DISMANTLING "POSITIVE AFFECT" AND ITS EFFECTS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF CUSTOMER JOY IN A SERVICE ENCOUNTER

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ABSTRACT

In this study, in which we argue for a disaggregated approach to customer emotions, we examine the antecedents of one specific customer emotion, namely joy, and how it affects customer satisfaction in a service encounter. Our proposed model contains four variables linked to each other as follows: (1) The service employee's emotional display behavior affects (2) the customer's assessment of the joyfulness of the service employee, and this assessment affects (3) the customer's own level of joy, which in turn has an impact on (4) the customer's level of satisfaction. This model received empirical support, thereby suggesting that cognitive judgments, particularly in terms of the customer's assessment of the service employee's emotional state, affect the customer's own emotional state.

INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is often said to result from confirmation/disconfirmation of expectations. However, the customer's emotional reactions have been shown to have independent effects on satisfaction (Mano and Oliver 1993; Oliver 1993; Westbrook 1987; Westbrook and Oliver 1991; Wirtz, Mattila, and Tan 2000). Such research clearly adds to our understanding of the determinants of satisfaction, and can also inspire managers wishing to identify additional customer satisfaction-enhancing activities beyond the determinants typically covered in the confirmation/disconfirmation of expectations tradition (e.g., perceived performance of various product attributes).

Some limitations, however, characterize existing efforts to examine the impact of the customer's emotions on his/her satisfaction. Two particular limitations serve as the point of departure for this paper. First, the typical approach to assessing emotions in a satisfaction context is to use aggregated emotion variables of the "positive affect" and "negative affect" types. That is to say, specific emotion types with similar valence are lumped together; it is assumed that emotions function in broad categories or "amalgamated groupings" (cf. Smith and Bolton 2002). The main advantage from the researcher's point of view, of course, is that a substantial level of economy is obtained. Yet this approach is problematic, because several discrete emotion types exist at a lower level of aggregation, and have different antecedents and consequences (Moore and Isen 1990; Roesch 1999). Some marketing scholars have voiced a similar concern (Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999; Holbrook and Batra 1987; Mitchell 1986). Second, existing attempts to examine emotions in a customer satisfaction context have focused on emotions as an antecedent to satisfaction. Customer satisfaction-related research has thus not fully explored activities that enhance emotions. Many emotion theories, however, offer fairly rich explanations of emotions, particularly if the analysis is allowed to be performed at the level of the specific emotion type rather than at the aggregate level.

These two limitations, we believe, call for a disaggregated approach. This paper is an attempt to follow such an approach, and will do so with respect to one particular emotion, namely joy, which is usually depicted as a distinct emotion type in many emotion theories (cf. Izard 1977; Johnston 1999; Plutchik 1980; Russell 1980). Moreover, joy is often included under the general label of "positive affect" in satisfaction research on emotions. Joy, then, is an emotion type that has been covered extensively by emotion theorists and indirectly by satisfaction researchers. For this reason, we believe that it would serve as a viable point of departure for a disaggregated approach (that ultimately would have to deal with each specific emotion type and its relation to customer satisfaction). In this paper, we are mainly concerned with (1) how customer joy is

produced, and (2) the effects of joy on satisfaction, but it should be noted that joy seems to be related to several other variables in ways that suggest that joy - as a distinct emotion type - deserves more attention in marketing-related research. For example, joy appears to foster flexible, creative, and faster thinking; generosity and helpfulness; variety-seeking behavior; the ability to better take the other's perspective in interaction (Isen 1984, 2001) and less perceived risks (Chaudhuri 1998). In addition, a focus on joy, as one specific emotion, would facilitate contact with literature that stresses the need for marketers to amuse customers by creating entertaining offers (Brown 2001).

A major premise of this paper is that customer joy may be evoked by a wide range of marketing activities, such as advertising, in-store music, and product design. Here, however, we will be concerned with one particular stimulus: the behavior of the firm's customer contact personnel in the service encounter. This encounter is a major source of input to the customer's perceptions of the service firm (cf. Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Hartline and Jones 1996; Normann 2000; Surprenant and Solomon 1987). Several studies also underscore that the service employee's behaviors have an impact on the customer's global assessments of the firm; examples of such behaviors are civility, courtesy, concern, congeniality, friendliness, helpfulness, and politeness (Westbrook 1981; Winsted 2000). From a managerial point of view, the main rationale for research on this topic is that an identification of employee behaviors that drive customer satisfaction will result in the firm focusing its efforts in terms of (a) employee selection, training, motivation and retention, and (b) customer satisfaction and loyalty activities (cf. Hartline and Jones 1996).

