group task) and explicate the role of each in the conceptual framework and subsequent empirical study.

Figure 1
Antecedents and Consequences of the Group Interaction Process



Note: Adapted from McGrath (1964).

----- indicates that the concept and path are not addressed in the present study

Group Composition

Group composition properties refer to attributes of individual group members, such as abilities, attitudes, personality characteristics and background characteristics (McGrath, 1964; Rupert et al., 2019). Some individual traits, such as job tenure or age, can be averaged and discussed as a group characteristic. Another way of describing group composition is by considering the extent to which group members exhibit similarity on a particular trait, which we heretofore refer to as the group's degree of *homophily* on that trait.

In the context of the present study, our conceptual model draws on McGrath's (1964) framework by looking at two group member properties that derive from service encounters: service experience and experience-homophily. We describe service experience in terms of its valence, whether group members' previous experience(s) with the service provider was generally positive or negative. An individual's service experience homophily would relate to the proportion of group members that had similarly positive or negative experiences with the provider. For example, in a 3-member group, experience-homophily would arise if a group member that had a positive service experience encounters another who had a positive service experience. In general, homophily influences the interaction process by lowering friction and improving communication among members (Fiedler et al., 1961). In the hypothesis development section, we further discuss how

service experience and experience-homophily can influence group interaction processes and, consequently, group members' emotions.

Group Structure

The network of connections among members establishes the structure of a group (Rulke & Galaskiewicz, 2000). In our conceptual model, we focus on a specific type of group structure, namely, the power structure. Though French and Raven (1959) identify five bases of power (i.e., referent, expert, reward, coercive, legitimate), we will focus on power designated to a position based on a company or organization's formal hierarchy, which is most closely related to legitimate power. Referent and expert power are dependent on idiosyncratic behaviors rather than the organization (Student, 1968). Though reward and coercive power are organizationally determined, they are respectively considered negative and positive forms of power (Harness et al., 2018), so their application could affect the group interaction process in ways beyond a purely structural influence.

In an organization, the formal role held by an individual conveys information about the amount of power held in comparison to related positions (McGrath, 1964). For example, the position of manager implies that there are some individuals whose work is overseen by the person in this role. In the case of a leader-subordinate relationship, the leader has legitimate power to direct certain activities of subordinates and broader decision-making authority. In this study, we are interested in seeing how the formal role of individual group members affects the individual outcomes generated by the group interaction process. In the hypothesis development section, we elaborate on how power influences group members' emotions during group interactions.

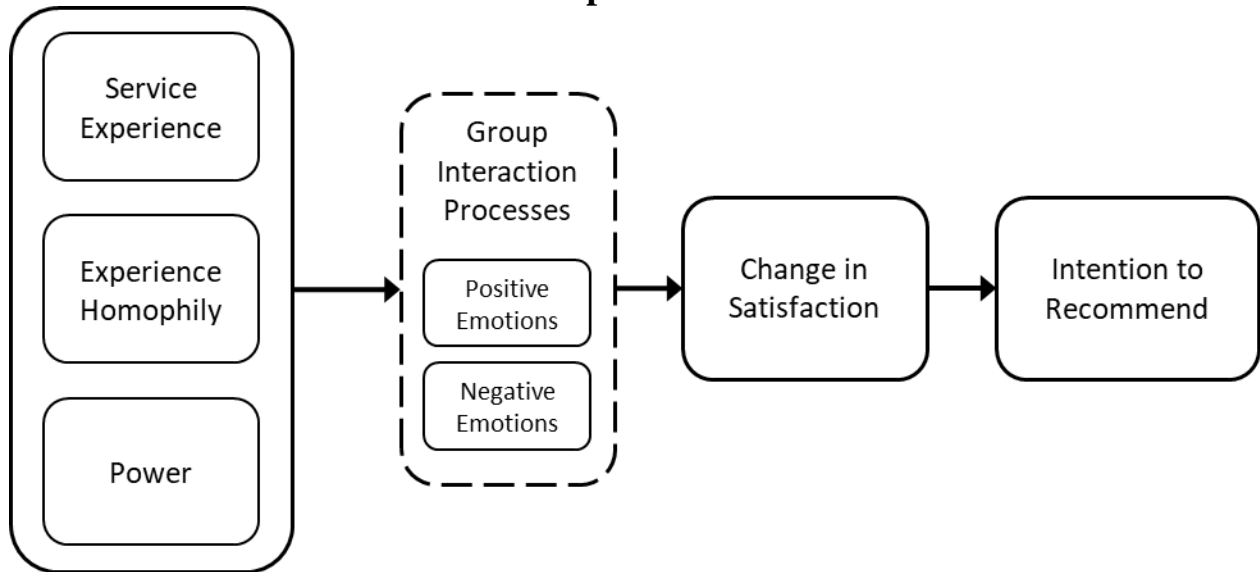
Group Task

A group has a set of goals or reasons for its existence, which are referred to as a group task (Nouri et al., 2013). The task influences the pattern of communication and imposes specific performance and coordination requirements on the group (McGrath, 1964). Thus, it is important to consider the nature of a task as the basis of group interactions. Hackman and Morris (1975) specify three distinct types of group tasks: 1) *production tasks*, which require ideas to be produced and developed, 2) *discussion tasks*, which require issues to be evaluated, and 3) *problem-solving*, which require specific actions to be followed to solve some problem. Whereas the production and problem-solving tasks are prevalent in the early and middle stages of the organizational buying process, discussion tasks are common at the post-purchase stage. As such, we explicitly consider a discussion task in this study, whereby the customer group collectively evaluates the services provided to them.

Effects on Members

The outcomes of group interaction processes determine how well groups perform on assigned tasks, influence groups' development, and affect individual members (McGrath, 1964). In our conceptual model, (see Figure 2) we suggest that positive or negative emotions can arise during customer group interaction processes (e.g., Ashkanasy and Doris, 2017). These emotions and the content of the group interactions affect changes in members' satisfaction and their intentions to recommend a service provider. In the following sections, we present specific hypotheses on the relationships depicted in our model.

