

Customer Participation in Creating Customer Satisfaction

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Abstract

The mechanism of service deliveries in the financial service industry has gradually transformed and developed over time, shifting from a one-way delivery of services to a situation where customers take part in the service by suggesting their desires. Such participation might positively impact service quality and result in the incensement of customer satisfaction toward the service. This study thus investigates the antecedents of customer participation, including interactional justice, customer education, affective commitment, and company support, and explores if customer participation strengthens customer satisfaction. Furthermore, it considers role identification and perceived benefits as moderators, depicting whether these variables enhance customer participation toward customer satisfaction. The study examines data after delivering surveys to customers of financial brokerage companies, considering a total of 324 entries as valid samples. Results show that customer education, affective commitment, and company support substantially increase the degree of customer participation. More interestingly, this research presents that customer participation dramatically enhances customer satisfaction toward service delivery. Perceived benefits also positively moderate the enhancement of customer participation toward customer satisfaction. These results provide insights into how Taiwan's financial service industry could increase customer participation and further enhance customer satisfaction in service delivery.

Keywords: Interactional Justice, Customer Education, Affective Commitment, Company Support, Customer Participation, Customer Satisfaction, Role Identification, Perceived Benefits.

JEL Classifications: M3, L1

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1. Introduction

Many scholars have performed extensive investigations into customer participation, because the relationship between customers and service providers in the service procedure continuously changes over time (Bettencourt, 1997, Eisingerich and Bell, 2006). The traditional mode of a service typically represents a one-way delivery whereby people receive the service just the way the company distributes it to them. However, customer participation promptly emerges during service delivery as the customer's willingness to participate in service process increases (Bateson, 1985). Customers may become partial employees when they participate in service delivery (Bowers, Martin, and Luker, 1990), and when they partake in how the services are delivered to them, the service are re-created and assembled. Therefore, Yi, Nataraajan, and Gong (2011) highlight the importance of customer participation, asserting that customers are involved or engaged in the service or consumption process more often than before. Bettencourt (1997) notes that customer participation can improve service quality if the customer shows a willingness to provide useful suggestions to the service procedure. Such interactive connection between consumers and service providers might result in increasingly frequent customer participation in service procedures. Accordingly, the current study aims to study this phenomenon further by discussing customer participation in the financial service field.

As financial services place significant emphasis on credence attributes, customers of such services are generally engaged in processes requiring their participation. In financial services, customer participation supports the co-production of service (Yoo, 2016) and helps the development of a competitive advantage in the financial service. Co-production by customers and financial consultants deepens the customer relationship and increases customer satisfaction (Mainardes, Teixeira, and da Silveira Romano, 2017). That customer participation is important in financial services is widely recognized, but most studies concentrate on Western countries (e.g., Auh *et al.*, 2019; Izogo, Elom, and Mpinganjira, 2020; Petzer, 2017). Research focusing on customer participation in the financial industry of Asian countries such as Taiwan is needed. Like many Asian countries, Taiwan is a high-context culture society wherein people look for more interpersonal communication (Hall, 1976). Prospective customers tend to seek the advice and opinion of financial consultants. The passage of the Financial Holding Company Act in 2001 allows Taiwanese banks to establish investment and insurance subsidiaries to conduct wealth management business (Wu, Wang, and Rouyer, 2020). Under these conditions, Taiwanese customers are used to having a high level of interpersonal contact and customization in terms of service bundling that exists between them and their consultants (Wu *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, financial brokerage companies present an ideal context within which the antecedents and consequences of customer participation exist.

The literature has integrated four major factors related to customer participation. These factors are customer education (e.g. Buttle and Burton, 2002; Eisingerich and Bell, 2006),

interactional justice (e.g. Brown, and Chandrashekar, 1998; Zhao, Peng, and Chen, 2014), affective commitment (e.g. Allen, and Smith, 1993; Auh, Bell, McLeod, and Shih, 2007; Izogo *et al.*, 2020), and company support (e.g. Fuchs, Prandelli, and Schreier, 2010; Grisseemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). This research constructs these components as antecedents of customer participation, which may impact the degree of customer participation during service procedure. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is an important issue when investigating customer relationships in service deliveries. Fornell (1992) defines customer satisfaction as customers' experience with the outputs and procedures of the service or the consumption process. Previous literature has found that customer participation may influence the satisfaction (e.g. Auh, Menguc, Katsikeas, and Jung, 2019; Izogo, Elom, and Mpinganjira, 2020) and perceived value (e.g. Carlson, Wyllie, Rahman, and Voola, 2018; Mustak, 2019) of customers who receive the service. In other words, the goal of customer participation is enabling services to be performed more efficiently and achieving a higher level of customer satisfaction (Jiang, Xu, Cui, Zhang, and Yang, 2019).