In this paper, therefore, we assume that the service employee will be in a particularly important position when it comes to his/her potential for evoking customer joy. The service encounter was consequently selected as the context for this study, with the specific purpose of examining a process that begins with joy-evoking behavior by the service employee and ends with customer satisfaction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Overview of the Framework

Our proposed model consists of four variables. They are assumed to be linked to each other as follows, in a situation in which a service employee (the stimulus person) interacts with a customer (the observer): (1) The service employee's behavior affects (2) the customer's assessment of the joyfulness of the service employee, and this assessment is assumed to affect (3) the customer's level of joy, which, in turn, has an impact on (4) the customer's level of satisfaction with the firm in which the service employee works. The basic assumption is that each of these four variables is linked in a direct way to the next variable in the chain. Our task in the following sections is to provide conceptual arguments regarding the proposed links and to develop hypotheses for the empirical part of the study.

The Service Employee's Behavior and the Inducement of Customer Joy

The point of departure for our proposed model is that the service employee's behavior in a service encounter has the potential of triggering an emotional response from the customer. In fact, we believe that behaviors of the types mentioned in the introduction - civility, courtesy, concern, congeniality, friendliness, helpfulness, and politeness - have a joy-evoking potential. Existing research, however, has been silent with regard to the effects of such behaviors on customer joy. The main source of knowledge about joy-evoking behaviors is research on various emotional display behaviors such as facial expressions, verbal utterances, bodily positions, and tone of voice. And there seems to be little doubt today that the stimulus person's smiling face and happy voice can induce observer joy (Adelmann and Zajonc 1989; Hess, Philippot, and Blairy 1998; Lundqvist and Dimberg 1995).

How this happens, however, is subject to debate. One main issue is related to the role of cognition, and while some authors argue that a stimulus may produce emotions without any cognitive activity (Zajonc 1980), others argue that some cognitive

activity is involved (Bagozzi et al 1999, Lazarus 1982) or may be involved (Hsee, Hatfield, Carlson, and Chemtob 1990). In this paper, we argue that cognitive activity is indeed involved; one main premise of the model we propose is that the link between the stimulus and its emotional effects on the observer is indirect, and that the observer's assessment of the stimulus person's emotional state is an important intermediate variable. More specifically, we assume that biological and social factors encourage the observer to use clues related to the stimulus person's behavior in order to assess the stimulus person's emotional state. This ability is an important facilitator of social interaction, and it is often referred to as empathy. Levenson and Ruef (1992), for example, suggest that the ability to perceive accurately the feelings of another person is the most fundamental aspect of empathy.

As already indicated, clues about another person's emotional state may come from many aspects of this person's behavior. For example, Neumann and Strack (2000) asked participants to assess the happiness and sadness expressed by happy and sad voice stimuli, and found that the happy voice received the highest intensity ratings of perceived happiness of the stimulus person. We believe that an outcome of this type (i.e., congruence between the displayed behavior's emotional tone and the observer's assessment of the emotional state of the stimulus person) requires the existence of a schema that informs the observer about the stimulus person's emotional state. Perhaps the most well-researched behavior (for effects on joy) is facial expressions, and the research in this area indicates that well-developed schemas exist (Ekman 1989, 1992). That is to say, a smiling facial expression usually results in the attribution of joy to the smiling person. Ekman (1989), among others, has argued that this is a universal attribution. Empirical results supporting a link between the exposure to a smiling face and the observer attributing joyfulness to the smiling person are presented by Niedenthal, Brauer, Halberstadt, and Innes-Ker (2001) and Otta, Follador, Abrosio, and Leneberg (1996). Because the service employee's facial expression in terms of smiling versus non-smiling is particularly likely to affect the observer's assessment of the emotional state of the service employee, we will focus on this specific behavior in our first hypothesis:

> H1: In a service encounter, a service employee will be perceived by the customer as more joyful when s/he is smiling than when s/he is not smiling

Turning to the consequences of the customer's assessment of the stimulus person's joyfulness, we assume that a process of emotional contagion operates in social situations (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1993; Hsee et al 1990; Laird, Alibozak, Davainis, Deignan, Fontanella, Hong, Levy, and Pacheco 1994). In other words, we expect the observer to adopt an emotional state that is congruent with the perceptions of the stimulus person's emotional state. The main reason is that such mimicking behavior facilitates social interaction. We also assume that most customers are interested in a smooth interaction in a service encounter, because they are in a position in which they must rely on the service employee (cf. Scharlemann, Eckel, Kacelnik, and Wilson 2001).

Several authors suggest that the stimulus person's facial expression produces a congruent emotional observer response through a two-step process often referred to as facial feedback. In the first step, a smile produces congruent muscular activity in the observer's face, and in the next step, this muscular activity "informs" the observer that s/he is joyful (Adelmann and Zajonc 1989; Dimberg and Thunberg 1998; Hatfield et al 1993; Hess et al 1998). One problem with the facial feedback hypothesis, however, is that no study has evaluated the complete chain of proposed mediation (Hess et al 1998). Another problem is that the effect sizes and correlations are often very modest when it comes to the links that are examined. Moreover, no room is allowed for cognitive activities from the observer's point of view. Yet several studies (outside the facial feedback research tradition) show that smiling stimuli induce cognitive responses such as increased trust in the stimulus person (Scharlemann et al 2001) and a higher level of perceived stimulus person intelligence (Lau 1982). These findings, we believe, suggest that cognitive responses may mediate the link between stimulus person behavior and observer joy (e.g., the reason I feel joyful when I interact with

a smiling person is that I believe I am interacting with an intelligent person).

