

HOW DO STEREOTYPES AFFECT THE ABILITY TO DELIVER GOOD SERVICE IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY?

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Abstract

The hospitality industry, which generated US \$445 billion dollars in 1999 (WTO, 1999), has enabled many nations to develop their economy and consequently is the most important legal business in the world. Moreover, the hospitality industry is one of the most important job creators in the world, providing employment to approximately 100 million people internationally, a figure 1.5 times greater than any other industrial sector (WTO, 1999). Given the importance of this industry, it is a business and government imperative to ensure that business understand and possess the capacity for quality service provision to the international consumer. Our paper helps illuminate this little understood issue in service provision by analysing how stereotypes affect the delivery of good service in the hospitality industry. A theoretical model of factors affecting the cross-cultural service experience is developed from a review of the literature on the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Similarity Attraction Paradigm, Prejudice Theory and Communication Theory. The research uses a multi-method research design incorporating three studies, a participant observation study, an interview study and a survey study. Results of correlational analyses showed that as hypothesised, positive and negative stereotypes were associated with customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction respectively. The research findings have important implications for organisational policies and practices regarding the selection, performance management and training of service staff.

HOW DO STEREOTYPES AFFECT THE ABILITY TO DELIVER GOOD SERVICE IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY?

Annually, the hospitality industry absorbs an increasing portion of the international population, with 664 million people travelling internationally in 1999 alone (WTO, 1999). As a consequence, the primary source of many nations' economy is the hospitality industry, making this industry the most important legal business in the world. Indeed, revenue from international tourism was calculated at approximately US \$445 billion in 1999 (WTO, 1999).

In this paper, we examine the impact of stereotypes in delivering good service to customers from a range of cultural backgrounds. Of particular interest is the response of service providers (staff) to customers (internal and external) from a dissimilar cultural background. It is proposed that the different levels of stereotypes (positive or negative) and the behaviour related to these can be associated with customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction respectively.

DIVERSITY ISSUES IN THE SERVICE INDUSTRY

Changing immigration patterns have contributed to the diversification of the demographic profile of nations across the globe (Sultana & Hartel, 1999). These shifts in the customer and labor base present new challenges and opportunities, both internal and external, to the organisation. As a consequence, investigations of business needs and practices across the globe are on the rise (Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Diversity is an umbrella term used to describe individual differences such as occupational training, interpersonal skills, gender, age, ethnic background and education (Härtel & Fujimoto, 2000). Observable types of diversity are commonly differentiated from non-observable types of diversity since diversity exerts its influence only when it is perceived (Härtel & Fujimoto, 2000). We focus on the observable types as many service encounters do not allow for the development of the intimacy or familiarity necessary to detect the non-observable types of diversity.

While acknowledging that culturally dissimilar customers often enter service encounters with culturally biased expectations, research shows that providers are more friendly in terms of smiling and conversing when interacting with racially similar customers in comparison to interactions with racially dissimilar customers (McCormick & Kinloch, 1986; Strauss & Mang, 1999). We concur, however, with the view forwarded by Powers and Ellison (1995:220) that "pre-existing positive racial attitudes may incline some individuals to form and sustain interracial friendships, while pre-existing negative attitudes may discourage other persons from pursuing such interracial contacts". Consequently, our research examines the proposition that,

Proposition: There will be a negative relationship between negative stereotyping and the delivery of good service to both internal and external customers.

STEREOTYPES AND THE CROSS-CULTURAL SERVICE ENCOUNTER

Across the world, cultural stereotypes or prejudices toward immigrants and ethnic minorities are evident (eg, Collins, 1988; Nicolou, 1990; Phizacklea & Miles, 1980). When negative, the cultural values or ideas represented by these stereotypes present a significant threat to the hospitality industry and countries that receive tourist currencies. On the other hand, when these stereotypes are positive, they are a source of advantage to the organisation and the country in receiving continuing patronage from the international customer.

When people lack awareness of their cultural conditioning, they tend to think of their own cultural opinions as being generally shared and as a part of basic human nature (Perlmutter, 1969). When such ethnocentricity

manifests itself in service behaviour, it is likely to leave a negative impression in the minds of tourists, disabling rather than enabling the country or company's capacity to generate wealth. When, in contrast, people possess an extraordinary level of empathy and dissimilarity openness, which is manifested in a warm reception toward tourists and low levels of negative stereotyping of other cultures (cf. Ayoko & Härtel, 2000; Fujimoto, Härtel, Härtel & Baker, 2000; Härtel, Barker & Baker, 1999; Härtel & Fujimoto, 2000), tourists are likely to leave their travel destination with a positive impression. Consequently, we argue that cultures, businesses and individuals showing empathy and openness towards culturally and ethnically dissimilar others will secure greater sustainability as service providers to the international consumer.