Figure 2
Conceptual Model



HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Antecedents of Emotions during Group Interactions

The favorable and unfavorable aspects of service exchanges can create specific emotions in customers (Bock et al., 2016; Weiner et al., 1978). Moreover, in the customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction literature, it is well established that service experiences can cause positive and negative emotions (Cepeda-Carrión, 2023; Oliver, 1993). Various aspects of the service experience, including the service environment, front-line employees, and fellow customers, can generate emotional responses (Ali et al., 2014; Bitner, 1992; Grace & O’Cass, 2004). During the group interaction process, customer group members share their service experiences and often relive the emotions generated from those experiences. Research suggests negative feelings can be reinforced when customers share their negative experiences privately with other customers (Balaji et al., 2015; Bearden & Oliver, 1985). Conversely, research suggests that sharing a positive experience heightens its impact on positive affect (Lambert et al., 2012). The research suggesting that sharing service experiences with others reinforces customers’ feelings leads us to hypothesize the following:

H1a: *A customer group member that has a favorable (unfavorable) service experience, will feel more (less) positive emotions during group interactions.*

H1b: *A customer group member that has a favorable (unfavorable) service experience will feel less (more) negative emotions during group interactions.*

Homophily describes the extent to which a person finds similarity with others on a particular attribute. For instance, people can perceive similarity in demographic variables, appearance, attitudes, beliefs, background, values, or experiences (Ahlf et al., 2019; Filieri et al., 2023). We define experience-homophily as sharing the same valence of experience, whether it is positive or negative. Importantly, we consider experience-homophily to be a global assessment, not specific to any service attribute, that is based on the general positivity or negativity of customers' actual experience rather than how they quantitatively rate their experience. Considering the heterogeneity of service offerings, it is common for there to be variance in the valence of the service experience across individuals in a customer group. Experience-homophily exists when a person encounters another in the customer group with a similarly positive or negative experience with a particular service provider. Conversely, experience-homophily would not exist when all others in the customer group have unique service experiences, whether positive or negative.

We propose that homophily will influence interactions among the members of a customer group (e.g., Ahlf et al., 2019; Mende et al., 2024). Though experience homophily has not been studied in B2B research, the literature suggests that other forms of homophily can facilitate communication (Ahlf et al., 2019), since communicators with similarities are likely to share common meanings for their exchanged messages (Rogers et al., 2001). Besides, when two people have similar experiences, they are more likely to listen attentively to one another (Gotlieb & Sarel, 1992), enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of the communication. Since similarity makes people assume they have common needs and goals (McGuire, 1968), individuals finding experience-homophily will feel more at ease during their conversation and feel more positive emotions. However, research suggests that when people do not find homophily with others, they feel more negative emotions (Prisbell & Andersen, 1980). Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H2a: *A customer group member who has (lacks) experience-homophily with her/his group, will feel more (less) positive emotions during group interactions.*

H2b: *A customer group member who has (lacks) experience-homophily with her/his group, will feel less (more) negative emotions during group interactions.*

Power is a primary force in social relationships and interactions (Jin et al., 2020; Vorauer & Quesnel, 2018). Keltner et al. (2003, p. 5) define power as "an individual's relative capacity to modify others' states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments". Resources and punishments can take different forms, such as money, physical pleasure/harm, knowledge, affection, friendship, decision-making opportunities, verbal abuse, and exclusion. In an organization with a defined hierarchical structure, formal roles often dictate how the individual members of a work team can allocate resources to one another (Hickson et al., 1971; Pfeffer, 1992). For example, a manager may have the power to allocate additional salary, increase the decision-making authority of a subordinate, or highlight exemplary performance to others. In contrast, it is unlikely that a subordinate would have the power to disperse these resources in his/her role.

Several studies have shown that the power or status of a member influences the rate, direction, and nature of his interactions with the group. High-power members communicate more than low-power members and are more commonly addressed by other members (Kelley, 1951; Strodbeck et al., 1957). In addition, high-power or high-status members criticize low-power members more often and have greater influence. Low-power members are not as critical of high-

power members and communicate more task-irrelevant messages (McGrath, 1964). When having to speak up or disagree with supervisors, it is common for low-power members to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and stress (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Burris, 2012).

Based on the approach/inhibition theory of power, higher social power increases the experience of positive emotions, whereas lower social power increases the experience of negative emotions (Keltner et al., 2003). For instance, Berdahl and Martorana (2006) manipulated social power in 61 three-person groups, finding that individuals with high power experienced and expressed more positive emotions and less anger than individuals with low power. Following this research, we hypothesize that power derived from formal roles will have a similar impact on positive and negative emotions:

H3a: *A customer group member with greater power will feel more positive emotions during group interactions than one with lower power.*

H3b: *A customer group member with greater power will experience less negative emotions during group interactions than one with lower power.*

Moderators of the Effect of Experience-Homophily on Emotions

Previously, we proposed that experience-homophily would enhance the positive emotions and diminish the negative emotions felt by customer group members, primarily because homophily improves communication and interactions among group members (Gotlieb & Sarel, 1992; Mende et al., 2023; Prisbell & Andersen, 1980). However, we also expect that the valence of the service experience (i.e., favorable or unfavorable) will moderate the effect of experience homophily on emotions.

Research indicates that negative information is generally weighted more heavily than positive information (Taylor, 1991); and that negative information is considered more diagnostic than positive information (Siegrist & Cvetkovich, 2001; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989). Negative information is often transparent and unambiguous, whereas positive information is not (White et al., 2003), so people tend to have more confidence in their negative opinions than their positive opinions. Since individuals are already highly certain of themselves when conveying negative information to others (Poortinga & Pidgeon, 2004), the added confidence benefits that derive from homophily with group members during interactions would be less pronounced. Thus, we expect the benefits of experience-homophily to be greater when the customer group member contributes positive information from a favorable service experience rather than negative information from an unfavorable experience. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H4a: *There will be an interaction between service experience and experience-homophily, such that when the service experience is favorable, the direct effect of experience-homophily on the positive emotions felt during group interactions will be stronger than when the service experience is unfavorable.*

H4b: *There will be an interaction between service experience and experience-homophily, such that when the service experience is favorable, the inverse effect of experience-homophily on the negative emotions felt during group interactions will be stronger than when the service experience is unfavorable.*

Though many people may contribute information and opinions that influence an overall evaluation in a business unit, generally, some individuals are tasked with gathering the potentially diverse opinions of others from the team and bringing the group to consensus. Organizations formally place these individuals in higher power roles through the establishment of a hierarchical structure. Typically, managers with greater legitimate power are responsible for guiding the group and bridging different opinions to reach a common ground. The relative ease or difficulty of arriving at a consensus should affect the emotions of high-power managers within a customer group more than the emotions of employee members with less power. The goal attainment process results in positive and negative emotions (Bagozzi & Pieters, 1998; McKechnie et al., 2018), and the goal of consensus would be more relevant to individuals in managerial roles.

When the experiences of a manager are like those of others in a customer group, the manager can generate consensus by bringing the dissenting opinions closer to their own. The experience-homophily shared with others in the group should make directing the conversations a bit smoother, generating more positive emotions for the individual. Though experience-homophily would also increase the positive emotions of employees with less formal power, the relevance of the consensus goal to managers with legitimate power should strengthen the influence of experience-homophily amongst these individuals. When an individual shares experience-homophily with others in the group, the final group consensus should be closer to their individual opinion than when there is a lack of experience-homophily, providing a greater sense of goal attainment. With the higher relevancy of the consensus goal to managers, the high-power managers should experience more positive emotions than the employees with lesser power. This would be consistent with Bagozzi and Pieters (1998), who find the relationship between goal attainment and positive emotions to be stronger among individuals for whom the goal is most relevant.