Here, we argue that one of the most important clues that serve to transfer the stimulus person's emotion to the observer is the observer's explicit assessment of the stimulus person's emotional state. That is to say, it is possible to depict the observer's attention to facial expressions, tone of voice, bodily postures, and other clues as a means for arriving at an assessment of the emotional state of the stimulus person - and this assessment, rather than the attribute information it is based on, is what produces an emotional reaction in the observer. This assumption can be seen in light of information integration theory (cf. Anderson 1981), in which it is held that different attributes vary with regard to their weight in forming assessments. Basically, an attribute's weight is determined by its relative salience, reliability, relevance, and quantity. Given that perceived joyfulness is based on many clues used by the observer, and thus not only on the stimulus person's facial expression, we assume that the perceived joyfulness of the stimulus person (with a potential for summarizing several attributes) is likely to be a particularly important clue, and that it has an independent effect on the observer's emotional state. More specifically, we expect that the customer's level of joy will be affected by his/her perception of the level of the service person's joyfulness as follows:

> H2: In a service encounter, customer-perceived service employee joyfulness is positively associated with the customer's own level of joy

Joy and Satisfaction

The main assumption in this section is that customer joy is positively associated with customer satisfaction. Direct empirical evidence for this assumption, however, is notoriously hard to find in the marketing literature. As mentioned in the introduction, one reason is that the majority of researchers interested in the link between emotions and customer satisfaction lump together several specific emotion types in order to create aggregated emotion variables such as negative affect and positive affect. For example, in a typical application,

joy and interest are seen as two indicators of positive affect, and this aggregated affect variable is used in assessments of the association with satisfaction (Oliver 1993; Westbrook 1987; Westbrook and Oliver 1991). Similar approaches, but with other labels for the positive affect variable, and with other joy-like items, have been used by Mano and Oliver (1993), Price, Arnould, and Tierney, 1995, and Wirtz et al (2000). This approach usually results in a positive and significant association between the positive affect variable and customer satisfaction (Mano and Oliver 1993; Oliver 1993; Price et al 1995; Westbrook 1987; Westbrook and Oliver 1991; Wirtz et al 2000), and thus provides indirect evidence for a positive joy-satisfaction link. Why, then, would this link exist? Different explanations can be offered depending on the view of satisfaction one adopts; here we present two explanations based on two different views of satisfaction.

The first explanation is based on the assumption that both joy and satisfaction are emotions. This assumption seems to be straightforward when it comes to joy, because joy is usually depicted as one of the fundamental emotions in many emotion theories (cf. Izard 1977; Johnston 1999; Plutchik 1980; Russell 1980). However, whether or not satisfaction is an emotion is a more open question, at least among satisfaction researchers. Yet several emotion typologies include both satisfaction and joy as two distinct emotions. Typically, in such cases, emotions are categorized in terms of two dimensions: unpleasantness-pleasantness and low arousal-high arousal. Joy is assumed to occupy the pleasantness/high arousal cell, while satisfaction occupies the pleasantness/low arousal cell (cf. Barrett and Russell 1998; Russell 1980; Russell and Carroll 1999). Some authors suggest additional dimensions, particularly potency, but this dimension seems to be less relevant for positive emotions (cf. Morgan and Heise 1988). The lay mind, however, is likely to be less precise than the researcher's mind when it comes to the ability to distinguish between discrete emotion types. That is to say, it is not always easy to determine exactly what emotion one experiences (Johnston 1999). Moreover, one particular emotion is likely to activate and also color other emotions (Polivy 1981; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). This process of emotional "cross-talk" seems

particularly likely to occur when it comes to emotion types located in relatively similar places in the emotional response matrix with the unpleasantness-pleasantness and low arousal-high arousal dimensions. Thus, given that both joy and satisfaction are pleasant experiences, and the tendency for emotional cross-talk, we expect that joy is positively associated with satisfaction.