The cultural values or ideas affecting cross-cultural relationships are referred to as stereotypes in the psychological sciences. Stereotypes define one's expectation and categorisation of other's conduct and characteristics (see Table 1 for a list of common stereotypes). Beginning in childhood, people internalise positive or negative comments about people outside one's family circle, which form the foundation for positive or negative perceptions about the others (Yzerbyt et al, 1994). These stereotypes carry intentions and communications.

Warshaw and Davis (1984 p. 214) defined intentions as "the degree to which a person has formulated conscious plans to perform some specified future behaviour". Intentions are the best predictors of behaviour (Ajzen & Madden, 1985). Communications, on the other hand, are defined as "the process by which the behaviour of one individual alters the probability of behavioural acts in other individuals" (Wilson, 1975:339). Kellerman (1992) argued that all communication is strategic and automatic.

In the study reported here, we observe and analyse how stereotypes affect the delivery of good service in the hospitality industry. The approach taken was to first, review the literature on how people create stereotyping, which includes intentions and communications. From this review, a model was created that shows the variables that connects stereotypes, intentions and communications. Next, a model is developed of how stereotypes can affect in any hospitality company. Finally, qualitative and quantitative methods are incorporated to assess the impact of stereotyping in the hospitality industry.

Table 1. Terms reflecting stereotyping processes in individuals

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Attentive | Hesitant | Intelligent | Argumentative | Critical |
| Practical | Submissive | Deceptive | Boastful | Ignorant |
| Witty | Active | Emotional | Efficient | Smooth |
| Resistant | Non-directive | Jovial | Inarticulate | Soft-spoken |
| Humble | Conforming | Organised | Alert | Straightforward |
| Sensitive | Perceptive | Supportive | Agreeable | Calm |
| Quiet | Quarrelsome | Dogmatic | Arrogant | Concealing |
| Aggressive | Uninvolved | Imaginative | Open | Individualistic |
| Articulate | Silent | Responsive | Unintelligible | Directive |
| Passive | Evasive | Conventional | Persistent | Ostentatious |
| Considerate | Manipulative | Loud | Courteous | Cooperative |
| Noisy | Friendly | Anxious | Hostile | Reserved |
| Talkative | Rude | Defiant | Overbearing | Demanding |
| Caring | | | | |

Source: Leonard & Locke, 1993

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STEREOTYPES, INTENTIONS AND COMMUNICATION.

Stereotype expectancies affect social interaction by influencing both the behaviour of the person holding the expectancy and the behaviour of the target of the expectancy (Hamilton et al, 1990). Thomas & Thomas (1928) stated, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." Therefore, a person's belief can cause reality to conform to that belief (Hamilton et al, 1990), in essence, a "self-fulfilling prophecy". In order for an expectancy to be self-fulfilling, it must induce expectancy-confirming behaviour

from the target person (Hamilton et al, 1990). Conversational involvement depends on such expectancies. Capella (1983) gives an example: "Some conversations seem to be very stimulating, involving their participants in mind as well as body and voice. Other conversations are plodding, dull, and lifeless, involving the participants only in the superficial routines and rituals necessary to manage the back-and-forth flow of information." In the following model (Figure 1), we outline the relationship between stereotypes, intentions, and communications.

