

Regulatory Focus and Customer Verbal Aggression

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Abstract

Customer verbal aggression adversely affects frontline employees, namely in terms of emotional exhaustion and absenteeism. Very few studies, however, have looked at the antecedents of customer verbal aggression and, in particular, at how employee characteristics relate to it. In this study we add to the literature by relating regulatory focus, an individual difference variable that distinguishes a promotion from a prevention orientation, with customer verbal aggression. Drawing on a hierarchical approach to the effects of psychological traits, we predict that the relationship between regulatory focus and customer verbal aggression is partially mediated by two specific self-regulatory mechanisms, self-efficacy and customer orientation. Based on a sample of 217 frontline employees, we determined that promotion is only indirectly and negatively related with customer verbal aggression, whereas prevention is both directly and indirectly positively related to customer verbal aggression.

Keywords: *Aggression; Customers; Services*

Track: Services Marketing