For our second explanation, we assume that satisfaction is not primarily an emotional construct. Instead, satisfaction is an evaluative judgment that results from an assessment of the extent to which expectations before a consumption activity are matched by performance judgments after this act (Westbrook 1987; Westbrook and Oliver 1991). With this view of satisfaction, affect is an antecedent to satisfaction and thus conceptually distinct from satisfaction; satisfaction results from evaluating the affect derived from a consumption experience (Mano and Oliver 1993; Wirtz et al 2000). In our case, then, and with this alternative view of satisfaction, why would joy (a positive emotion) have an impact on satisfaction (an evaluative judgment)? One main explanation is referred to as affect infusion (or affect transfer) in the literature. In general, it is proposed that an emotion will affect a judgment in terms of valence congruence (e.g., a pleasant emotion leads to a favorable judgment). Two alternative mechanisms of affect infusion are suggested by Forgas (1995). The first is the affect-priming principle, in which affect directly influences judgments during substantive processing through its selective influence on attention, encoding, retrieval, and associative processes. The second is the affect-as-information principle; in this case, affect informs judgments during fast, heuristic processes as judges use their affective state as a short-cut to infer their evaluative reactions to an object. An interesting aspect of Forgas' (1995) emphasis on the conditions for affect infusion - substantive processing and fast, heuristic processes - is that they appear to cover both high and low involvement processing. This view suggests that it is hard for an object not to evoke some sort of emotional reaction (cf. Damasio 1999; Zeitlin and Westwood 1986). It also suggests that it is hard for the emotional reaction not to color judgments of the object. One main reason behind the salient role of

emotions in affecting judgments appears to be that emotions leave strong affective traces in memory, and memory elements with such traces are believed to be highly accessible to cognitive operations (Westbrook and Oliver 1991).

Thus, from a conceptual point of view, and for two alternative ways to depict customer satisfaction, the following is hypothesized:

H3: Customer joy is positively associated with customer satisfaction

RESEARCH METHOD

Stimulus Materials

We used a role-playing scenario to generate responses in terms of the variables in the hypotheses (cf. Bagozzi et al 1999, who argue that the use of scenarios in an experimental context can generate discrete emotional responses). The scenario referred to a customer's interaction with a service employee in a hotel, and included a service recovery situation (i.e., an initially poor performance activity was followed by the service employee's attempt to react to the initial incident). Given that (1) satisfaction tends to be heavily skewed in many empirical studies (cf. Fornell 1992; Peterson and Wilson 1992) and (2) customers who are subject to a service recovery become less satisfied than those customers who receive good service and thus do not need a recovery strategy (Andreassen 2001), our selection of a service recovery situation was an attempt to create a setting that would reduce some skewness in satisfaction responses. Moreover, because a recovery situation is assumed to be a pivotal moment for customers (Smith and Bolton 2002), we expected that this particular situation would be a useful stimulus to generate an emotional response.

Scenario

Imagine that this happens the next time you stay in a hotel.

When you arrive, you are greeted at the reception desk by an employee called Sara. She welcomes you, checks you in, says that your room number is 312, and tells you how to find your room.

Here, one of the two stimulus photographs appeared. The smiling version and the non-smiling version were both labeled: "Sara at the reception desk."

After having arrived at your room, you find that the television does not work, and you return to the reception desk to inform the hotel staff about this. Sara is still there.

"Hello again, is everything OK in room 312?" she asks.

You explain that everything is not OK, because the television does not work.

"Then I must really apologize," says Sara. "Please let me try to take care of this with the person who is responsible for the rooms."

Sara calls this person, who quickly arrives at the reception desk. He goes with you to your room, examines the television set, and finds that the batteries in the remote control are flat. He replaces the batteries, and the television now works. After a while Sara calls you.

"I heard that the television is working again. And please let me apologize again," she says.

Some questions about this event are included below.

Please answer these questions now.

The scenario included a photograph of the service employee with whom the respondent was supposed to interact. Two photographs of the same service employee - one in which she appeared with a smile and one in which she appeared without a smile - were used to create two versions of the scenario (see Figure 1). The photos were taken by us, with a digital camera, and were presented to the respondents as they appear in Figure 1.

Stimulus Assessment

Some researchers argue that qualitatively different types of smiles exist, particularly in terms of Duchenne smiles (joy-based smiles) and non-Duchenne smiles (smiles not based on joy). The basic argument is that Duchenne and non-Duchenne smiles produce different responses. Ekman (1992), for example, has reviewed several studies indicating that Duchenne smiles are more likely to generate observer joy than non-Duchenne smiles (cf. Ekman, Davidson, and Friesen 1990). Thus, observers appear to be able to distinguish (consciously or unconsciously) between these two types of

Figure 1
The Two Photos Used in the Scenarios

smiles. Similar results appear in a more recent study by Surakka and Hietanen (1998). Moreover, Grandey (2000), who is explicitly concerned with emotional display in service situations, suggests that faked smiles may produce a "leakage" that enables observers to detect the deception. She also suggests that faked smiles may negatively impact perceptions of service. It is clearly relevant, in this light, to examine what specific type of smile is used in research on smiles.

We therefore examined the smile stimulus with a pretest group of respondents ($n = 27$) exposing them to the smile photograph in figure 1 (no scenario text was provided). We asked these respondents to assess both the target person and her smile. Regarding her smile, we asked: "What is your impression of this person's smile?" The question was followed by a set of adjective pairs scored on a 10-point scale: fake-genuine, not honest-honest, unfriendly-friendly, cold-warm, untrustworthy-trustworthy, manipulative-not manipulative. Next, we created a Duchenne smile measure as the unweighted average of the participants' responses to these items (alpha = .96). The sample mean was computed ($M = 6.64$), and we tested if this mean was significantly different from the scale midpoint (i.e., 5.5) with a t-test. The outcome was significant, $t = 2.76$, $p = .01$, providing initial evidence that our particular smile stimulus is of the Duchenne type rather than the non-Duchenne type.

