



# An Empirical Study on the Customer Satisfaction of Taiitang's Chinese Numerology Consulting Service and Products

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**Abstract.** Taiitang (太乙堂) I Ching and geomancy research and consulting center in the middle of Taiwan provides Chinese numerology and astrology consulting service and products such as “lucky seal (開運印鑑 in Chinese).” Along with the consulting service, the lucky seal is recommended after a special personal blessing process for a good fortune in the future, which is believed to have magical power and will affect the owner's luck. Therefore, different requirements need to design and purchase different seals to add new power for the customer. In order to continuously improve the service and make the alternative consulting education sustainable, an empirical study was conducted to examine the customer satisfaction and future purchase intention in the center. A questionnaire was designed to include items about consulting quality, product value, personnel service, service environment, overall performance and purchase intention. The Likert five-point scale was used. A sample of 231 participants responded to the survey. The results showed that the highest satisfaction of customers was with the convincing consulting and numerologists or astrologists' professional knowledge, whereas the lowest was their dress. Overall performance highly contributed to purchase intention with very high correlation coefficients.

**Keywords:** Numerology · Astrology · Satisfaction · Seal · Fortune

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The History of Taiitang

Taiitang, a Chinese Numerology and Astrology Consulting Center, whose main business is the Chinese Seal Stamp for good fortune, was established in 1989. To keep up with the times, after some improvement and innovation, the center set up an institute of Five Elements to promote the four pillars eight characters technique [1]. By offering professional courses that teach the theory of four pillars eight characters technique and help students understand themselves, Taiitang is trying its best to be recognized as professional.

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By combining the Chinese theory of seal and stamp with the numerology and the astrology, one of the major products, the lucky seal, in Taiitang is designed for good fortune, which should be done at a specific time on a particular date following the person's nature. After a special personal blessing process, the personal lucky seal is believed to have magical power, which can inspire one's potential, turn one's weaknesses into strengths, and activate one's personal spiritual power and good fortune. Therefore, everyone can transcend their poor fate or destiny and follow what they decide to do and fulfill their personal values.

## 1.2 Status of Taiitang

A professional customer service process, starting from entering the physical centers or visiting the online service system, has been introduced in 2017, in the hope of providing better overall service quality and smoothing the process of any interactive service contacts. All the offerings are customized which makes customers feel that they are special. The employees are trained to be able to distinguish customers in terms of their characteristics, personalities, and various needs to support solid consulting services and interaction between the consulting masters and customers. This is expected to improve the center's management system and business by increasing customers' satisfaction and their repurchase intention.

Taiitang now has two consulting centers at Taichung and Changhua in central Taiwan. It has five departments, including Sales Department, Geomancy Department, Information Department, Teaching Department, and Distribution Department. It has approximately 60,000 customers in total, of which 6,000 are active members. Among the active members, approximately 600 are premium members, who have taken the four pillars eight characters course, and 30 have become professional teachers.

Taiitang is an accredited member of the International Professional License Accreditation Council (IPLAC) [2] since 2020. This accreditation allows Taiitang to provide personnel service training assessments and confer a professional certificate (CZPBEC, Certificate of Zu-Ping Birthdate Eight Characters) for those who pass numerology and astrology expertise tests for developing advanced professional growth. In order to continuously improve the service and make the alternative consulting education sustainable, the major purpose of this empirical study was conducted to examine the perceived customer satisfaction and future purchase intention of the premium members in Taiitang. The study attained feedback from customers for improving service quality and after-sales service, so as to increase reputation among consumers and to operate sustainably.

## 1.3 Products and Services

The major product is the seal stamp for good fortune, which is recommended and made after a special personal blessing process and is believed to have magical power and will affect the owner's luck. Different requirements are needed to design and purchase different seals to add new power for the customer. In Taiwan, the seal stamp has the same function as an individual's signature for legal documents and can be associated with the owner's fortune if the stamp can fit its owner's eight characters of birthday data in the making process and usage. The seal stamp for good fortune is not a one-time consumer

product. As long as customers need a new change in destiny, the practitioners will make new ones according to new orders.

Services include four pillars eight characters courses, numerology and astrology consulting, geomancy, baby and company naming consulting, and giving auspicious dates for moving into a new house, etc. The framework of Taiitang’s service blueprint process includes front desk services, physical and online consulting by the practitioners, tangible exhibition, customer buying journey, back-office system for data analysis and accounting management, make-to-order process, product research and development, purchasing and inventory control, standardized after-sales service, regular track of consumer behavior and the data maintenance and updates. Figure 1 shows the blueprint of service in Taiitang, the Chinese Numerology and Astrology Consulting Center (Fig. 1).

