Academic Weekly Digest

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

How to reduce stereotypes?

With the increasingly diverse workforce in the hospitality and tourism industry, it is imperative to identify strategies to reduce biases in the workplace. We examined the utility of providing individual-level positive individuating information as a strategy to combat customers' stereotypes in service encounters. Dr Tracy Xu and colleagues found that providing positive counter-stereotypical individuating information most strongly impacted customers' satisfaction ratings of employees.

Providing Positive Individuating Information to Reduce Stereotype-Based Negativity in Service Encounters

Dr Tracy Xu

In a globalized business environment, diversity and effective diversity management has become a strategic endeavour for hospitality organizations to enhance customer satisfaction. However, stereotypes exist, and customers may form perceptions and make judgments of the service providers based on their age, race, physical attractiveness, and other characteristics not related to job performance. Across two studies, we examined the utility of providing individual-level positive individuating information as a strategy to combat customers' stereotypes in service encounters. In the first study, we explored the effectiveness of providing either positive stereotypical or counter-stereotypical individuating information to remediate negative perceptions toward older workers in an experimental vignette study using a hypothetical customer service encounter. In the second study, we demonstrated the robustness of this technique with a group that has opposing stereotypes compared to older workers (Asian adults). Across these two studies, we found that providing positive counter-stereotypical individuating information most strongly impacted customers' satisfaction ratings of employees by boosting positive counter-stereotypical perceptions of both older and Asian targets.

> " Service providers can individuate themselves from stereotypes, resulting in more positive customer perceptions "

Taken together, the results suggest that providing positive counter-stereotypical individuating information is a particularly effective strategy in improving customer perceptions of service providers. Thus, in terms of customer-facing jobs in hospitality, providing positive individuating information may be particularly fruitful in increasing customers' evaluations of employees, and thus, organizations may wish to provide training and opportunities for workers to engage in such information-sharing with customers, even in short-term encounters.

Further Reading:
Smith, N. A., Martinez, L., Xu, S. (Tracy), & Waterbury, C. J. (2022). Providing Positive Individuating Information to Reduce Stereotype-Based Negativity in Service Encounters. Cornell Hospitality Quarterly.
Link: bit.ly/3B5eQhh