Furthermore, the pretest group was asked to assess the target person's level of joyfulness. We used two adjective pairs: unhappy-happy, and in a bad mood-in a good mood. Both were scored on a 10-point response format. Since the responses to the two items were positively and significantly correlated ® = .81, $p < .001$), we used the unweighted average of the responses to the two items as a measure of this variable, ($M = 7.98$), which was positively and significantly correlated with the Duchenne smile variable ® = .61, $p < .01$). In other words, our smile stimulus behaved as we expected, given the literature's view of people's ability to assess if a smile is joy-based or not. These results, then, provide additional evidence that we are dealing with a Duchenne smile.

Further, to assess the extent to which the stimulus person realistically represented a service

employee in a hotel (i.e., the scenario context in the main data collection), we used the following two adjective pairs scored on a 10-point scale: atypical service person-typical service person ($M = 7.85$), and unlikely to work in a hotel-likely to work in a hotel ($M = 7.37$). The mean responses to these two items, we believe, indicate that the stimulus person was likely to be encountered in a hotel (both means were significantly different from the scale midpoint, $p < .01$ in both cases).

Data Collection and Participants in the Main Study

Each scenario was included in a questionnaire that we used to collect the data. The respondents were randomly allocated to one of these two versions, and answered an identical set of questions about the variables in the hypotheses after being exposed to the scenario.

All respondents were adult participants in marketing seminars in executive education programs. They were asked to complete the questionnaire in the classroom at the beginning of a seminar. The first author, who led the seminar, distributed the questionnaire to the participants, informed them that no talking was allowed while completing the questionnaire, stressed that responses to all questionnaire items were necessary, collected the completed questionnaires, and debriefed the participants. The procedure was repeated with four groups of participants who met the teacher on four different occasions. No main differences in the responses emerged between the four groups, and they were aggregated to one single sample for the analysis ($N = 101$). The smile scenario version was completed by 49 participants, and the non-smiling version by 52.

Measures

Service Employee Smiling Behavior. A smile variable was created to indicate which particular facial expression each respondent had been exposed to (1 = no smile, 2 = smile), and this variable was used as an independent variable in the subsequent analyses (cf. Kelly, Slater, and Karan 2002 for a similar approach for dealing with treatment

variables). Smiles can be conceptualized as both a quantitative and a qualitative variable; indeed, it seems as if smiles can be treated in terms of all of Stevens' (1946) classical measurement scales. It is possible, for example, to regard a smile as a ratio scale variable (a zero level of smile can be at hand). Here, however, we are assuming that our smile variable contains information about the extent to which a smile is at hand; the smile treatment encompasses a higher level of smile intensity than the no smile treatment. It should be noted, given the pretest results, that the smile variable seems to capture a Duchenne smile (and not necessarily other qualitative types of smiles). This restriction must be kept in mind as we proceed.

Perceived Level of Joyfulness. We used the same adjective pairs as in the pretest to capture the respondent's perception of the stimulus person's joy, namely unhappy-happy and in a bad mood-in a good mood (both were scored on a 10-point response format). The responses to the two items were positively and significantly correlated ® = .78, p < .01), and therefore we used the unweighted average of the responses to the two items as our measure of this variable. Alpha for these two items was .87. It can be noted that the mean for this variable, for the respondents in the main study who were exposed to the smile stimulus (M = 7.95), did not differ significantly (t = -0.05, p = .96) from the pretest respondents (M = 7.98).

Customer Joy. The respondents were asked to reflect on how they would feel given an interaction of the type described in the scenario. At this point in the questionnaire, a 10-point joy scale appeared, consisting of the following adjectives: joyful, pleased, and in a good mood (1 = Do not agree at all, 10 = Agree completely). Alpha for the joy scale was .84. Similar items appear in a frequently used joy scale developed by Izard (1977). Havlena and Holbrook (1986) and Holbrook and Batra (1987) have used related items in their joy scales. We used the average of the three items as the customer joy measure. In addition, and as a (discriminant) validity check, a sadness scale including three adjectives (sad, in a bad mood, and grieved) was also to be completed by the respondent (alpha = .84). The

specific joy and sadness items were mixed in the questionnaire, and joy and sadness were expected to be negatively correlated but not bipolar (i.e., the negative correlation is larger than -1). For example, in Lorr and Shea (1979), the sadness-cheerfulness correlation was -.55, and the sad-happy correlation in Sjöberg, Svensson, and Persson (1979) was -.47. In our case, the correlation between the joy variable and the sadness variable was -.54 (p < .01), indicating that some level of validity was at hand in our measure of joy.