When customers are involved in service creation, they can often also be included in the service procedure by indicating what and how they want to be served (Cermak, File, and Prince, 1994; Mustak, 2019); as a result, the service may likely better meet their expectations. In other words, customer participation allows customers to obtain superior service outcomes that fit their specific needs and help them in developing and maintaining better relationships with their service providers (Wang, 2019). Most importantly, customers provide information and get involved in service co-production, and these inputs result in meaningful and cooperative contributions to the service process (Zhao, Yan, and Keh, 2018). According to Vega-Vazquez, Revilla-Camacho, and Cossío-Silva (2013), customer participation may have a positive correlation with customer satisfaction toward an experience with service delivery. Many previous works have focused on the antecedent factors of consumer participation (i.e. customer education, interactional justice, affective commitment, and company support), and their consequent effect on consumers' loyalty behaviors, but there is a lack of research discussing the moderating variables in the financial industry (Auh *et al.*, 2019).

Previous research has identified some potential moderating variables such as role identification and perceived benefits (e.g. Meuter, Bitner, Ostrom, and Brown, 2005; Dong *et al.*, 2015). The first one is role identification, which has been treated as a vital element in examining customers' feelings of involvement in the service procedure. For example, Dabholkar (1996) proves that playing a role in the service procedure is more preferable than not being in the act. Meuter *et al.* (2005) also indicate that the understanding of customers on how and what they want in the service is echoed when they believe they have a role in the service. One major reason is that when customers put forth some efforts in the service process, they will perceive more attraction of the service due to the feed-back from their participation.

Another one is perceived benefits, which are tested as a moderator in the relationship between customer participation and customer satisfaction (Dong *et al.*, 2015). When customers perceive more benefits during service delivery from the service provider (Meuter *et al.*, 2005), they might enhance their willingness to participate in the service delivery process. Customers' satisfaction toward the service procedure escalates when they receive benefits or awards from participating in the service (Dong, Sivakumar, Evans, and Zou, 2015). In response to a call for more studies exploring the moderating effects, the present research takes role identification and perceived benefits as moderating variables to evaluate the enhancement from customer participation to customer satisfaction.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

This study takes the antecedents of customer participation into consideration, including interactional justice, customer education, affective commitment and company support. Furthermore, this study probes that whether the customer participation will enlarge the degree of customer satisfaction in the service procedure. Two moderating variables are also added in this study to discuss whether they will impact the enhancement of customer participation towards customer satisfaction, including role identification and perceived benefits. Such an integrated investigation on all these potential variables is less studied in the customer relationship field on customer participation. Figure 2.1 below represents the conceptual framework of this research.

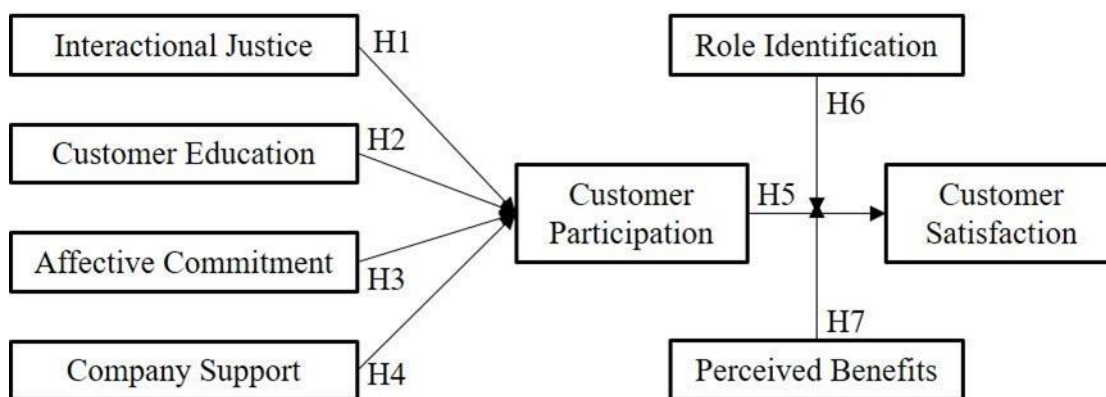


Figure 2.1: Framework and Hypothesized Effects

2.1. Customer Participation

Customer participation is consumers' willingness to engage in service delivery and offer practical suggestions for improving service offerings (Bettencourt, 1997; Eisingerich and Bell, 2006; Auh *et al.*, 2019). Bettencourt (1997) indicated that customers may devote themselves to service quality via three participatory roles, namely, promoters, co-producers, and consultants. Cermak *et al.* (1994) further asserted that customer participation in the service process may include mental and physical aspects, regardless of the suggestions provided to the service

provider or contributed to the service delivery. For example, one consumer can be physically involved in the service delivery process by operating self-service machine to increase service efficiency (Lin, 2019) or mentally by offering a free smile to inspire a good service by an attendant. Such participations in the service process can improve the entire service quality (Ngo and O’Cass, 2013).