Similarly, we expect experience-homophily to reduce the negative emotions of high-power managers more than it reduces the negative emotions of lower-power employees. Managers' who have service experiences that are similar to other employees have an easier time exerting pressure and influencing other customer group members (McPherson et al., 2008), while more care is required when engaging in conversations with others that have disparate opinions. Further, a lack of experience-homophily represents a threat to an individual's power. The individual would have a minority opinion and face the uncertainty of opposing most others, which weakens confidence and sense of authority (Mourali & Yang, 2013), leading to negative emotions during the interactions. As the threat to power is greater for those in legitimate power roles, this lack of experience-homophily should generate more negative emotions in managers than it would for employees with lesser power. Hence:

H5a: *There will be an interaction between power and experience-homophily will interact, such that when power is greater, the direct effect of experience-homophily on the positive emotions felt during group interactions will be stronger than when power is lower.*

H5b: *There will be an interaction between power and experience-homophily, such that when power is greater, the inverse effect of experience-homophily on the negative emotions felt during group interactions will be stronger than when power is lower.*

Emotions during Group Interactions and Change in Satisfaction

During group interactions, members hear about each other's service encounters and start to process this new information by comparing it to their own service experience and integrating agreeable or opposing views into their initial evaluation (Brannon & Sampler, 2018). We previously argued that this group interaction could raise positive and negative emotions in customer group members. These emotions affect information processing and alter satisfaction evaluations (Söderlund & Rosengren, 2004). While transaction-specific satisfaction judgments are often described as emotional responses, cumulative satisfaction assessments that consider overall experiences are more similar to attitudes (Olsen & Johnson, 2003; Prassida & Hsu, 2022).

An individual's change in satisfaction toward a service provider is the difference between their satisfaction before and after interacting with other members of the customer group. When satisfaction after group interactions is higher than before group interactions, the change in satisfaction is greater than zero. Research suggests that positive emotions towards aspects of the service experience relate to more favorable satisfaction assessments, and negative emotions relate to less favorable satisfaction assessments in B2B contexts (Candi & Kahn, 2016; Siadou-Martin et al., 2017; Pascual-Nebreda et al., 2023). Though post-purchase interactions are a key aspect of the B2B experience (Burger & Cann, 1995), their role in determining satisfaction has largely been unaccounted for. We expect that emotions experienced during group discussions over the service provider will also influence satisfaction since these discussions are also a key aspect of the consumption experience in B2B contexts. Specifically, we hypothesize:

H6a: *Positive emotions experienced during group interactions will enhance the change in satisfaction toward a service provider.*

H6b: *Negative emotions experienced during group interactions will diminish the change in satisfaction toward a service provider.*

According to evaluation theory, emotions at a single point in time influence processing, judgment, and eventually one's behavior (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Generally, positive emotions lead to a more favorable judgment or evaluation than negative emotions. In turn, positive or negative evaluations are followed by behaviors reflective of the evaluation (Kemp et al., 2018; Anaza et al., 2020). Considering the well-established, direct relationship between satisfaction and recommendation behavior in B2B service contexts (e.g., Lam et al. 2004; Roy et al., 2019; Wangenheim, 2003), we suggest that changes in satisfaction will be the evaluation mechanism by which emotions during group interactions will influence recommendation intentions. Specifically, we hypothesize:

H7a: *Positive emotions experienced during group interactions will indirectly increase the intention to recommend a service provider via change in satisfaction.*

H7b: *Negative emotions experienced during group interactions will indirectly decrease the intention to recommend a service provider via change in satisfaction.*

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

We used scenario-based role-playing experiments to test the proposed hypotheses (e.g., McCollough et al., 2000; Smith et al., 1999; Söderlund & Rosengren, 2004). Scenarios have advantages over real observation, as they eliminate difficulties such as ethical considerations, expenses, and time. In addition, scenarios facilitate manipulation and allow more control over variables (Bitner et al., 1990). We first conducted a pilot study with 18 participants to test the clarity of our role-play instructions and scenarios. We revised the study scenarios and instructions based on participants' feedback and responses.

Procedure

Upper-level undergraduate business students enrolled in sales or marketing strategy courses at a U.S. urban university took part in the main study during class sessions and received bonus points as an incentive. In the university's business school, the average age of upper-level students is 25.8, with 60% over the age of 23. Approximately 2/3 of the business school students are presently employed. Only junior and senior-level students participated in the study.

One of the authors attended class sessions in person to conduct the experiment after being granted permission by the instructors. We started the role-play exercise by randomly assigning participants to 3-member customer groups. A 3-member group is the smallest group that allows discussion between members with similar and dissimilar characteristics, such as levels of power (Shelly & Webster, 1997). Some 2-member groups were formed when the number of class attendees was not a factor of three, but responses from the 2-member groups were not retained in the final sample. We randomly assigned one of three job responsibilities to each member of the customer group (i.e., budgeting, quality control, or time management) so that each participant would have a different perspective of the relationship with the service provider and so the study results would be more generalizable.

Each person was required to spend time reading his or her assigned scenario. The scenario provided information about the firm providing the service and details about the participant's service experience. In addition to discussing the service from the perspective of one of the three distinct job responsibilities, the service context was described as either consulting or advertising, each participant was identified as either a manager or an assistant manager, and either favorable or unfavorable details were provided about the service experience. Hence, we created 24 (3 X 2 X 2 X 2) distinct scenarios in all. After reading their scenario, participants were required to answer a survey that included some attention checks and questions about their individual satisfaction with the service provider (see the paper APPENDIX to review sample scenarios).

We structured the scenarios provided to each group so that each member had a different job responsibility, so there was one manager and two assistant managers in each group, and so that one person in each group had a service experience that differed in valence from the other two (i.e., two had unfavorable service experiences and one had a favorable service experience or two had favorable service experiences and one had an unfavorable service experience). By structuring the scenarios in this way, there was always one person in each customer group with greater legitimate power (manager) and one person in each customer group who lacked experience-homophily. This organization helped facilitate our manipulations across the three key antecedents in the study: service experience (favorable/unfavorable), power (high/low), and experience-homophily (yes/no). Experience-homophily was considered "yes" for an individual when one of the other two people in the group had a similarly favorable or unfavorable service experience.

After completing the individual surveys, participants were instructed to get together with the other members of their group to reach a consensus on how to evaluate the service provider and discuss their service experiences with one another. Each group submitted their consensual evaluation and then each participant completed one more survey individually. This survey included another set of questions about their satisfaction with the service provider, along with questions about their felt emotions during the group discussions, and their intentions to recommend the service provider. One complete round of role-play took approximately 30 minutes. In some classes, the allotted class time was sufficient for researchers to conduct two rounds of role-play, and participants were carefully assigned to different scenarios when this occurred. The final sample included 146 participants, of which, seventy-six engaged in two rounds of role-play. There were 222 individual observations across seventy-four complete groups. We did not find any significant differences between individuals that engaged in one versus two rounds of role-play on any of the constructs measured in the study ($p \geq .16$).