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Previous Studies About Four Pillars Eight Characters

Not many academic English journal papers examined topics related to the four pillars eight characters (Ba Zi 八字 in Chinese) or the four pillars of destiny. However, it is still common for people from eastern cultures to use Chinese astrology such as BaZi as an important guide for understanding, explaining, and predicting character, relationships, career, and wealth [3, 4], although four pillars of destiny might be considered as an unorthodox science [5]. It seems that people are usually expected to make scientific decisions and rational actions but they also likely engage in fortune-telling practices upon BaZi analyses at the same time. This phenomenon is known as cognitive polyphasia [6].

Application of BaZi analysis can be divided into multiple aspects of lives including financial situation, career development, personal relationship fortunes [7] and explanation of enduring emotional state. These wide ranges of applications encourage the

tangible exhibition	physical appearance	appearance of employees	consulting seats	sample products	product order sheet	payment equipment	waiting for invoice	
customer behavior	arrival	in the waiting area	consulting service	decision on purchase	fill in the order information	amount calculation	payment	leaving
External interactions between employees and customers								
front desk	greeting to waiting seats	inquiry of service items	consulting sheet	product marketing	receive the order	amount calculation	receive payment and give the invoice	
Visible service versus invisible service								
Back-office service		input the birthday data	build or extract the customer file		calculate all orders	credit card system	save the customer file	
Internal interactions among employees								
supporting system		database of four pillars			database of products and production	accounting system	update the database	

**Fig. 1.** The Blueprint of Service in a Chinese Numerology and Astrology Consulting Center  
 Source: YH Lee, et al. 2018

development of BaZi consulting services and relevant products, and their quality is getting more emphasis than before to improve the satisfaction and purchasing intention of customers. Although numerous studies have already investigated satisfaction and purchasing intention in many industries and companies, this study is the first research to conduct an empirical survey on customer satisfaction with Chinese numerology consulting services and products, and Taitang is the case company for data collection.

## 2.2 Satisfaction and Purchase Intention

Service quality can lead to customer satisfaction and increase consumer behavioral intention [8]. Thus, this study used quality of service and products as a proxy to measure satisfaction in five aspects: Consulting service, products, personnel, environment, and overall quality. Consulting services and related products such as the “lucky seal” are the core of Taitang I-Ching (or Yi Ching) (Book of Changes) (易經 in Chinese) and geomancy (feng shui 風水 in Chinese) research and consulting center [9]. Consulting service refers to whether the knowledge and information from numerologists or astrologists are professional and convincing, and able to satisfy customers' curiosity. The product quality of a lucky seal stamp refers to whether it is perceived as beautiful, valuable, and helpful, and whether the material is reliable and the price is reasonable.

The other three aspects of personnel, environment, and overall quality refer to PBZ SERVQUAL [10]. The personnel aspect indicates the assurance of the service process delivered by the personnel, and also relates to whether the personnel's dress looks professional, which is revised from an item of SERVQUAL's tangibles' dimension: “XYZ's employees are well dressed and appear neat” [11]. The environmental aspect talks about whether the facility, equipment, and indoor decoration look modern and clean, create a relaxed atmosphere and let visitors feel pleasant. This is obviously similar to the dimension of tangibles in SERVQUAL. The overall performance refers to reliability, assurance and confidence in personal data security, delivery of after-sales service and the overall service.

For behavioral intention, two dimensions are included in this study: Loyalty and purchase intention. Loyalty is expressed to show a favorite priority and be willing to recommend, wait and purchase the membership. Purchase intention shows a willingness to consume the consulting service and repurchase products.

## 3 Research Methods

### 3.1 Participants and Data Collection

Taitang has approximately 6,000 active members. Among the active members, about 600 are premium members, who are the population of this study. The questionnaire was distributed to investigate customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. All premium 600 members were invited by the Line to click on the link of the questionnaire. A sample of 231 participants responded to the survey. The response rate was 38.5% (231/600 = 38.5%).

### 3.2 Measurement

A questionnaire was designed to include items about satisfaction with consulting quality, product value, personnel service, service environment, overall performance and repurchase intention as well as loyalty. The Likert five-point scale was used: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. This paper has the same data from Liao's thesis [12], and the Chinese version of the items can be found in her thesis.