Considering that the way to interact with customers has changed over time, studies such as Bowers *et al.* (1990); Kelley, Donnelly, and Skinner (1990); and Auh *et al.*, (2019) present various concepts and probe the behavior and outcomes of customer participation in the service process. In detail, Bateson (1985) examined the different motivations of financial institution consumers when given the choice between self-service or traditional service in the service delivery procedure. Some customers prefer to participate even if no extra incentive is offered (Bateson, 1985). Bowers *et al.* (1990) treated customers as partial employees in the service environment, as customer participation not only lessens cost but improves service qualities and customer satisfaction level. Kelley *et al.* (1990) investigated the participatory role of customers involved in the service delivery process and found that service quality improved due to customer participation. Eisingerich and Bell (2006) pointed out that in the financial service process, customer participation can decrease customers’ changeable behaviors, thereby increasing their satisfaction with the service provider.

2.1.1. The Link between Interactional Justice and Customer Participation

Interactional justice is the degree of fairness of interpersonal manners in which customers are treated during consumption involvement (Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar, 1998; Zhao, Peng, and Chen, 2014). Concerned with interpersonal treatments in service or consumption, many researchers examined if customers are addressed equitably (e.g., Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988; Blodgett *et al.*, 1997; Wang and Jiang, 2015). These studies provide insights into the components that associate interactional justice with courtesy, honesty, and empathy. For instance, Blodgett, Hill, and Tax (1997) discussed the interactional justice of complaints from a postal scenario, where the customers are treated with respect or rudeness. Their findings indicated that the higher degree of interactional justice perceived by a consumer, the higher possibility the customer will re-patronize the service provider.

Later research attempts to extend the findings of the aforementioned studies. For example, Sparks and McColl-Kennedy (2001) found that interactional justice influences customer satisfaction with service recovery. The findings of Maxham and Netemeyer (2002) are similar. In addition, Auh *et al.* (2007) found that the perceptions on interactional justice contribute to increasing the level of cooperative behaviors (co-production) among financial service customers. Carrillo, Svensson, and Neira (2019) found significant relationships between interactional/distributive justice and service satisfaction. Therefore, interactional justice may enhance consumers’ willingness to participate the service process, which, in turn, empowers the

collaboration in service execution. Consequently, interactional justice may likely have an impact on customer participation. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Interactional justice will have a positive effect on customer participation.

2.1.2. The Link between Customer Education and Customer Participation

Customer education is the procedure in which service providers offer advice to customers to enhance their skills and abilities, thereby enabling customers to contribute to service delivery (e.g., Buttle and Burton, 2002; Eisingerich and Bell, 2006). Sharma and Patterson (1999) stated that customer education can be measured as the information and investment suggestions that service advisors provide and explain to customers in the financial service procedure. Murray and Ozanne (1991) suggested that customer education is an “awareness step” that helps companies identify customers’ preference for products and need for the service provider. Furthermore, educated customers can reinforce the operation of financial service delivery and maintain a robust relationship with their service providers (Eisingerich and Bell, 2006).

According to Hibbert, Winklhofer, and Temerak (2012), customers with high skills and knowledge are more effective than those with low skills and knowledge in service activities and value creation. Eisingerich and Bell (2006) discovered that customer education can enhance their willingness to participate the service. When service advisers have higher willingness to provide additional education for their customers, more customer participation can be observed during the service process (Eisingerich and Bell, 2006). Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Customer education will have a positive effect on customer participation.

2.1.3. The Link between Affective Commitment and Customer Participation

Affective commitment reflects a psychological and emotional feeling or sense of belonging with a firm (Auh *et al.*, 2007; Izogo *et al.*, 2020). It represents customers’ emotional attachment to a firm (e.g., Allen and Meyer, 1990; Meyer, Allen, and Smith, 1993; Ariani, 2012). Bravo *et al.* (2019) found that the performance and behaviors of service employees influence consumers’ emotions and satisfaction. Moreover, Gruen, Summers, and Acito (2000) defined affective commitment as a customer’s psychological aspect in the act of feeling bonded with and favoring the service provider. The feeling that customers have toward the company causes them to convey their positive perception to others as well (Harrison-Walker, 2001). Customers yearn to maintain an emotional relationship with the firm or service provider.