Measures

Individual satisfaction with the service provider was measured both before and after the group discussion. Each group member independently answered five items adopted from Lam et al. (2004). We capture *change in satisfaction* by subtracting the measured value of each satisfaction item taken before the group discussion from the measured value of each corresponding item taken after the group discussion. We used three items from Lam et al. (2004) to measure *intention to recommend* after the group discussion. Both satisfaction and intention to recommend were measured on a scale from 0 = “strongly disagree” to 10 = “strongly agree”. Scale items are shown in Table 1.

To capture positive and negative emotions, participants were asked, “During the process of discussing with your previous team members to reach a consensus on your overall evaluation, how much did you feel each of the following emotions?” They responded to each emotion on a scale from 0 = “not at all” to 10 = “very much”. The set of positive (excited, glad, content, self-assured) and negative (angry, ashamed, disappointed, and uncomfortable) emotions was based on Bagozzi and Pieters (1998). To confirm that the positive and negative emotions represented different dimensions, we conducted a factor analysis on these items with varimax rotation, and the positive and negative emotions clearly loaded on two different factors.

Attention and Manipulation Check

After reading through their assigned scenario and prior to having group interactions, participants answered three open-ended questions to check their attentiveness to the key information: 1) position in the company, 2) job responsibility, and 3) the main aspects of their service experience. All participants answered at least two of these attention-check questions correctly, and only five respondents missed a question. Further, we allowed all participants to review the scenario again, prior to engaging in interactions with the other members of the customer group, to clarify any aspects of the scenario that were not correctly recalled and further strengthen their understanding of the situation. Initial satisfaction with the service provider was assessed at the same time the attention check measures were taken. Consistent with the intended manipulation, respondents were more satisfied after the favorable service experience than after the unfavorable service experience ($M_f = 8.44$, $M_u = 2.41$, $F(1, 220) = 865.59$, $p < .001$). This held true when tested within each service context (i.e., advertising, consulting) and within each job description (i.e., budgeting, quality control, time management).

FINDINGS

Main Effects

We applied a 2 (service experience: favorable/unfavorable) X 2 (experience homophily: yes/no) X 2 (power: high/low) design and conducted MANOVA to analyze the data. The direct effect of service experience on positive ($F(1, 214) = .01, p = .93$) and negative ($F(1, 214) = .77, p = .38$) emotions was non-significant, failing to support Hypotheses 1a and 1b (see Table 2).

However, we found that experience-homophily had a significant effect on both positive ($F(1, 214) = 68.05, p = .00$) and negative emotions ($F(1, 214) = 25.76, p < .01$), providing support for Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Individuals sharing experience-homophily with another group member experienced more positive emotions ($M = 6.12$ vs. 4.86) and fewer negative emotions ($M = 1.13$ vs. 1.92) than those who lacked experience-homophily. Tests of the effects of power on emotions returned mixed results. Power had a significant effect on positive emotions ($F(1, 214) = 4.83, p = .03$), as members with greater power experienced more positive emotions ($M = 5.84$ vs. 5.13). On the other hand, the effect of power on negative emotions ($F(1, 214) = 3.47, p = .06$) trended in the opposite direction of our hypothesis ($M_{\text{high}} = 1.79, M_{\text{low}} = 1.28$). Thus, the results provide support for Hypothesis 3a but fail to support Hypothesis 3b.

Interactions

The interaction between experience-homophily and service experience had a significant influence on both positive ($F(1, 214) = 8.57, p < .01$) and negative emotions ($F(1, 214) = 10.03, p < .01$). ANOVA analyses showed that the direct effect of experience-homophily on positive emotions ($M_{\text{yes}} = 5.45, M_{\text{no}} = 5.26, F(1, 110) = .21, p = .64$) and inverse effect of experience-homophily on negative emotions ($M_{\text{yes}} = 1.50, M_{\text{no}} = 1.37, F(1, 110) = .11, p = .74$) were non-significant when service experience was unfavorable. Conversely, the direct effect of experience-homophily on positive emotions ($M_{\text{yes}} = 6.34, M_{\text{no}} = 4.43, F(1, 108) = 19.31, p < .001$) and inverse effect of experience-homophily on negative emotions ($M_{\text{yes}} = 0.85$ vs. $M_{\text{no}} = 2.66, F(1, 108) = 23.14, p = .001$) were significant when service experience was favorable. These results collectively support Hypotheses 4a and 4b, the effect of experience-homophily on emotions is more substantial when the service experience is favorable (see figure 3).

The interaction between experience-homophily and power did not have a significant effect on positive emotions ($F(1, 214) = .99, p = .32$), failing to support Hypothesis 5a. However, further analysis showed that managers experienced significantly more positive emotions than employees when they had experience homophily ($M_{\text{yes}} = 6.76, M_{\text{no}} = 5.57, F(1, 146) = 9.80, p < .01$). The interaction did have a significant effect on negative emotions ($F(1, 214) = 5.24, p = .02$). ANOVA analyses showed that experience-homophily did not significantly lower negative emotions when the individual was in the lesser power role of an assistant ($M_{\text{yes}} = 1.24, M_{\text{no}} = 1.36, F(1, 146) = .16, p = .69$), but did significantly lower negative emotions when the individual was in the higher power role of a manager ($M_{\text{yes}} = 1.03, M_{\text{no}} = 2.79, F(1, 72) = 10.80, p < .01$). These results collectively support Hypothesis 5b. (see figure 4).

Though not hypothesized, in follow-up analyses, we found that the three-way interaction of experience homophily, service experience, and power was also significant for negative emotions ($F(1, 214) = 4.92, p = .028$), but not positive emotions ($F(1, 214) = .53, p = .47$). Managers who had a favorable service experience that was dissimilar to others, felt more negative emotions ($M = 3.66, SE = .38$) than low power members ($M = 1.3, SE = .45$) (see figure 5). Across all the potential interactions, significant effects involving negative emotions were more common than when the interaction involved positive emotions. This may be due in part to the relatively large main effect

Table 1:
Construct and Measurement Model Analysis

Latent Construct	Items/Indicators	Loading	Mean	SD
<i>Negative Emotions</i> AVE = 0.53; α = .80	Uncomfortable	0.54	0.97	2.03
	Disappointed	0.85	2.25	3.03
	Ashamed	0.65	0.83	1.78
	Angry	0.83	1.82	2.75
<i>Positive Emotions</i> AVE = 0.65; α = .86	Self-Assured	0.66	6.35	2.56
	Glad	0.97	4.97	2.68
	Excited	0.76	4.85	2.68
	Content	N/A	5.95	2.64
<i>Intention to Recommend</i> AVE = 0.90; α = 0.98	I will say positive things about Solutions Co. to other professional	0.96	4.24	2.97
	I will recommend Solutions Co. to professional colleagues who seek my	0.92	3.98	2.87
	I will encourage other companies to do business with Solutions Co.	0.96	3.83	2.85
<i>Satisfactor Δ</i> AVE = 0.82; α = 0.95	In general, I am very satisfied with Solutions Co.	0.94	-0.97	2.63
	Overall, I am very satisfied with my relationship with Solutions Co.	0.92	-1.13	2.61
	Overall, Solutions Co. is a good company to do business with.	0.93	-1.39	2.87
	Overall, Solutions Co. treats my company with respect.	0.84	-1.48	3.09
	Overall, the service of Solutions Co. comes up to my expectations.	0.89	-0.98	3.07

of that experience homophily has on positive emotions and further supports the notion that negative and positive emotions represent different dimensions.

