

RECOMMEND, DON'T UPSELL

A guest-first approach to increasing value without making bartenders sound like salespeople.

▲ SEC. 01

UPSELLING VS. RECOMMENDING

TRANSACTIONAL	HOSPITALITY-LED
"Want Grey Goose?"	"Do you want something clean and neutral, or a little more character?"
"Want to make that a double?"	Understand the occasion and preference before suggesting anything.
Lists every bottle	Narrows to two or three useful options.
Pushes price	Explains why a particular product fits the guest.

Research on employee service behavior supports the importance of personal service, while question-asking research supports follow-up questions as a way to communicate listening and responsiveness. **[R1][R2]**

▲ SEC. 02

A SIMPLE RECOMMENDATION METHOD

- Discover the preference.
- Offer two or three options; not a product dump.
- Choose one recommendation.

- Give a short reason.
- Accept the guest's choice without pressure.

▲ SEC. 03

WHAT TOP BARS ILLUSTRATE

Superbueno has described a compact menu built around drinks with clear identities and different style/flavor profiles; Overstory has emphasized bartender conversation as part of how guests navigate the menu. [c3][c1]

The goal: a good recommendation should make the guest think, "They understood what I wanted." If the guest thinks, "They just sold me the expensive one," trust falls.

▲ SOURCES

EVIDENCE & SOURCES

● **RESEARCH EVIDENCE** peer-reviewed study

○ **MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK** established management literature

■ **LEADING-BAR CASE** documented operator practice, not a controlled experiment

R1 ● **RESEARCH** Huang, Yeomans, Brooks, Minson & Gino (2017). "It Doesn't Hurt to Ask: Question-Asking Increases Liking." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113(3), 430–452. 2025 correction issued. **Source**

R2 ● **RESEARCH** "The impact of personal and functional aspects of restaurant employee service behaviour on customer satisfaction." *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 66 (2017), 46–53. **Source**

R7 ● **RESEARCH** Sattavorn & Khasasin (2026). "Impact of Japanese hospitality; Omotenashi; on customers' experiences and their loyalty to restaurants." *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 133, 104523. **Source**

C1

■ CASE
2022. **Source**

Overstory, New York. North America's 50 Best Bars: Michter's Art of Hospitality Award

C3

■ CASE

Superbueno, New York. Ranked No. 2, North America's 50 Best Bars 2024. **Source**

Interpretation note: hospitality and restaurant studies are used as evidence for general service and environment principles. They should not be read as guarantees of a specific sales lift in a particular bar. Leading-bar examples illustrate execution patterns consistent with those principles.

Part of The Happy Thesis Co.'s free Bar Owner Resource Library. **Get in touch** if you'd like help putting any of this into practice.