Previous studies note that customers who have high affective commitment may participate in service procedure (Auh *et al.*, 2007; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003; Izogo *et al.*, 2020). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) proposed that strong, committed relationships between customers and a company often increase customer participation in the production or service process. Auh *et al.* (2007; 2019) likewise pointed out that affective commitment increases customer

participation in financial and medical services. As evidenced by earlier studies, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: Affective commitment will have a positive effect on customer participation.

2.1.4. The Link between Company Support and Customer Participation

Company support is the movement of the company when service offerings are accessed to empower customers to participate in service creation. (Fuchs, Prandelli, and Schreier, 2010; Grisseemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Several scholars stated the importance of company support while performing a service (Bagozzi, 1995; Bettencourt, 1997; Sharma and Patterson, 1999). Bagozzi (1995) proposed that the support of a company for customers leads to the latter's willingness to have a relationship with the former, thereby encouraging customers to cooperate in service development. Bettencourt (1997) empirically tested samples of grocery customers and observed that the perceived company support for customers is vital in service consumption or process. Sharma and Patterson (1999) also discovered that communication between customers and a company enhances their relationship, thereby reducing the possibility of service failures declining while improving service quality.

Several studies show that company support likely affects customer participation when the service is implied (e.g., Bettencourt, 1997; Grisseemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). For example, Bettencourt (1997) suggested that when consumers perceive company's support during service encounters, this perception can be considered as an antecedent of customer voluntary performance with the service. Furthermore, Grisseemann and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) pointed out that company support can significantly encourage tourism industry customers into creating service during service delivery. As evidenced by mentioned previous works, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H4: Company support will have a positive effect on customer participation.

2.2. Customer Participation and Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the post-purchase customer behavior associated with meeting expectations (Fornell, 1992, Fornell, Rust, and Dekimpe, 2010). According to Fornell (1992), customer satisfaction measures the quality of the output that a customer experiences after consumption or service process. Spreng and Olshavsky (1993) suggested that customer satisfaction is based on the perceptual and rational feelings obtained during and after consumption. Customers may sense pleasure and fulfillment when participating because they have control over the service procedure and the outcome (Schneider and Bowen, 2010). Several studies also indicate that satisfaction is an attitude resulting from the service or purchase (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982; Wu, 2011). Many scholars suggested that customer participation has a positive influence on customer satisfaction during service encounters (Czepiel, 1990; Cermak *et al.*, 1994; Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert, and Zeithaml, 1997). Cermak *et*

al. (1994) empirically explored the relationship between customer participation and satisfaction in service delivery as well as customer intention to repurchase after service experience. According to Bitner *et al.* (1997), customer participation affects their satisfaction with healthcare and medical service delivery.

In financial services, customers may be satisfied with service delivery if they can participate in the service process such as choosing and/or composing the package of their investment options (e.g., Surprenant and Solomon, 1987; Ramani and Kumar, 2008). Auh *et al.*, (2019) showed that consumer participation results in greater customer empowerment and satisfaction in bank services. As evidenced by mentioned works, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5: Customer participation will have a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

2.3. Moderating Role of Role Identification

Role identification is the understanding and acceptance of customers of their participation roles (Meuter *et al.*, 2005; Dong *et al.*, 2015). Dong *et al.* (2015) indicated that role identification is the internalization of whether or not customers obtain participatory roles. Extant literature suggests that the identification of customer roles is crucial because some customers may not recognize or accept their involvement in the service process (Dong *et al.*, 2015). Lengnick-Hall (1996) said customers may act out two roles: information providers or co-developers of the service. According to Bowers *et al.* (1990), some companies regard customers as trial employees in the service procedure. Moreover, Pearsall, Ellis, and Bell (2010) pointed out that people's understanding and awareness of their responsibilities can deepen upon finding out they play roles in the service process.

Meuter *et al.* (2005) stated that customers' feeling of having a role is a key component of their participation readiness, which may impact their participation. Although customers are regarded as partial employees in service procedure (Bowers *et al.*, 1990), Karmarkar and Pitbladdo (1995) said that customers should also identify themselves with their roles. Customers' involvement in the service procedure increases when they consider their roles to be vital in receiving quality service or an outcome that fulfills their intentions (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1993). The perceived participatory roles of customers is important for customer participation in the service. According to Dong *et al.* (2015), customers' recognition of their roles in the service process may significantly strengthen their willingness to participate in the service, and thus enhance their degree of satisfaction. As evidenced by previous works, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H6: Role identification will positively moderate the enhancement of customer participation towards customer satisfaction.