Table 2
ANOVA results

Variable	Positive Emotions		Negative Emotions	
	F-value	P-value	F-value	P-value
Service Experience	.007	.934	.766	.382
Experience Homophily	15.194	.000	7.884	.005
Power	4.833	.029	3.467	.064
Experience Homophily * Service Experience	8.566	.004	10.031	.002
Experience Homophily * Power	.995	.320	5.243	.023
Service Experience * Power	.320	.572	4.869	.028
Experience Homophily * Service Experience * Power	.534	.466	4.921	.028

Figure 3
Effect of Interaction between Experience Homophily and Service Experience on Emotions

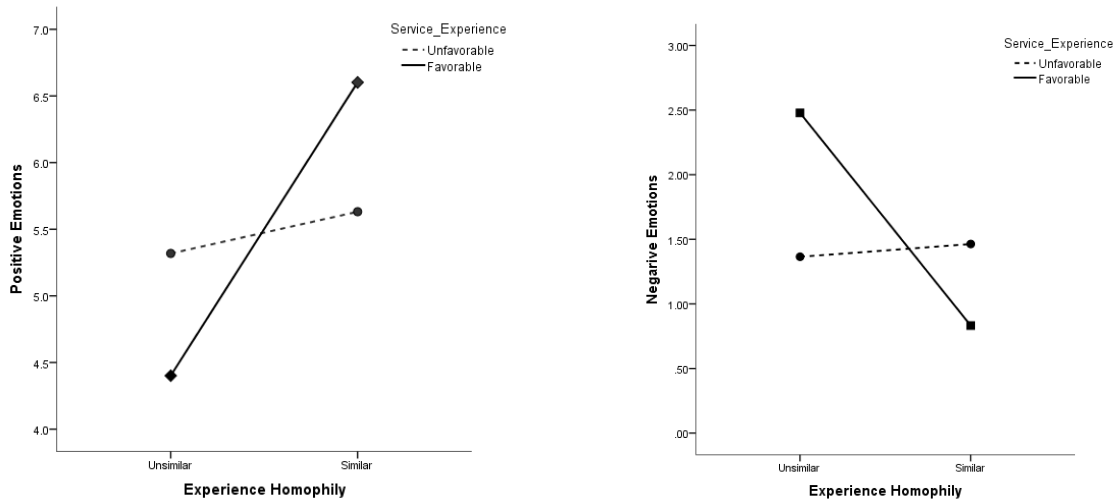
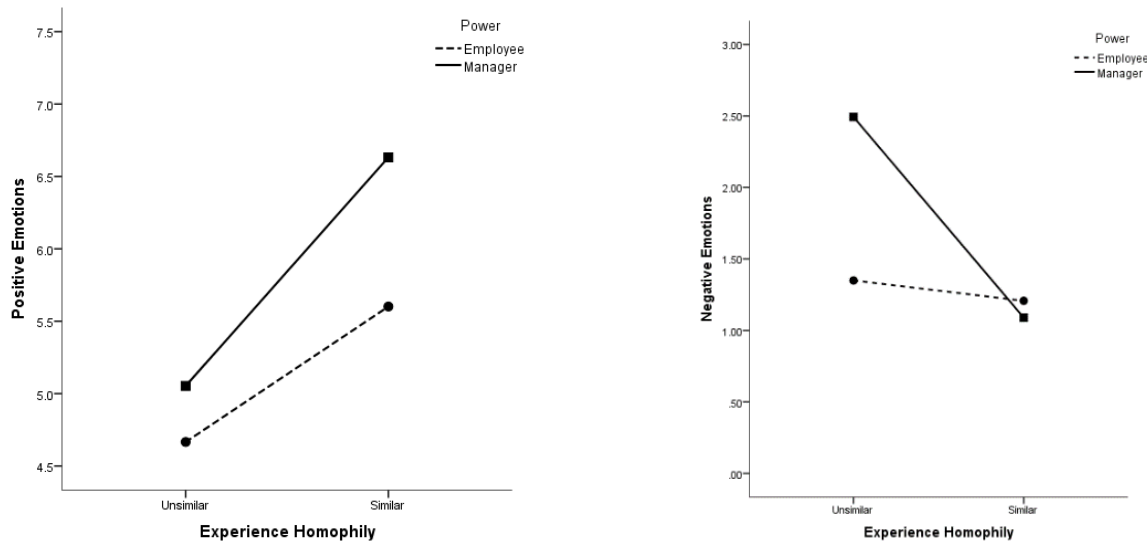


Figure 4
Effect of Interaction between Experience Homophily and Power on Emotions



Structural Model Analyses

To test Hypotheses 6 and 7 regarding the influence of positive and negative emotions on changes in satisfaction and intention to recommend, we conducted an SEM analysis using AMOS 25 with maximum likelihood estimation. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first conducted to assess the properties of the latent constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). While most of the fit indices were acceptable (i.e., $\chi^2 = 261.05$, $df = 98$; CFI = 0.95; NNFI = 0.94), the RMSEA of .087, $CI_{90\%} = .074$ to .10 implied only a marginal model fit. Upon a closer examination of the items, it was found that the “content” positive emotion item exhibited a high cross-loading and error covariance. After removing this item and estimating the measurement model again, all the fit indices indicated acceptable model fit ($\chi^2 = 182.15$, $df = 84$; CFI = 0.97; NNFI = 0.96; RMSEA = .073, $CI_{90\%} = .058$ to .087). In this revised measurement model, all the standardized factor loadings were $\geq .54$ and significant at $\alpha = .01$, providing evidence of convergent validity. All scales demonstrated Cronbach alpha $\geq .80$, and the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was ≥ 0.53 (see Table 1). The AVE for every first-order construct exceeded the squared correlation between all pairs involving the construct and another first-order construct, providing evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Correlations and descriptive statistics for the model constructs are shown in Table 3.