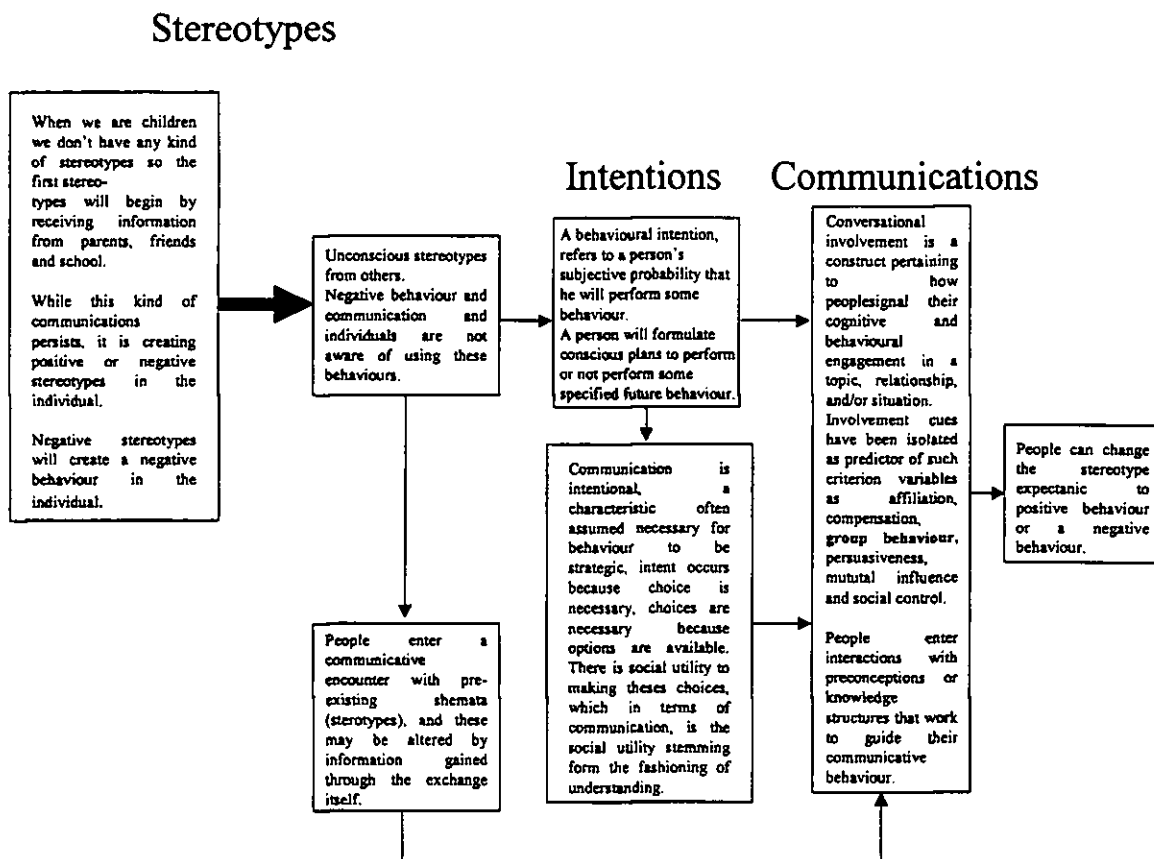


Figure 2. How stereotypes, intentions and communications interact

When personal contact occurs face to face, strangers or acquaintances are faced with the task of managing interpersonal relationships under conditions of uncertainty (Palmer & Simmon, 1995). When a decision has to be made during a personal contact, the implication is that perceptions could be negative or positive and based on the unconscious perception of actions (Gruber, 1989; Kellerman, 1992; Lachman et al, 1979; Lewicki, 1986; Lewicki & Hill, 1987; Reber et al, 1980).

Branscombe & Smith (1990) provide an excellent illustration of how stereotypes affect decision-making during face-to-face contact:

1. The target's group membership triggers the stereotype in the perceiver's memory (Smith, 1984; Wyer & Srull, 1980, Branscombe & Smith, 1990) making the qualities associated with the stereotype highly cognitively available for supplementary processing.
2. All the information is processed in a manner that is strongly influenced by the existing stereotypic traits (Branscombe & Smith, 1990). The perceiver may test hypotheses about the target or construe new information in conditions of the stereotype classes, characteristically in a confirmatory manner (Rothbart, 1981; Snyder, 1981; Branscombe & Smith, 1990). What is

estimated may well differ across persons, depending upon how powerfully they stick to the stereotype (Branscombe & Smith, 1990).

3. Criteria are then generated to make determinations about the interaction (Branscombe & Smith, 1990).
4. The final decision is made. Burke and Reitzes mention that "the central argument is that individuals are motivated to formulate plans and achieve levels of performance that reinforce, support or confirm their identities" (Branscombe & Smith, 1990).

When the individual has a positive stereotype of another individual, the judgment will be more positive than negative (Manusov et al, 1997). Individuals prefer behaviours that confirm expectations. They are likely to judge others more favourably when behaviours and expectations match (Manusov et al, 1997) and prefer others to act in ways that are similar to their own behaviour (Vrij & Winkel, 1992). On the other hand, when lack of correspondence exists between beliefs and behaviours, negative assessments often result (Manusov et al, 1997; Peretti, 1974). Because stereotypes tend to be negative, the categorisation process often gives rise to problematic outcomes (Liebertson, 1985; McNabb, 1986; Manusov et al, 1993).