2.4. Moderating Role of Perceived Benefits

The perceived benefits of participation are customer evaluation of participation rewards (e.g., Meuter *et al.*, 2005; Dong *et al.*, 2015). These benefits can be classified into extrinsic and intrinsic benefits (Meuter *et al.*, 2005). Extrinsic benefits are externally controlled rewards, which include price discounts, time savings, and convenience (Dabholkar, 1996; Meuter *et al.*, 2005). By contrast, intrinsic benefits are psychological rewards people receive from performing well, including feelings of enjoyment and accomplishment (Bateson, 1985; Lusch, Brown, and Brunswick, 1992). Predicting that most customers are unlikely to participate in service production without benefits and motivation is reasonable (Meuter *et al.*, 2005). According to Dong *et al.* (2015), many companies offer participation rewards to their customers, but they do not understand the actual desires of their customers. Thus, providing what the customers regard as valuable is more compelling than overloaded awards and benefits (Frei, 2006).

The concept of perceived benefits as a moderator in the relationship between customer participation and customer satisfaction was initially described by Dong *et al.* (2015). For customers who want to participate in customizing the service procedure and benefiting the service, such a participation will result in positive service outcome and the feeling of being desired (Claycomb, Lengnick-Hall, and Inks, 2001). By contrast, for customers who consider the benefits they obtain during participation, their participation will result in the feeling of satisfaction and enhanced willingness to participate in the service procedure (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson, 2005; Dong *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, Chan, Yim, and Lam (2010) suggested that during consumers' participation in service delivery process, if they perceived higher value, their satisfaction may increase. As evidenced by previous research, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H7: Perceived benefits will positively moderate the enhancement of customer participation towards customer satisfaction.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection and Sampling

The research model is deemed suitable for an investment service context wherein customers and investment consultants have more chance to interact with each other and engage in co-production. Share of wallet has never been more critical in the present state of the financial market, in which many competing firms emerge each day. Therefore, investment service industry presents an ideal context within which the antecedents and consequences of customer participation can enhance satisfaction (Wu, Wang, and Rouyer, 2020).

This study used a quota sampling method based on the target investment companies' number of branches in Taiwan. A total of 800 self-reported surveys were distributed by

investment companies' salespeople at service counters to individual customers. To overcome the difficulty posed by respondents having multiple investment companies, they were asked to report their major investment company. In this study, major investment company was defined as a customer's sole investment company or that investment company where most of their investment businesses were done. If a customer's major investment company was not one of the target investment company, then the survey process was discontinued. To increase the response rate, the surveys were conducted in the many cities in Taiwan.

Respondents from large, medium, and small-sized; financial holding company and non-financial holding company based investment companies were all represented in the sample. To some extent, the sample characteristics appear to be representative of investment company customers in Taiwan. The respondents of the questionnaire included more males than females among a total of 324 people. Participants who are males stand a 61.4 percent of the responses with 199 people, whereas female respondents hold on a 38.6 percent with 125 people. Moreover, 35.8 percent of those who filled out the survey are aged between 26 and 50 years old. Others included people that are more than 51 years old with an 8.3 percent and those less than 20 years old with a 0.6 percent out of the overall respondents. From these figures, over ninety percent of the respondents are found to be aged between 21 and 50 years old, meaning that the investors are predominantly grownups including young adults and middle-aged people. People who have a degree in a university or college stand a major portion of the respondents in this study with a 62.7 percent out of overall feedbacks.

3.2. Measure Development

In this research, all the measured items were adapted from the existing scales used in other research (see Appendix). All items used in the questionnaire used a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (i.e., strongly disagree) to 7 (i.e., strongly agree). The four items used to measure interactional justice came from Auh *et al.* (2007) and Colquitt (2001). The measure of customer education included four items taken from Eisingerich and Bell (2006). The five items to measure affective commitment were adopted from Gruen *et al.* (2000) and Auh *et al.* (2007). Company support was measured with five items provided by Chan *et al.* (2010). The five items used to measure customer participation came from Eisingerich and Bell (2006) and Chan *et al.* (2010).

The measure of customer satisfaction included five items taken from Chan *et al.* (2010) and Dong *et al.* (2015). The three items to measure role identification and four items to measure perceived benefits were adopted from Meuter *et al.* (2005) and Dong *et al.* (2015), respectively. In this study, one manager from the investment services industry and two academics of financial marketing area were recruited to review specific items and the definitions of all the constructs included in the questionnaires. To ensure the internal validity of the measurement, one manager and two academics were asked if the selected items could measure the underlying constructs.

