

The Conflict Between Social Distance and Cultural Proximity in Service Encounters With Compatriot Migrant Employees While on Vacation Abroad

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Abstract

We investigate tourists' stereotypes and service expectations of employees with a local vs. non-local accent when travelling abroad. Furthermore, we account for consumer- (home country, cultural openness) and situation-specific (cultural congruence) boundary conditions. We conducted a 3 (service setting) x 2 (employee accent) online experiment with 128 Austrians and 119 Mexicans using audio scenarios. Results suggest that negative social stereotypes overshadow cultural proximity (Mexican tourists look down on Mexican migrant employees abroad), but that service expectations are unaffected by this. Accent-service cultural congruence plays an important role in this context. The moderating role of tourists' cultural open-mindedness depends on their home country and the considered stereotype dimensions (i.e., superiority, attractiveness, or dynamism). Our findings call for a multifaceted and more nuanced view of the in-group/out-group dichotomy in intercultural service encounters.

Keywords: *intercultural service encounters, employee accent, stereotypes*

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