The theory of reasoned action says that intention is predicted by "attitude toward the behaviour" or the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the behaviour in question (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Another predictor of intention mentioned in this theory is subjective norms or the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour (Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Intentions may not only be determined by attitudes toward behaviours and subjective norms, but also by personal moral obligations (Shwartz & Tessler, 1972; Zuckerman & Reis, 1978; Gollwitzer, 1993).

When liking exists, the amount of talk will be an attempt to show greater involvement and interest whereas dislike is likely to result in a decrease in talk (Palmer & Simmons, 1995). Pleasant communication results in favourable judgments of the individual while unpleasant communication leads to negative views of the individual (Burgoon & Lepore, 1993).

McKirnan and Hamayan (1984a) propose that intergroup thoughts influence the clarity and variety of norms in interethnic encounters. "People with more negative attitudes toward an out group may have clearer norms and a narrower range in regard to the behaviour to out group members". When social distance is strongly distinguished, all the considerations are ignored in favour of strategies intended to sustain social distance.

Outstanding communication skills are essential in the hospitality industry (Van Der Wagen, 1999) and the industry is therefore extremely vulnerable to negative relations caused by miscommunication (c/f. Härtel et al., 1999). The next models (Figure 2-3) show a general model of the structure of a hospitality organisation and probable stereotypes that could exist within the different departments and different levels. Figure 2 shows the internal climate of the organisation. Figure 3 shows the final impact that stereotypes have in the hotel organisation; that is, a loss or gain of income for the company. The model is based on personal experience and interviews obtained in Australia and Mexico.