Several items in the questionnaire were modified based on their suggestions to suit the investment service context.

3.3. Validation of Measures

This research adapted the two-step approach advocated by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). First, this study developed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with eight research variables in a structural equation model (SEM) (see Figure 2.1). The SEM including seven hypotheses was then estimated with data. The results of CFA revealed an acceptable result regarding the data's variability and reliability. The good reliability of the measurement was found as the value of Cronbach's alphas of all constructs were greater than 0.70. In addition, all composite reliabilities were greater than 0.70, and all average variance extracted (AVE) estimates were greater than 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The good convergent validity of the measurement was found as all of the items had significant loadings on their respective constructs (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Discriminant validity was evidenced by the fact that none of the confidence intervals of the phi estimates between the pair of constructs were 1 in this study (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Wu, Wang, and Rouyer, 2020).

4. Results

The SEM analysis was conducted through LISREL 9.2 to find out whether the hypotheses developed for this study were supported or not. Table 1 shows the results of the proposed model. H1–H5 were tested by Model 1. The fit of Model 1 was acceptable ($\chi^2/d.f. = 2.539$, NNFI = 0.92, RMR = 0.08, RMSEA = 0.06). For the four antecedents of customer participation, H1, interactional justice has a positive effect on the degree of customer participation, was not supported as the path had a non-significant p-value of 0.665 ($\gamma = -0.033$, $t = -0.433$). By contrast, H2, customer education has a positive effect on the degree of customer participation, was supported as the path had a significant p-value of 0.011 ($\gamma = 0.238$, $t = 2.542$). H3, affective commitment has a positive effect on the degree of customer participation, was also supported as the path had a p-value of 0.011 ($\gamma = 0.193$, $t = 2.552$) that represented the significant level. H4, company support has a positive effect on the degree of customer participation, was supported as the path had a significant p-value under 0.001 ($\gamma = 0.529$, $t = 6.778$). Finally, H5, customer participation has a positive effect on the degree of customer satisfaction, was supported as well because the path had a significant p-value under 0.001 ($\beta = 0.805$, $t = 12.252$).

To test the moderating effects of role identification and perceived benefits, this research carried out multiple-group analysis. The multiple-group analysis statistically compares the coefficients between two subgroups. If the coefficients significantly differ from each other, then the higher the coefficients are, the greater the effect on satisfaction (Wu *et al.*, 2020). This research first divided the total sample into two subgroups based on low/high role identification and perceived benefits. This research then tested the difference of chi-square to evaluate the

equality of the coefficients. If the result showed that the two coefficients were significantly different, then the two paths differed. This process can compare two subgroups and test whether the paths are different in terms of the direct effect of customer participation on customer satisfaction or not.

H6 proposes that role identification can positively moderate the enhancement of customer participation toward customer satisfaction. Referring to Model 2, the coefficient of the path from customer participation to customer satisfaction was higher in the high role identification subgroup ($\beta = 0.812$, $t = 11.497$) than in the low role identification subgroup ($\beta = 0.760$, $t = 7.712$). However, the chi-square difference was not significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.422$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$), thus rejecting H6. H7 proposes that perceived benefits can positively moderate the enhancement of customer participation toward customer satisfaction. As shown in Model 3, the coefficient of the path from customer participation to customer satisfaction differed among subgroups. The coefficient value was higher in the high perceived benefits subgroup ($\beta = 0.853$, $t = 11.662$) than in the low perceived benefits subgroup ($\beta = 0.735$, $t = 8.606$). Finally, the chi-square difference was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 14.225$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$), thus supporting H7.

Table 1: Path Coefficients and Results of SEM

Model	Path	Coefficient	t	$\Delta\chi^2$
Model 1	International justice → customer participation	-0.033	-0.433	
	Customer education → customer participation	0.238	2.542	
	Affective commitment → customer participation	0.193	2.552	
	Company support → customer participation	0.529	6.778	
	Customer participation → customer satisfaction	0.805	12.252	
Model 2	Low role identification Subgroup			
	Customer participation → customer satisfaction	0.760	7.712	
	High role identification Subgroup			1.422
	Customer participation → customer satisfaction	0.812	11.497	
Model 3	Low perceived benefits Subgroup			
	Customer participation → customer satisfaction	0.735	8.608	
	High perceived benefits Subgroup			14.225
	Customer participation → customer satisfaction	0.853	11.662	

