

# Consumers' Participation In The Service Postcounter and Their Attributions For Their Performance: The Case of University Students

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## Background

Different Levels of customer participation are inevitable in services production and delivery.

The current conceptualization of the service delivery process focuses mainly on the relationship between the provider and the customer *during* the service encounter.

The concepts of partial employees and coproducers have received increased attention from marketing people and various researchers (Chase, 1978; Lovelock and Young, 1979; Bowen, 1986; Mills and Morris, 1986; Kelley and others, 1990, 1992) who have proposed strategies for influencing customer participation during the service encounter while Bettencourt, 1997, developed a model of antecedents of customer voluntary performance (CVP) which, among others, refers to behavior of customers – cooperation and conscientiousness – *during* the service encounter.

In a sub-set of service industries, the human services industries, however, their successful delivery does on the level and quality of customer participation not only during the service encounter but, mainly, during the postcounter. Human services are those services in which people are their “material” or “inputs” and the objective of their delivery is “a change of state by the person” or a “transformation process” (Hasenfeld, 1983; Dickens, 1996).

The postcounter “includes what clients must continue doing, even after the encounter, to help guarantee the lasting effectiveness of the encounter itself” (Schneider and Bowen, 1995).

Despite conceptual awareness of the postcounter there has been no research on, first, what influence customer participation and performance during the postcounter and, second, customers' attributions for the success or failure in services where their participation was crucial during the postcounter stage.

## Objective

The main objective of this working paper is to empirically investigate antecedents

of students' participation during the postcounter stage and their attributions for their success/failure in a service (education) where customers expected participation is high not only during delivery of service but after delivery as well (outside the classrooms) for achieving a satisfactory service.

## Significance of the study

Research conducted in the past influencing customer participation in the production and delivery of services has focused on the service encounter (Shostack, 1985; Solomon and other, 1985; Surprenant and others, 1987; Bitner, 1990; Bitner and others, 1990; Dwanye and others, 1994; Bitner and others, 1994) while one study, only, investigated empirically antecedents of customer cooperation during the service encounter (Bettencourt, 1997).

As customers' attributions concerns, previous research has focused mainly on hypothetical consumption situations (Folkes, 1984; Oliver and DeSarbo, 1988).

This research is going to examine the factors which influence customers' participation during the postcounter stage and their attributions for their success/failure (internal and external factors) in a *real* consumption situation, where their participation for the satisfactory service delivery is required *after* the delivery of the service as well.

## Research design

Data are going to be collected through a questionnaire from approximately 150 students from two universities.

Students are going to be asked about the factors which influence them to participate during the postcounter stage, their expected performance, actual performance, their satisfaction with their results and their lecturers; Do they attribute their results to their lecturers, themselves or both?

## References

Available upon request