Hospitality Organisation

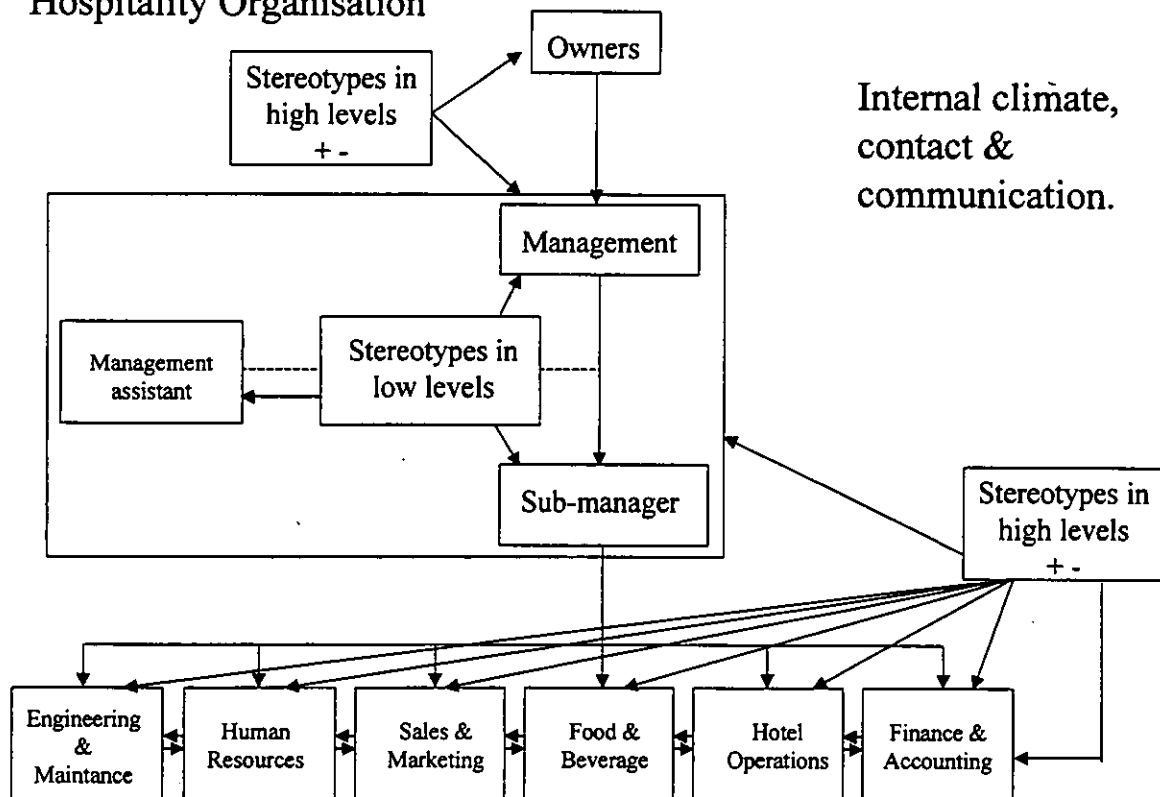


Figure 3. General model of the structure of a hospitality organisation

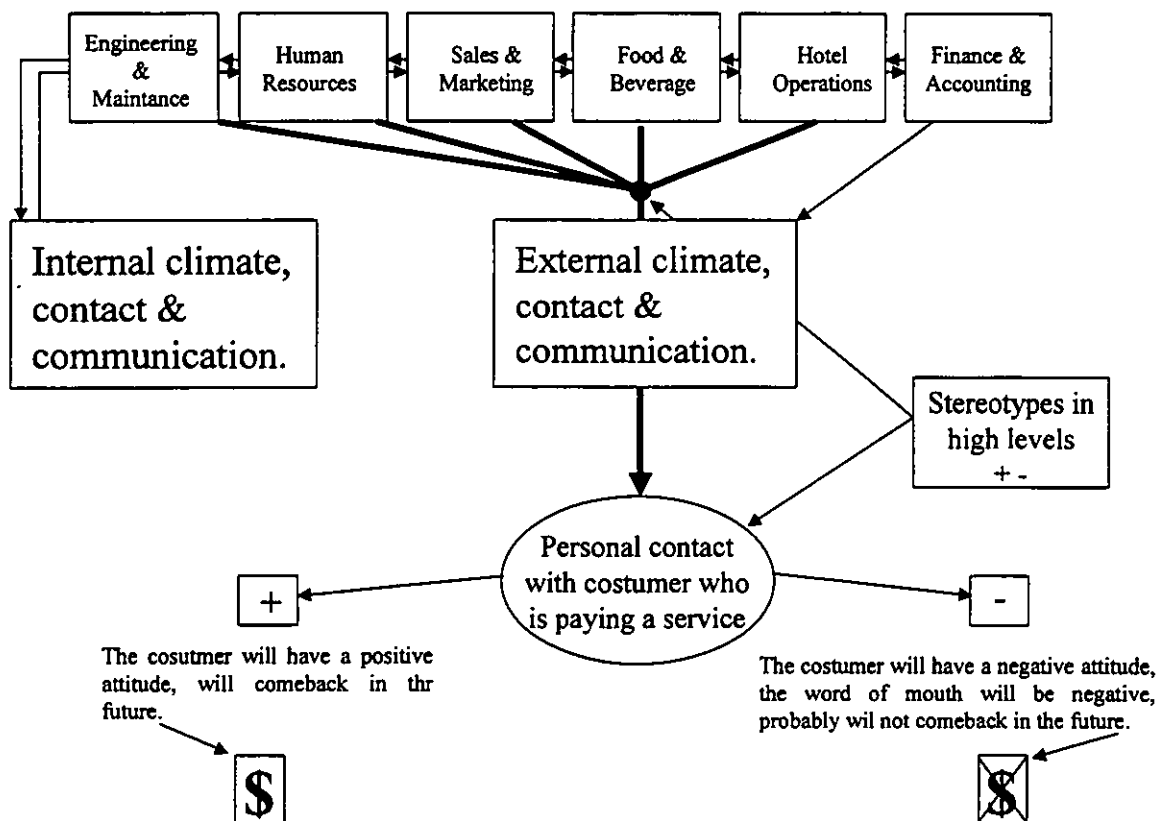


Figure 4. Model of impact of stereotypes in hotel organisation

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE IN THE ORGANISATION

Communication is essential to a positive climate in the organisation. Recent studies identify three different kinds of communication in the peer relationship: (i) information peer with low levels of self-disclosure and trust, (ii) collegial peer with moderate levels of trust, self-disclosure, emotional support and friendship, and (iii) special peer with high levels of emotional support, personal feedback, trust, self-disclosure and friendship (Odden & Sias, 1997).