Customer satisfaction. In this study, we are interested in what Smith and Bolton (2002) refer to as "service encounter satisfaction after recovery efforts". It is a transaction-specific satisfaction construct, and we measured it in two ways, because there appear to be two main ways to capture satisfaction in existing research (cf. Söderlund and Öhman 2003): one object-oriented way and one act-oriented way. First, for the object-oriented measure, we used the unweighted average of the participant's responses to three customer satisfaction items developed by Fornell (1992). They appear in several national customer satisfaction barometers (cf. Johnson, Gustafsson, Andreassen, Lervik, and Cha 2001), and in academic research by Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann (1994) and Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, and Everitt (1996). More specifically, respondents were asked to think about their impression of the hotel and to respond to the following items on a 10-point scale: "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this hotel?" (1 = very dissatisfied, 10 = very satisfied), "To what extent does this hotel meet your expectations?" (1 = not at all, 10 = totally), and "Imagine a hotel that is perfect in every respect. How near or far from this ideal do you find this hotel?" (1 = very far from, 10 = cannot get any closer). Alpha for this scale was .91. Second, and as an act-oriented way to capture satisfaction, we asked the respondents the following question: "How would you summarize your view of your decision to stay at this hotel?" The question was followed by three items: "I am happy about my decision to go there," "I believe I did the right thing when I selected it;" and "Overall, I am satisfied with the decision to go there" (1 = do not agree at all, 10 = agree totally). Similar satisfaction measures have been recommended by Oliver (1997) and used by,

for example, Butcher, Sparks, and O'Callaghan (2001), and Cronin, Brady, and Hult (2000). In our case, alpha was .95, and we used the average of the responses to the three items as the (act-oriented) satisfaction measure. It can be noted that the individual items (in both satisfaction measures) suggest that the scholars who originally developed these items appear to have been influenced by both notions of satisfaction that we used in the theoretical section (i.e., "satisfaction as an emotion" and "satisfaction as an evaluative judgment").

To assess the validity of the two satisfaction measures, the questionnaire included two measures of behavioral intentions: "If other problems occurred during your stay at the hotel, how likely is it that you would get in touch with the same receptionist again?" (1 = very unlikely, 10 = very likely), and "How likely is it that you would recommend this hotel to a friend who is looking for a hotel?" (1 = very unlikely, 10 = very likely). The first intention measure was significantly associated with the object-oriented satisfaction measure $r = .52, p < .01$) and with the act-oriented satisfaction measure $r = .76, p < .01$). The same pattern was found for the second intention measure $r = .51$ and $r = .73; p < .01$ in both cases). Given that satisfaction is generally assumed to be positively associated with behavioral intentions, it can be contended that some level of validity was at hand in our satisfaction measures.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Assessing the Hypotheses

We tested all hypotheses simultaneously using a structural equation modeling approach in which the hypothesized links served as the proposed model. We estimated our proposed model with maximum likelihood procedures (in AMOS 5), and we did this separately for each of the two satisfaction measures. Hoyle and Smith (1994) have suggested two structural equation modeling approaches for dealing with treatment variables: (1) use of a variable that reflects variability in treatment (i.e., a strategy similar to introducing dummy variables in regression analysis), and (2) simultaneously estimating separate models for different groups. Here, and with respect to our

service employee behavior variable (i.e., no smile vs. smile), the first approach was used.

In the case of the object-oriented satisfaction measure, a good level of fit was obtained ($\chi^2 = 27.98$, $df = 25, p = .31$, CFI = .995, NFI = .953, RMSEA = .035). An examination of the standardized regression coefficients revealed a significant and positive association between the service employee's behavior (i.e., no smile vs. smile) and perceived joyfulness ($\beta = .63, p < .01$). This means that H1 was supported. The association between perceived joyfulness and customer joy (H2) was also supported ($\beta = .49, p < .01$). For Hypothesis 3, we expected customer joy to have a positive impact on customer satisfaction, and the hypothesis was supported ($\beta = .80, p < .01$). With regard to the act-oriented satisfaction measure, the fit of the proposed model was marginally reduced ($\chi^2 = 30.40$, $df = 25, p = .21$, CFI = .992, NFI = .956, RMSEA = .046) compared to the object-oriented satisfaction measure. The results with regard to the specific hypotheses, however, were identical and will not be reported here for the sake of brevity.

Additional Analyses

Our proposed model differs from existing attempts to conceptualize the observer's emotional responses to a stimulus person's emotional display behavior in one important way: We believe that (a) the observer assesses the emotional state of the stimulus person, and that (b) this assessment influences the observer so that a congruent emotional reaction occurs. In our present case, this assessment is represented by the perceived joyfulness variable. The role of this particular variable was therefore examined with some additional analyses.