Following the measurement analysis, a structural model was estimated to examine the direct and indirect influences of positive and negative emotions experienced during group interactions on change in group member satisfaction and recommendation intention. We controlled for the potential influences of the experimental manipulations on the variables in the model as well. Though these were dichotomous variables, since our model modeled them as exogenous constructs, their inclusion did not require specific changes to the standard model estimation (e.g., Mueller and Hancock, 2018). The fit indices indicated the structural model was a good fit to the

data: $\chi^2 = 232.79$, $df = 117$; CFI = 0.97; NNFI = 0.96; RMSEA = .067, CI_{90%} = .054 to .079. Table 4 and Figure 6 detail the structural analysis results, including the significant control effects. Positive emotions experienced during group interactions enhanced the change in satisfaction toward a service provider ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.28$, $p < .05$). In contrast, negative emotions experienced during group interactions diminished the change in satisfaction toward a service provider ($\beta = -.19$, $t = -2.73$, $p < .05$), supporting Hypotheses 6a and 6b.

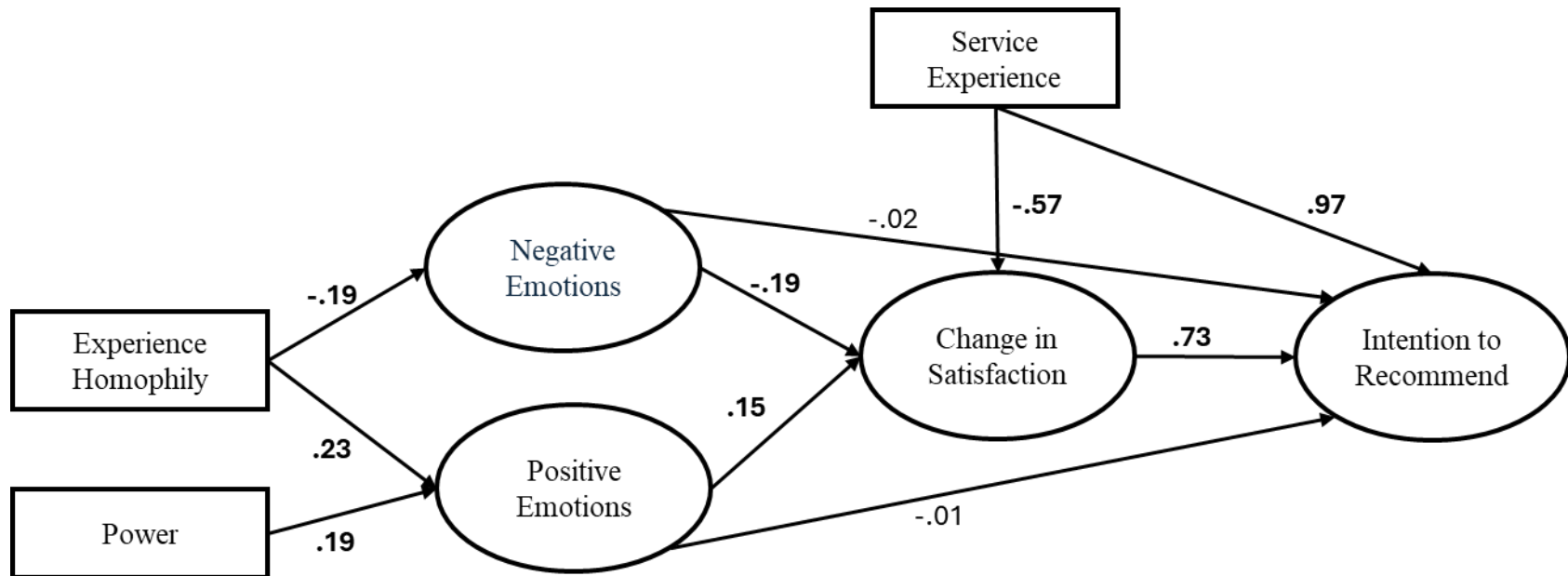
Finally, we conduct bootstrap analyses in AMOS using 5,000 samples to test the proposed indirect effects in Hypothesis 7 (e.g., Shrout and Bolger, 2002). Bootstrapping returns bias-corrected confidence intervals for the effects of interest. The indirect path from positive emotions to recommendation intention via change in satisfaction was found to be positive and significant ($\beta_{upper} = .19$, $\beta_{lower} = .04$, $p < .01$), while the path from negative emotions to recommendation intention via change in satisfaction was found to be negative and significant ($\beta_{upper} = -.05$, $\beta_{lower} = -.23$, $p < .01$), supporting Hypotheses 7a and 7b. Since the direct paths from emotions to recommendation intention were non-significant (see Table 4), this collectively implies that change in satisfaction fully mediates the influence of positive and negative emotions from group interactions on recommendation intention. We present a summary of all study findings in Table 5.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics of Relevant Constructs

	PE	NE	Δ Sat	REC	SE	EH	Pow
Positive Emotions (PE)	<i>.66</i>						
Negative Emotions (NE)	-.43**	<i>.60</i>					
Δ in Satisfaction (Δ Sat)	.20**	-.24**	<i>.83</i>				
Intention to Recommend (REC)	.24**	-.20**	.22**	<i>.93</i>			
Service Experience (SE) (0 = Unfavorable; 1 = Favorable)	.08	.00	-.57**	.54**	-		
Experience Homophily (EH) (0 = Unsimilar; 1 = Similar)	.20**	-.13*	.01	.12	-.02	-	
Power (0 = Employee; 1 = Manager)	.13	.06	-.09	.02	.16*	-.21**	-
Mean	5.53	1.47	-1.19	4.02	.49	.67	.33
Standard Deviation	2.23	1.94	2.64	2.84	.50	.47	.47

Notes: Square root of AVE shown in *italics*; * indicates correlation significant at $p < .05$; ** indicates correlation significant at $p < .01$

Figure 6
SEM Model Results



Note: Coefficient estimates that are significant at the .05 or lower level are in bold.

TABLE 4
Results of Structural Analysis

	<i>Stand. Coefficient</i>	<i>Stand. Error</i>	<i>T-Value</i>
Primary Model Paths			
Positive Emotions → Δ in Satisfaction	.15*	.11	2.28
Negative Emotions → Δ in Satisfaction	-.19**	.16	-2.73
Δ in Satisfaction → Intention to Recommend	.73***	.07	12.94
Positive Emotions → Intention to Recommend	-.01	.09	0.92
Negative Emotions → Intention to Recommend	-.02	.13	0.73
Significant Controlled Paths			
Service Experience → Δ in Satisfaction	-.57***	.28	-10.06
Service Experience → Intention to Recommend	.97***	.30	18.27
Experience Homophily → Positive Emotions	.23**	.20	3.18
Experience Homophily → Negative Emotions	-.19*	.18	-2.54
Power → Positive Emotions	.19**	.22	2.68
Squared Multiple Correlations			
Δ in Satisfaction	.40		
Intention to Recommend	.69		
Fit Indices			
χ^2 (df)	182.15*** (84)		
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.97		
Non Normed Fit Index (NNFI)	0.96		
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	0.073		

*** $p \leq .001$

** $p \leq .01$

* $p \leq .05$

CONCLUSION

General Discussion

This study considers how the dynamics of customer group interactions affect individuals' emotional responses, satisfaction change, and intention to recommend a B2B service provider. The customer group is specific to B2B buying and is comprised of employees from within the organization who receive a providers' services. We developed a conceptual model that identifies three key variables – service experience, experience homophily, and power – that could shape the emotions experienced by individuals in a customer group when attempting to form a consensus evaluation of a service provider and conducted a role-playing experiment that organized participants into 3-member teams to test the model hypotheses. Results of the experimental procedure suggest that the homophily of group member experiences is the primary antecedent of both positive and negative emotions during interactions with other customer group members

regarding a service provider. When individuals' service experiences were similar to others in their group (i.e., experience-homophily), they tended to have more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions during group interactions concerning the service provider.