The essential relationship between communication and emotions emerges when peers do not reciprocate favours. People will then experience negative emotions such as anger, depression and uncertainty (Buunk et al, 1993; Odden & Sias, 1997). These negative results will cause relationships to stay at superficial levels in the organisation, creating high levels of stress and a negative climate (Odden & Sias, 1997). A special peer relationship, on the other hand, will better help co-workers to deal with stressful situations and high levels of pressure during a workday (Odden & Sias, 1997).

A person who has favourable attitude toward a diverse workplace will accept minorities (eg. Non-whites, women) as coworkers and in supervisory positions and will be more sympathetic to the increased employment of minority groups. On the other hand, those persons with a more negative attitude toward diversity will be less accepting of minorities as coworkers and in positions of authority. Additionally, these individuals will tend to object to the increased hiring of minorities (Jackson, 1992).

METHODOLOGY

Scientific realism was adopted as the epistemological framework for the research. Scientific realism takes the view that reality is a truth that can be approximated (Hunt, 1990). The approach is relevant to the present research as it is assumed that stereotyping exists and that it and its effects in the service environment can be measured and evaluated.

Because qualitative and quantitative methodologies complement each other's strengths and weaknesses (Jick, 1979; Brewer & Hunter, 1989), both were incorporated in the thesis. Specifically, because little is known about the role of stereotyping in the service profession, qualitative techniques were used to elicit the tacit knowledge of customers and service professionals and managers on the issue (c/f. Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lofland, 1971). The information yielded by interview and observation techniques was used to refine the theoretical model and formed the basis for the second study. An hypothetical issue of stereotypes or prejudice in the hospitality industry was derived from the qualitative findings and used in study two, which used survey methodology. The survey method is useful to collect information from a broad range of persons, to allow assessment of relationships among variables and to assess the generaliseability of theoretical predictions (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lofland, 1971).

Study 1 - Observations

Observations were used as this method provides information on contextual and situational factors affecting variables of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Since it was important to obtain information minimally affected by the observer, non-intrusive procedures were used (Bouchard, 1976). Specifically, the researcher was a participant observer, working in a hotel in Brisbane where the researcher had the opportunity to work as a trainee. Almost all the departments were observed especially human resources, rooms division, and food and beverage. Additionally, observations on the relationship between waiter and costumer were made in a Mexican restaurant in Brisbane. Observations were conducted for periods of 8 hours over a period of 6 months. Following recommendations of Kirk and Miller (1986), notes relating to service provision characteristics to individuals of same and other cultures were recorded by the author within 24 hours of a given observation period.

Study 2 - Interviews

Because people's experiences and interpretations of events were sought, interviews were indicated (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Semi-structured interviews were used to enhance reliability and validity while enabling flexibility (Patton, 1990). Cross-validation of findings from interviews was made possible by the collection of observational data (Statt, 1997).

Interviews were opened with the question, How do you think stereotypes affect the delivery of good service? Other questions presented to participants were, Do you think that the service could improve with low levels of stereotypes?

Ten different people with hospitality experience were interviewed. The people were selected after visiting different hotels as "The Heritage", Novotel, and Marriott, Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, they were invited to be part of the study telling them the important issue of stereotyping in the hospitality industry and the negative or positive consequences, a time of no more than ten minutes was used to finish each interview due to the busy environment in which these people worked.

The following answers provide examples of employees revealing some of the strong stereotypes related to service delivery:

"There are some employees that serve the customer negatively and it is a fact that a negative attitude exists. Generally this happens with employees that have more experience and not with new ones."

Service Manager, Novotel, Brisbane.

"Stereotyping in the workplace depends on the type of customer and how they treat myself as a waiter. If I am treated well I will try hard to service their needs in every way, but if a customer treats me bad and disrespects me I will not be as efficient"

Service Worker, The Heritage Hotel, Brisbane.

Before attending the individual interview, the target person was asked first if he/she is able to answer to some questions regarding attitudes towards internal or external costumer, prejudice, and racism. The respondents indicated interest and willingness to volunteer in the research. Interviews took part in Brisbane, Mexico City, and Sydney.

Study 3 – Survey

A version of the dissimilarity openness scale was used in the research, which has a reported reliability exceeding the recommended value of Cronbach's $\alpha=0.70$ (Fujimoto et al., 2000). The scale was developed to measure attitude toward diversity in the work environment. The response format uses a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree. High scores on the scale reflects a positive attitude toward diversity in the workplace, whereas low scores suggest negative attitudes toward a diverse workplace. A sample item is:

When I am in a group where members are from different countries:

I expect more stress than when I am in a group where all the members are from the same country.