## 4 Results and Discussion

The sample consists of 150 females (64.9%). Most participants were between 31 and 59 years old (76.2%). 60.2% were married and 59.3% has a college degree. 26.0% worked in the services sector while 39% worked in the manufacturing, industry or commerce sectors. 74.4% had a monthly income between 1,000 and 2,000 US dollars.

The results showed that the highest satisfaction of customers was with the convincing consulting (mean = 4.481) and numerologists or astrologists' professional knowledge (mean = 4.369), whereas the lowest was personnel dress (3.562) and the price of the seal stamp (3.776) (Table 1). The reliability of satisfaction is Cronbach alpha 0.94. In average, the mean of satisfaction is 4.064 with a standard deviation 0.588.

Reliabilities of loyalty and repurchase intention were represented by Cronbach alpha 0.92 and 0.88 respectively. On average, respondents had loyalty (mean = 4.015 with a

**Table 1.** Satisfaction

Satisfaction	Items	Means
Consulting	Convincing	4.481
	Curiosity	4.352
	Professional knowledge	4.369
Product value	Price	3.776
	Material	4.107
	Aesthetic	3.940
	Quality	3.944
	Helpful	4.043
Personnel service	Service process	3.927
	Dress	3.562
Service environment	Atmosphere	3.957
	Modern style	3.940
Overall performance	Reliable	4.206
	After-sales service	4.155
	Confidence	4.185

**Table 2.** Purchase Intention

Purchase intention and Loyalty	Items	Means
Loyalty	Priority	4.094
	Recommendation	3.979
	Waiting	3.876
	Membership	4.107
Purchase intention	Repurchase intention in products	4.108
	Repurchase intention in services	4.283

standard deviation of 0.731) with Taiitang and have repurchase intention (mean = 4.197 with a standard deviation of 0.731) in both products and services (Table 2). Overall performance highly contributed to loyalty and repurchase intention with correlation coefficients between 0.81 and 0.86. Loyalty and repurchase intention (Cronbach alpha 0.898) were further combined as purchase intention with a mean = 4.106 and standard deviation = 0.696.

Further analyses were conducted using a stepwise multiple regression method in the following steps [13]:

1. The independent variable (one of the 15 satisfaction items) which is best correlated with the dependent variable (purchase intention) is first included in the regression model.
2. Then, the remaining independent variable (one of the 14 remaining satisfaction items) with the highest partial correlation with the dependent variable, controlling for the first independent variable, is entered.
3. The process is repeated until the addition of a remaining independent variable does not increase R-square significantly.

The results showed six items in satisfaction were selected to best predict purchase intention with an explained variance of adjusted R square 88.2%. The item with the highest standardized regression coefficient (0.321,  $p < .001$ ) was: Overall the service, product and the image of Taiitang let me feel confident. Since the BaZi consulting service is primarily based on valuable information, which is invisible, this may explain why customers' perceived reliability of PBZ SERVQUAL is important to make customers feel confident. Another item with the second high standardized regression coefficient (0.284,  $p < .001$ ) was: The product quality of the lucky seal stamp was perceived as helpful for me to purchase. Again, even the function of the seal stamp is invisible. Only when the owner feels helpful with some magical power from the stamp, this would urge consumption intention [8].

## 5 Conclusion and Suggestion

In conclusion, the study shows that Taiitang provides satisfactory products and services, and maintains members' loyalty and repurchase intention. Particularly, the consulting

services are professional and convincing. Interestingly, customers might expect to see more professional dress in personnel. Further, there is a caveat for not overestimating the satisfaction level due to only a 38.5% response rate. It is possible that in Chinese culture, only those who tend to be positive are more likely to respond to a survey than those who are not so positive. In future study, a more unbiased sampling method is required.

Theoretically, this study created scales to measure satisfaction and purchase intention of Taitang. Other similar firms can refer to these scales if they want to assess their performance. However, the content validity can be improved in future studies. For example, two dimensions of SERVQUAL, responsiveness, and empathy, can be considered to be contained.

Practically, Taitang may consider designing uniforms to improve the perceived quality of the dress. Additionally, Taitang may try to let the process of making the seal stamp more transparent than before without disclosing the business secret. For example, the instruction may inform customers that the seal stamp will be handmade and must be at the right time to match the purchaser's eight characters. Hope this would improve customers' perceived reasonability of the product's price. Further, the design and product material can be innovative and in future research, an experimental research design can be conducted to test new products by using an electroencephalogram (EEG).

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