As the conceptual model proposes, the valence of the service experiences and individuals' power roles in the customer group moderates the relationship between experience-homophily and emotions. Power and experience homophily are considerations that are especially relevant to the B2B context compared to B2C purchasing since it is more common for multiple individuals to be involved in purchasing and post-purchase evaluations when serving organizational customers. Further investigation of these effects showed that there was only an increase in an individual's positive emotions due to experiencing homophily when their service experience was favorable, and there was only a decrease in individuals' negative emotions due to experiencing homophily when their service experience was favorable and when the individual was operating in a higher power role. When the service experience was unfavorable, experience homophily did not lead to more positive or less negative emotions. This could be due to the diagnostic nature of negative information and how it carries more weight in our decision-making. Negative information is considered more serious and trusted than positive information (Siegrist & Cvetkovich, 2001). It can create a level of certainty that makes the person less concerned about whether others in the group agree with them or not.

Table 5
Summary of Findings

Hypothesis	Supported
1a: Service Experience → ⁽⁺⁾ Positive Emotions	No
1b: Service Experience → ⁽⁻⁾ Negative Emotions	No
2a: Experience-Homophily → ⁽⁺⁾ Positive Emotions	Yes
2b: Experience-Homophily → ⁽⁻⁾ Negative Emotions	Yes
3a: Power → ⁽⁺⁾ Positive Emotions	Yes
3b: Power → ⁽⁻⁾ Negative Emotions	No
4a: Experience-Homophily * Service Experience → ⁽⁺⁾ Positive Emotions	Yes
4b: Experience-Homophily * Service Experience → ⁽⁻⁾ Negative Emotions	Yes
5a: Experience-Homophily * Power → ⁽⁺⁾ Positive Emotions	No
5b: Experience-Homophily * Power → ⁽⁻⁾ Negative Emotions	Yes
6a: Positive Emotions → Δ Satisfaction	Yes
6b: Negative Emotions → Δ Satisfaction	Yes
7a: Positive Emotions → Δ Satisfaction → Intention to Recommend	Yes
7b: Negative Emotions → Δ Satisfaction → Intention to Recommend	Yes

The positive and negative emotions experienced by individuals regarding a service provider during customer group interactions affected how their satisfaction changed following those interactions. Some satisfaction change is expected in this context as individuals' perspectives converge to form a new shared reality for the group through their dialogue (Bormann, 1982). Positive emotions influenced change in individuals' satisfaction following group interactions in a positive direction, while negative emotions influenced change in individuals' satisfaction

following group interaction in a negative direction. The change in individuals' satisfaction directly influenced individuals' intention to recommend a service provider. Hence, consistent with the conceptual model, emotions indirectly affected individuals' intention to recommend a service via their effects on change in satisfaction.

The vast majority of the hypothesized relationships were supported in the study, demonstrating the appropriateness of the conceptual model. Notably, we did not find any direct effect of service experience on the positive and negative emotions derived from group interactions regarding the service provider. This could be due to the possible change in feelings from experiencing service to recalling a service experience (Lawler et al., 2000). The emotions experienced during group interactions appeared to flow mainly from the agreements or disagreements within the group, and the actual service's favorability did not carry over to individuals' feelings about these interactions. Perhaps the effect of service experience on these emotions would have been present had we considered groups where all the service experiences had similar valences rather than forcing differences in each group. Furthermore, some aspects of the B2B context could be impacting this relationship. As Frechette and Wingate (2022) observe, specific consumption contexts such as peer-to-peer exchange can mitigate or lower the effect of a negative service experience on customer satisfaction because consumers tend to be more empathetic to other consumers. In B2B contexts, negative service outcomes may impact the organization more than the individual, which could also mitigate the effect of negative service experiences.

Further, the effects of power were mixed, as one of the hypothesized direct and one of the hypothesized indirect relationships involving power were not supported. Specifically, while power had significantly increased positive emotions, it did not significantly reduce negative emotions; while the interaction between power and experience homophily significantly reduced negative emotions, this interaction did not increase positive emotions. Since the data for all these effects was in the right direction, the mixed effects may relate to limitations associated with the power manipulation. While there are five bases of power, we were only able to manipulate legitimate power in our study. Informing a person playing a role that they are in charge is much different from being responsible for a team that is either harmonious or dysfunctional, so the emotions experienced by students due to our power manipulation were likely not as intense as the emotions that would have been experienced in the real world, where the disagreements and decisions have potentially serious consequences.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The present study contributes to the dearth of recent literature in B2B contexts that relates to business customer satisfaction (e.g., Nowak et al., 2023). Generally, the results of this study support research highlighting the meaningful role of emotions in business-to-business decision-making (e.g., Bourguignon et al., 2023; Chugh et al., 2023). Specifically, this study is the first to consider the emotions that arise from the interactions with other members of an employee's team. Considering the collective understanding of business buying as a group-oriented process (Johnson, 2023; Johnston & Bonoma, 1981), and the literature supporting the influence of group interactions on individual emotions (Goodwin & Sayette, 2023; Lovaglia & Houser, 1996), our study contributes a conceptual model linking group dynamics to individuals' emotions in the context of business buying. The model identifies a set of group member characteristics that relate to experienced emotions during post-purchase interactions based on the background of individual members and the structure of the group by applying the work of McGrath (1964) to the B2B service

context. These model characteristics – service experience, experience homophily, and power – each demonstrated a direct or interactive influence on positive and negative individual emotions during group interactions regarding the service provider, thereby laying a sound theoretical foundation for future research on the topic. One of the model characteristics, experience homophily, represents a new approach to examining homophily in the context of intraorganizational relationships that goes beyond the prevalent focus on demographic characteristics (Ahlf et al., 2019).

Our research also adds to the limited amount of work on the buyer's post-purchase behavior. Though research on buyer's decision-making has been a bit more common (Molinari et al., 2008; Patterson, 2000; Steward et al., 2019), post-purchase processes are of critical importance, as they affect the ongoing engagement of clients in the form of repurchasing, willingness-to-pay, and recommendation behaviors. Our conceptual model and empirical results clarify how the emotions that arise from group interactions at the post-purchase phase can ultimately affect engagement in the form of intention to recommend a service provider. Building on prior research that also supports the role of group interactions on changes in satisfaction (Bohlmann et al., 2006), our model and empirical findings extend the influence of these interactions to the engagement behaviors of customer group members.