I feel more comfortable interacting with members from the same country as I am.

I may blame those who are from a different country for difficulties in interactive or negative outcomes (eg poor quality of group ideas).

I am enthusiastic to exchange opinions with people who are from different countries.

The average amount of time required to complete the survey was ten minutes.

Field Site

The 2000 Olympics, held in Sydney Australia, was selected as the field site for this study. The Olympics affords an ideal setting for studying the role of stereotyping in service delivery and ratings because it is attended and staffed by a wide variety of cultures.

The working constituency at the Olympics comprised 15,300 Olympic Village athletes and officials, 7,000 Paralympic Village athletes and officials, 6,000 members of the media (Media Village) and 2,000 staff members (Spotless Service manual, 2000). The population at the Olympics was made up of people from 197 countries, speaking 72 different languages.

Because the code of conduct of the Olympic Village strictly prohibited talking to athletes, permission was only granted to survey staff. Forty 40 staff at the Olympic Village and Paralympic Village venue were surveyed. This venue was selected among the possible ten venues because it was the most active and widely visited venue and comprised the most diverse set of service staff.

The Olympic Village was comprised of International House, the main dining room, the human resources office, and the management office. Each of these sections, with the exception of the human resources and management areas, subdivided work into five areas: front of the house, facilities, kitchen brigade, executive chefs, and management. These sections used the same rostering schedule, consisting of the morning roster from 7 to 3, the afternoon roster from 3 to 11, and the night roster from 11 to 7.

Sample

A sample of at least 80 people was sought but denied by the management office because shifts were extremely busy and involving this many staff would create too much distraction from assigned tasks. Instead, 40 staff were selected by the service supervisor of the afternoon shift, which was the least pressured of the three possible shifts.

Staff were selected from the facilities work area, which generally had 50 staff working the afternoon shift. The facilities work area staff are responsible for one of the following tasks: floor cleaning, bins, ware washing, and pot washing. The sample of 40 staff comprised 24 men and 14 women. Thirty of the sample identified them as white and ten identified themselves as non-white. Twenty-six persons ranged between 15-20 years old, eight ranged between 20-30 years old, two ranged between 30-40 years old, one was in the 40-50 years of age category and one was in the 50-60 years of age category. Two persons did not specify their gender and two persons did not indicate their age. It is important to note that the management team evaluated the performance. A breakdown of the sample is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographics of sample for the study (N=67)

| Variable | | n | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|----|------------|
| Gender | Male | 24 | 60% |
| | Female | 14 | 30% |
| Race | White | 30 | 90% |
| | Non White | 10 | 10% |
| Age | 15-20 | 26 | 70% |
| | 20-30 | 8 | 20% |
| | 30-40 | 2 | 5% |
| | 40-50 | 1 | 2.5% |
| | 60-50 | 1 | 2.5% |

Procedure

The management office advised the researcher to conduct the survey in the main dining room in the facilities work area, since it was well accepted that a staff working there represented a wide range of cultures. The management office also designated that the survey be administered between 15:30 to 18:00 hours to minimise service disruptions.

The selected staff was asked to respond a Likert test without any time constraints. The average time of responding was between 10 to 20 minutes. Respondents appeared to approach the questionnaire in a positive manner.

RESULTS

Study 1 – Observations

The author observed the service interactions of four employees representing Latin, Asian and Western backgrounds. Employees were waiters and waitresses in a Mexican-Latino restaurant in Brisbane. The average tenure on the job was two years.

The service-scape of the restaurant comprised 20 tables, colourful setting, soft Latin and mariachi music, low lighting, and Mexican furniture. Tables were fairly closely spaced making movement among them somewhat awkward. Shifts were always under-staffed and staff were typically busy throughout their six-hour shifts. Most customers were Anglo-Australian.

Analysis of observational notes revealed that service quality, as measured by comments to the manager that persons were pleased with the service and would return, was generally of a higher standard when providers were serving persons from a similar background. This relationship was strongest for the Latin provider and weakest for the Asian provider. Customers were observed to call to other providers for help more often when their service provider did not smile during the exchanges with them or when called upon for assistance. This customer behaviour was more often observed when the Latin provider was involved in the service exchange than when the Asian provider was involved in the service exchange.