5. Discussion

According to statistical analysis results, interactional justice does not influence customer participation as a whole. This result is different from previous findings, which claim that justice exists throughout the interaction between customers and service providers. The present analysis shows that no significant enhancement of interactional justice to customer participation may be attributed to the environment of the financial service industry in Taiwan. The relationships between individual investors and their financial consultants in Taiwan may be slightly different from those in other nations sampled in previous research. Taiwanese investors tend to have favorable communication and contacts with their service providers. However, this phenomenon does not exactly lead to their participation in their financial portfolio. Investors can have an outstanding relationship with their advisors in their investment service without personally

participating in the service. Moreover, customers who are treated with politeness and courtesy throughout the service may feel that such treatment is reasonable and will not join in the service by person. Customers are also likely to entrust the service to the provider when the service has interactional justice.

In line with Eisingerich and Bell (2006), the current study documents the effectiveness of offering customer education in terms of the other three antecedents of customer participation. Customer education strengthens the degree of participation because the service provider gives suggestions and information to customers during the service procedure. As such, customers are informed of the service process and are likely to participate in achieving the investment outcome. Moreover, the outcomes of the analysis of affective commitment to customer participation in the present study are similar to those of Auh *et al.* (2007; 2019). Affective commitment influences the level of participation because customers with emotional attachment to the company are willing to participate in the service process. Investors who feel a part of the service procedure and the provider are likely to participate in assembling their own investment portfolios with the assistance of financial consultants. The benefits of providing company support revealed in this study are in accordance with previous literature as well (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Company support impacts the level of participation because the firm provides the needs of customers and empowers them to participate in the service. The probability that customers will participate in assembling their investment structure increases as the financial company gives additional assistance to investors who are exerting effort in building their investment portfolios throughout their firm.

Based on the current analysis, customer participation can significantly impact customer satisfaction. Customer participation in service delivery allows customers to meet their service expectations and feel satisfied with the process or outcomes. These findings are in line with extant studies that discover the relationship of customer participation and customer satisfaction (Cermak *et al.*, 1994). Customers who build up their investment portfolios with their financial consultants have more satisfaction than those who do not participate in the financial service process.

The outcomes of this study show that role identification does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between customer participation and customer satisfaction. The participatory role of customers throughout the service procedure—if they understand or recognize their ability of performing the service—does not affect the enhancement of customer participation toward customer satisfaction. This study discovers this phenomenon, which is disparate from previous findings. The outcomes show that upon discovering that they have a role in composing their portfolio and a liability in choosing investment details, investors' participation in assembling their investment structure will not positively affect their satisfaction with the process or outcome. Moreover, perceived benefits moderate the enhancement effect of

customer participation on customer satisfaction, as Dong *et al.* (2015) pointed out in their research. The meaning of this moderating effect is that customer satisfaction increases when customers participate in the service process and when the perceived benefits of participation is high.

Based on the above discussion, this study offers a proper theoretical framework for investigating the customer relationship because customer participation emphasizes the importance of relationship between customers and service providers. In addition, this study breaks new ground on service marketing literature, focusing on customer participation that is critical to satisfaction. Even more unique is that this study extends existing research by exploring the vital role of customer participation in mediating the effect of affective commitment, customer education, and company support on customer satisfaction. Specifically, the setting in which customer participation is more effective to gain satisfaction is explored by examining the moderating effect of perceived benefits on the relationship between customer participation and satisfaction. At a theoretical level, these findings add to understanding of these relationships that benefit managing customer participation to maximize satisfaction.

6. Managerial Implications

The way of providing service has changed overtime. Customer participation in the service delivery has become increasingly frequent and prevalent. Customers participate in the financial service procedure by composing their portfolio with financial consultants and wishing they can receive exceptional service or outcome. According to the results, customer education, affective commitment, and company support increase customer participation in assembling their investment portfolio. Customer participation in structuring the portfolio is influenced by the information and suggestions offered by service providers, the emotional attachment of customers to service suppliers, and the assistance given by companies to customers. Applying and strengthening these three elements may have great potential to increase the willingness of customers to participate in the service process. Investment consultants can promote customer participation by developing affective commitment, which encourages customer participation with service provider by creating a close relationship. Therefore, investment consultants must find additional skills and techniques to nurture commitment in their respective relationship. They must also have a clear understanding of their customers when educating their customers. Thus, training programs must focus on the communication and education skills of investment consultants for them to comprehend further the changing needs of their customers, which subsequently motivates customers to engage in customer participation. Customer participation can be promoted by enhancing company support. Hence, investment consultants must care about the underlying customer needs and develop investment portfolio that match their customers' preferences as close as possible.