In the first step, we compared our proposed model to an extended model in which two links were added: (1) a link between service employee behavior and joy, and (2) a link between service employee behavior and satisfaction. The fit for this extended model - in the object-oriented satisfaction case - was slightly higher ($\chi^2 = 23.74$, $df = 23, p = .42$, CFI = .999, NFI = .96, RMSEA = .018) than for the proposed model. Yet the increase in fit was not significant ($p = .12$). Similar results were obtained in

the act-oriented satisfaction case; the extended model was characterized by an increase in fit (χ^2 = 26.24, df = 23, p = .29, CFI = .995, NFI = .962, RMSEA = .038), but it did not provide a significantly higher level of fit (p = .125) than the proposed model. This analysis, then, suggests that the main contribution of service employee behavior is to trigger an assessment of what the service person's emotional state is and that this assessment is the main causal agent of what happens later in the process.

The comparison between the proposed model and the extended model thus suggests that perceived joyfulness may mediate the relationship between service employee behavior and customer joy. In a second step, we explored this role for perceived joyfulness with the approach recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) and Holmbeck (1997), in which four separate regression analyses are used. In our case, the first regression indicated that service person behavior is positively associated with perceived joyfulness (β = 0.6, p < .01), the second regression indicated that service employee behavior was associated with customer joy (β = 0.17, p = .09), and the third regression showed that perceived joyfulness was associated with customer joy (β = 0.41, p < .01). Finally, the fourth regression, in which customer joy was the dependent variable, and service employee behavior and perceived joyfulness were independent variables, indicated that perceived joyfulness (β = 0.48, p < .01), but not service employee behavior (β = -.011, p = .32), contributed to customer joy (R^2 = .16, F = 10.23, p < .01). Therefore, in our case, and according to the criteria developed by Baron and Kenny (1986), it can be contended that perceived joyfulness mediated the relationship between service employee behavior and customer joy.

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Main Findings

This study provides support for the existence of a chain in which the following direct links exist: The service employee's emotional display behavior affects the customer's perceptions of the joyfulness of the service employee, which affects customer joy

- which in turn affects customer satisfaction. Moreover, perceived joyfulness seems to mediate the relationship between the service employee's behavior and customer joy. The latter finding, we believe, suggests that facial muscular movement (i.e., a common focus in existing research on joy) is only one of several factors that explain why one person tends to "catch" the emotions of another person.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One obvious limitation is that our proposed model excludes variables that may add to our understanding of the service employee behavior-customer satisfaction chain. Perceived service employee joyfulness, for example, is not the only factor that creates customer joy in a service encounter. Assessments of additional antecedents to customer joy should therefore be conducted in future research. It is also likely that some customers who have been subject to a service failure, as in our scenario, find smiling behaviour/joyfulness inappropriate, and thus the smile may create an unfavorable attitude towards the service employee. More generally, it has been shown that certain *pro forma* service behaviors (i.e., behaviors that from the customer's point of view appear to be routinized and programmed) have a negative impact on the customer's perceptions of the service employee's competence and the firm's trustworthiness (Surprenant and Solomon 1987). Hence, it is possible that smiles and joyfulness may be perceived in similar terms and thus negatively impact attitudes toward the service person's behaviour (The customer may wonder, for example: "Why is she smiling? Did I do something funny? Why doesn't she concentrate on what she is supposed to do instead?"). And in the next step, this attitude may have a negative impact on customer joy.

Another limitation is that our conceptualization (and operationalization) of smiling behavior is only one of several ways of coming to terms with this construct. Basically, we have assumed that a smiling face contains "more" smile than a non-smiling face, and the result was a somewhat primitive smile measure that takes account of only two levels of smile. Constructs that better capture magnitude and

qualitative differences can clearly be used. Our development of a Duchenne smile variable for the pretest is one alternative approach, and existing smile research offers a rich smorgasbord of aspects such as duration, frequency and size of smiles (cf. Deutsch 1990; Pugh 2001; Rafaeli and Sutton 1990). Furthermore, smiles are only one of several behaviours with a joy-enhancing potential, and other behaviour variables of this type - and their relative influence - should be assessed in further research.

This study also shares a potentially serious limitation with all existing attempts to empirically examine joy and joyfulness. Presumably, this limitation is based on the dominant measurement paradigm that strongly encourages researchers to develop multi-item measures (cf. Churchill 1979). In any case, the limitation manifests itself in the practice of developing joy items in which items such as good mood and happiness are used as synonyms. From a strict conceptual point, however, joy is a very shortly-lived emotion, while mood has a longer duration, and happiness can be conceived of as a long-term state of mind (Ben-Ze'ev 2000). The practical problem, however, is that there are few synonyms for joy. The list of adjectives is indeed limited, given that one needs to focus on pure emotion words and thus avoid words defining traits, physical states, and cognitive states (cf. Morgan and Heise 1988). Moreover, very few scholars have addressed the extent to which respondents in an empirical study are able to discriminate between various questionnaire items in terms of what these items mean according to theoretical notions of emotion, mood, and more permanent states of mind in which an unpleasant-pleasant dimension exists. Clearly, more efforts are needed to increase the congruence between measurement items and theoretical constructs.