Study 2 - Interviews

Interviews were conducted on site in 5-star hotels. The five interviews conducted in Mexico City were known to the author. The five interviews conducted in Brisbane and Sydney were staff available at the time of the author's visit. Staff interviewed in Mexico City were Mexican nationals. Staff interviewed in Brisbane and Sydney comprised two Latinos and three Anglo-Australians.

The opening question was, How do you think stereotypes affect the delivery of good service? Interviews lasted about 10 minutes. The author recorded responses by hand at the time interviews took place. Before closing the interview, respondents were given the opportunity to review the recorded notes and verify that they accurately reflected their views. All persons participating in the interview were forthcoming with responses and illustrations of their comments.

Some issues such as voice, avoidance, employee effort and trust, were identified through the interviews, in fact there was an association between the stereotyping carried by the employee towards the service provided to the customer. For example, one provider reported, *my volume of voice could vary from one customer to another customer, this will depend if I like him or not*. Table 4 shows the key issues identified from analysis of the interview transcripts.

Table 4. Key Stereotyping issues identified in the interviews

| Category | Key Descriptors |
|-----------------|---|
| Voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tone (Unfriendly, Sarcastic, Friendly) ▪ Speed (Low, Fast) ▪ Volume (loud, silently) |
| Avoidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of eye contact ▪ Not acknowledging the customer's presence ▪ Serving another customer despite being first in line ▪ Body language: facing another direction |
| Employee Effort | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree of friendliness and contact ▪ Amount of 'small talk' ▪ Helping initiatives |
| Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asking the house-keeping department to check the room to some customer, basically non-white ▪ Luggage checked |

The themes are congruent with interpersonal service behaviours, extra-transactional service behaviour and the concept of respect in communication (Bailey, 1997; Martin & Adams, 1999).

Study 3 - Survey

Reliability of the survey was adequate with a Cronbach's alpha of .70. Openness toward dissimilarity was significantly related to managers' ratings of provider service performance. Individuals reporting expectations of more clashes with co-workers from different backgrounds had lower performance than those persons not having these expectations ($F(2,33)=7.59$, $p<0.01$, $R^2=0.14$).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Globalisation is changing the business environment, creating more and more cross-cultural exchange (Stone, 1995). In this paper, we discussed the inter-cultural service encounter, arguing that first impressions and personality judgments based on cues of non-verbal behaviours (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993; Solomon et al, 1985) may lead to deficiencies in the delivery of service to international customers.

The research used three methods to investigate the proposition that a negative relationship between negative stereotyping and the delivery of good service to both internal and external customers would exist. The interviews gave personal accounts by staff of inferior service treatment evoked by staff having negative stereotyping towards a culture, race or gender. Corroborating evidence was provided by observations and the results of a survey administered to staff at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games.

Before discussing the implications of the research, it is necessary to point out the limitations of the research. First, the research relied on cross-sectional data. The interviews required employees to reflect on their experiences whereas the survey assessed employees at one point in time. Participant observation overcame this limitation to some degree as it was longitudinal in nature. Nonetheless, longitudinal research would be useful to assess the robustness of the findings reported here. Another limitation is the small sample size obtained in the survey study, which may impact the representativeness of the findings. Again, the triangulation method employed provides additional evidence for the credibility of the research findings.

IMPLICATIONS

A number of practical implications emerge from the research. First, human resource policies that promote a dissimilarity open climate and reduce the difficulties employees face in interactions with persons from other cultures are likely to facilitate the provision of service to the international customer (Tharenou, 1999). Second, selection should consider the capacity of recruits to provide equitable and positive service to persons from a variety of backgrounds. A number of cross-cultural communication and interaction attitudes and skills have been identified, including international orientation, international experience, multicultural friendship networks, foreign language skills, willingness to change, experience seeking, participation in cultural events, adaptability, and dissimilarity openness (eg, Caliguri, 1994; Fujimoto et al., in press; Gregersen, Morrison & Black, 1998; Laabs, 1991; McCall, 1994; Meyer, 1997; Tharenou, 1999). Third, performance monitoring, feedback and evaluation should compare the service of providers to similar and dissimilar customers. Fourth, training and development in cross-cultural skills is indicated. Indeed, there is evidence that such training is a determinant of effectiveness and satisfaction in cross-cultural interactions (Black et al, 1991). Activities such as sensitivity training, cultural studies programs, rotation in international assignments are some of the ways in which employees can be prepared and developed for cross-cultural work (Caliguri, 1994; Tung, 1981).

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