Further, this study applies seldom-used approaches in B2B research, such as the 3-person role play technique. While not commonly utilized in business research, this procedure is useful in gaining a better understanding of group interaction processes in task-oriented groups (Shelly & Webster, 1997). Using the 3-person role-play approach, we were able to manipulate the experience-homophily in such a way that the valence of group members' experiences placed them in the majority (2/3) or minority (1/3) of their 3-person team. Individual perspectives can be lost in groups that are too heavily skewed in favor of the majority (Kanter, 1977), so these proportions helped to facilitate dialogue. Further, this approach allowed us to capture data on individual satisfaction pre-discussion and post-discussion so that a longitudinal approach could be applied to appropriately capture satisfaction change (e.g., Bohlmann et al., 2006).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study has several implications for service providers with business clients. First, the findings suggest that service providers should be concerned about the individual emotions of customer group members due to the constructive and detrimental effects of these emotions on business relationships (Andersen & Kumar, 2006; Tähtinen & Blois, 2011), especially recommendation intention. Though a customer might be happy with his or her service experience, discussions with customer group members with different experiences could introduce negative feelings and reduce an otherwise satisfied customer's intention to recommend the provider. Providers should broaden their perspective on the customer experience for B2B customer group members to include these interactions, given their influence on satisfaction and emotions. Data collection efforts need to go beyond individual service experiences and capture how individuals feel when discussing the provider with others in their company.

The study illustrates how focusing exclusively on key managerial informants to measure organizational satisfaction, rather than considering a broader set of employees, can be problematic. Gathering data from only key managerial informants ignores the flows of information within firms that can provide greater insight into the homophily across individuals' service experiences. Lack of homophily appeared to be especially troubling to managers in customer groups with favorable service experiences, as these individuals had the highest negative emotions. Managers in this

situation would have to go out of their way to support a service provider, putting them in a compromising situation. When service providers identify managers or even lower-level employees facing this dynamic, they should make efforts to equip the individual with information to help facilitate their conversations with other customer group members. However, to detect these issues, satisfaction assessment would need to include employees affected by the service, even when an upper-level manager is the sole decision maker.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We acknowledge that this study does have limitations that should be considered in future research. While we consider our implementation of the 3-person role play technique an innovative contribution to B2B research, we acknowledge that this approach fails to capture many nuances that would exist in a real-world setting. Despite our efforts to immerse role-play participants in the scenario, the impact of characteristics such as service experience or power would likely be stronger when individuals are directly involved and live out the reality rather than just being informed of the situation. Real employee interactions would take place in a context where there are preexisting organizational and relational dynamics, and the interactions between customer group members would most often play out over a longer time period in an organization rather than be constrained to the 30-minute meeting in our study.

As such, while we believe that the implications of our study are generally applicable, care should be taken when evaluating our tests of specific model relationships. We recommend that future researchers attempt to replicate our experiment to confirm the results are not sample or context specific. The application of a student sample to collect the data may be considered a study limitation, though students have also been utilized in prior notable B2B research studies involving the buying center concept (Bolton et al., 2012; Moritz et al., 2013). We do note that the students used in our study were upperclassmen with some knowledge of business-to-business buying. Future research may consider taking a field-study approach to testing the conceptual model on individuals within actual customer organizations. This approach would help researchers identify which model relationships are dependent on organizational nuances. Future research may also consider applying groups of different sizes and proportions to identify other boundary conditions.

Our follow-up analysis, illustrating three-way interactions between the manipulated variables in our study, may pose some interesting questions that researchers may pursue in the future (see Figure 5). However, Due to the controlled nature of the experiment in this study, we limited our manipulations to specific dimensions of homophily and power. For instance, we were only able to examine a specific type of homophily based on the service experience, though many other forms of homophily exist (e.g., Ahlf et al., 2019; Filieri et al., 2023). Further, we were only able to examine the effect of one form of power in this study, the legitimate power of an upper-level manager. Other forms of homophily or bases of power may yield different results. For instance, given the role of technology and information in many services, future research may expand this framework to consider expert power as well. Finally, while we considered effects of the role in the group held by individuals, we did not account for potential differences across managerial or leadership styles. Future research may consider distinct individual leadership styles, as the amount of input managers desire from their teams may relate to how a lack of homophily affects their emotions during discussions.

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Submitted: 17 January 2024

Revised: 28 August 2024

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APPENDIX: Sample Scenario

Note: This sample scenario illustrates the differences in wording across three (job responsibilities), two managerial levels: manager [assistant manager], and two service experiences: **favorable** [unfavorable].

Please read the scenario that is assigned to you. Try to imagine yourself in the situation described in the scenario and put yourself in the shoes of the character. Then answer to the questions. You have 10 minutes to work on this part, afterward the group discussion will begin.

Scenario:

Put yourself in the position of a manager [an assistant manager] who works at XYZ. You are part of a three-member team, where you are [a manager is] the team leader. You have two assistant managers that report to you. [You and another assistant manager are equal subordinates to the manager and report to him or her.]

One of the suppliers you deal with is an advertising company called ABI Co. that helps XYZ promote its programs. ABI Co. is hired to run a campaign including a series of ads for a new program recently added to XYZ. Timing is critical as potential students should be made aware of this program before the fall semester starts in order for them to enroll in time.

Your team is working with ABI Co. on this campaign, each of you has different responsibilities. As a manager [an assistant manager] you are responsible for:

(Job Responsibility #1) the marketing budget.

(Job Responsibility #2) making sure ads will transfer the right message, a message that is both understandable and attractive to potential applicants.

(Job Responsibility #3) setting the goals for each stage of the campaign, checking that deliverables are met and following up on timelines.

The work with ABI Co. is still under progress, and the final outcome of the campaign isn't known yet. So far, your experience with them can be summarized as below:

(Job Responsibility #1) In the beginning, you had allocated a specific budget for this campaign, but were concerned you would not be able to stay within budget and still have a good outcome. You tried to negotiate with ABI Co. and bring the price down to meet your budget constraints. In the end, you were **able** [unable] to stay within the budget and you **were** [were not] pleased with the negotiation process.

(Job Responsibility #2) You are having brainstorming sessions with ABI Co. staff to come up with ideas for a series of ads. You feel **they are on the right track most of the time** [you have to give them constant direction], and they **do** [don't] understand what the selling points of your program are. So far, each deliverable has needed **only minor improvements** [a lot of improvements] to become satisfactory.

(Job Responsibility #3) Any delay in the submission of deliverables can have a considerable impact on the launch's timeline, and as a result, on the effectiveness of the campaign in reaching the potential applicants in time. So far, dealing with them has been **easy** [a big headache]. ABI Co. **has** [has not] been always responsive regarding the submission of deliverables. You **didn't need to** [needed to] follow up more than once for every step involved in the launch.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.