In addition, it should be noted that one particular service encounter was used to generate the data: an encounter that involved a service failure and a recovery attempt. Smith and Bolton (2002) have argued that this particular encounter may put the customer in a situation in which he or she is more emotionally involved, and more observant, compared to routine or first-time service situations. It is also possible that a service failure produces incongruity in the customer's sense-making activities to a larger extent than routine services, and this incongruity may enhance a cognitive reaction (e.g., in terms of an assessment of the service person's emotions) that is not typical of normal service encounters. These aspects of a service failure, then, may reduce the generalizability of our findings. It can be argued, however, that a service failure followed by a good recovery attempt (as in our scenario) includes elements of both good and poor service performance. Therefore, a service failure situation has indeed something in common with a typical service situation, in the sense that performance in a typical service situation is seldom at the highest level with regard to all service elements. In any case, future research needs to examine if different service situations create different emotional patterns than those obtained by us in this study. We also believe that such research should take account for the customer's goals in the service situation, because it has been argued that goals in terms of "oughts" versus "ideals" may modify the customer's reliance on emotions when judgments are made (Pham and Avanet 2004).

Implications for Research and Practice

We believe that our approach, in which we have focused on joy (i.e., one specific emotion type), illustrates that it is indeed possible to deal with emotions in a satisfaction context in a disaggregated way. Several authors have objected to the practice of lumping conceptually distinct emotions together (Roesch 1999), yet an aggregation of this type is what constitutes the main practice in research on the relation between emotions and customer satisfaction (i.e., in terms of variables of the "positive affect" type). To achieve more precision, and given that discrete emotions have different antecedents and consequences, we suggest that scholars involved in this area should consider a more disaggregated view of emotion types - and that other emotions aside from joy deserve further attention. Given that satisfaction is one of several discrete emotion types, it is also possible that a disaggregated approach may reveal that other discrete emotions are more important outcomes of a service encounter or a purchase than satisfaction when it comes to explanations of intentions or behavior (cf. Bagozzi

et al 1999 p. 201 for a similar argument). Incidentally, and given that one single discrete emotion type is to replace satisfaction, Bagozzi et al (1999) suggest that a case could be made for happiness/joy.

Given our focus on joy, some managerial implications can be derived from the results. First, in a situation in which customer satisfaction is the target outcome, our results imply that perceived joyfulness is a particularly crucial variable. If perceived joyfulness is positively related to service employees' joy in a more objective sense, an important challenge for managers is to come to terms with the determinants of workplace joy. An examination of this type will most likely show that the manager him/herself is an important part of the equation. Normann (2000), among others, has argued that it is hard for the service employee to behave in one particular way with customers if s/he finds him/herself in a situation in which radically different behaviors are encountered in interactions with managers. So, for example, joyful managers, and joyful colleagues, may be needed to produce service employee joy.

Second, our results suggest that (a) smiling behavior appears to affect perceived joyfulness in a positive way given that the smile is perceived as genuine, and (b) perceived joyfulness, rather than smiling behavior per se, produces effects on other variables. Therefore, we believe that the results add some restrictions to the "smiling imperative policy" that some firms have adopted. That is to say, smile *enforcement* may have few benefits. In addition, being a service worker is demanding, and extensive customer contacts may produce job dissatisfaction and burn out (Singh, Goolsby and Rhoads 1994). It is not unlikely that enforced smiles, and other enforced emotion-related behaviors, will add further fuel to this process.

Furthermore, much existing research on the antecedents of satisfaction has focused on the attribute-level performance of controllable attributes (e.g., opening hours and product range). However, some service employee behaviors, such as smiling, are relatively less controllable from a managerial point of view (and perhaps also from the service employee's point of view). Yet they too seem to contribute to customer satisfaction. In view of this,

we believe our results imply that other less controllable behaviors and attributes, such as smell, physical attractiveness, and eye contact deserve more attention in future research. Indeed, it seems as if many factors of this type may be discovered in future research.

Another issue for future research is that a service encounter - by definition - involves both customers and service employees. And the service employee is highly likely to react in emotional terms, too. It should be possible, therefore, to examine a behavior-satisfaction chain from the service employee's point of view. That is to say, how does the customer's smiling behavior, and other possible expressions of joyfulness, affect the service employee's level of (job) satisfaction? This issue has received very little attention.

Finally, it should also be noted that customers "meet" smiling behavior and other joy-enhancing behaviors not only in service encounters. Advertising is a sterling example of a marketing activity that is heavily overpopulated by smiling people in terms of the facial expressions of decorative models, celebrities, and "the typical customer" endorser. Yet advertising researchers have avoided this type of appeal to the same extent that the smiling service person has been avoided in service research; the joy appeal (a name we had to invent here) is not included in existing typologies in which various appeals (e.g., fear appeal, humor appeal, and sex appeal) are distinguished (cf. Percy and Rossiter 1992). For this reason, a further examination of joy-enhancing stimuli and their effects on the customer could also be useful for advertising research.

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