

Why are Complaints from Some Consumers Taken More Seriously than Those from Others? Gender Discrimination in Service Recovery Response: The Role of Employees' Age

Natalia Rogova

Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt

Shashi Matta

Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt

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Abstract

This research explores whether women's complaints in the marketplace are taken less seriously than men's, which leads to unfavorable treatment of female complainants and gender inequity. In two online experiments, we uncover the phenomenon of consumers' gender discrimination in service recovery responses by frontline employees. Results show that in gender-neutral service industries, women's complaints are perceived as less credible, which leads to decreased monetary compensation and willingness to apologize, but only among older respondents. In masculine service industries, surprisingly, women receive higher monetary compensation than men for unsuccessful service, and the effect is largely driven by younger and middle-aged respondents. This research can help companies to adjust sensitivity training programs for frontline service employees, to achieve equal treatment of consumers of all genders, and avoid overcorrection and bias.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Services, Organization Behavior, Sales Force, Service Quality*

Track: Services Marketing