As shown in the current analysis, customer participation also enhances the level of customer satisfaction. Companies allowing customers to participate in composing their financial portfolio promote feelings of contentment among customers. Financial companies can focus on this phenomenon to increase customer satisfaction on the service. Moreover, the issue of perceived benefits serves as a vital factor in the enhancement effect of customer participation on customer satisfaction. Giving adequate benefits to customers may increase their satisfaction with the service when they participate in the procedure with financial consultants. The relationship between customers and service providers has always been a widely discussed issue. With the current findings, financial service companies in Taiwan and in different parts of the world can identify the relatively vital factors in their service procedures. These findings will also help companies discover ways to promote customer satisfaction given the competitiveness of the financial market. Financial companies will finally be able to develop customer satisfaction with the firm and service by identifying the aspects in their service that may increase customer participation throughout service delivery.

7. Research Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that can serve as avenues for future research. First, this study investigated the critical role of consumer participation within a high-context culture country, which highlights interpersonal relationships (Hall, 1976). As such, the findings of this study may not apply to other low-context culture countries such as the United States and Northern Europe. Future research may focus on the moderating effect of cultural variables such as individualism/collectivism and high/low uncertainty avoidance. Culture-related factors may moderate the relationship between customer participation and consumer behaviors such as perceived value, satisfaction, and intention to buy.

Second, the respondents were predominantly recruited from particular financial brokerage companies, and the questionnaires were not randomly collected. Specifically, the customers from these companies mainly reside in northern and central Taiwan because of the insufficient feedback from the southern and the eastern regions of Taiwan. Owing to the aforementioned limitations, the discoveries of this study should not be generalized into a complete interpretation of customer participation. Future researchers may consider investigating different variables with moderating effects on the enhancement effect of customer participation on customer satisfaction.

Appendix

Construct	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Interactional Justice				
My consultant takes seriously of the concerns I have.	0.684	0.827	0.828	0.546
My consultant puts the appropriate amount of effort into resolving any concerns I have.	0.713			
I feel treated with courtesy and respect by the consultant.	0.776			
My consultant listens politely to what I want to say.	0.779			
Customer Education				
My consultant keeps me very well informed about what is going on with the procedures of the services.	0.734	0.816	0.816	0.527
My consultant explains financial concepts as well as recommendations of investments in a meaningful way.	0.754			
My consultant always offers me as much financial information as I need.	0.676			
My consultant always explains to me the pros and cons of the investment he or she recommends to me.	0.737			
Affective Commitment				
I feel like part of the family at this investment company.	0.786	0.900	0.901	0.647
The financial services of this investment company has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	0.791			
I feel emotionally attached to the financial services this investment company provides.	0.820			
I feel a strong sense of belonging to this investment company	0.850			
I enjoy discussing the financial services of this investment company with other people.	0.771			
Company Support				
This investment company tries to provide the best financial services as possible.	0.705	0.877	0.878	0.590
Help is available from this investment company when I have financial problems.	0.714			
This investment company strongly considers my needs and wants.	0.807			
This investment company really cares about my investment performance.	0.788			
This investment company is willing to help me when I have a special request.	0.819			
Customer Participation				
I have a high level of participation in the financial service procedure.	0.742	0.894	0.888	0.613
I am very much involved in deciding how the service should be provided.	0.770			
I make constructive suggestions to this investment company on how to improve its service offerings.	0.798			
I spent a lot of time sharing information about my needs and opinions with the consultant during the service.	0.786			

I put a lot of effort into expressing my personal needs to the consultant during the service process.	0.817			
Customer Satisfaction				
My experiences at this investment company have always been pleasant.	0.818	0.895	0.894	0.629
Based on all my experience with this investment company, I am very satisfied.	0.802			
I am satisfied with the services this investment company provided.	0.786			
The financial service of this investment company meets my expectations.	0.785			
I am satisfied with the investment outcomes of the service at this investment company.	0.774			
Role Identification				
I enjoy serving myself by being involved in the service procedure.	0.719	0.768	0.768	0.525
I am happy to take on some service roles to replace the work of the financial consultant.	0.739			
I think I have the responsibility to be involved in this financial service.	0.715			
Perceived Benefits				
I would get what I really want if I participate in the service process.	0.793	0.876	0.879	0.646
I would get my service carried out in a timely manner if I participate in the service process.	0.830			
I would make the service have a better quality if I participate in the service process.	0.693			
Participating in the service process provides me with feelings of enjoyment.	0.887			

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