The Effects of Store Atmosphere and Sales Promotion on Purchase Intention —Perceived Customer Mood as a Mediator

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Abstract

In an informatized society, customers are easily affected by many factors before purchasing goods. In the process ofmaking decisions to buy products, store environment, employees' attitudes, store's sales promotion and mood influence decision to purchase, and that changes consumers' purchase intention. Besides it, due to changes in consumption patterns, consumers not only can go shopping in physical stores, but also buy merchandises on the Internet. People have different considerations to go shopping in distinct channels. Therefore, it is also worthy to study the considerations that impact customers' purchase intention. This paper mainly discusses the relationship between store atmosphere, sales promotion, customer mood and purchase intention. Taking cosmetics counters at department stores as an example,opinions of a sample of 276 female consumers was collected through questionnaire survey. The results show that store atmosphere and sales promotion are significantly related tocustomer mood, and customer mood is significantly related to purchase intention. In addition, customer mood is a mediator variable between store atmosphere and purchase intention and also between sales promotion and purchase intention.

Key Words: Store Atmosphere, Sales Promotion, Customer Mood, Purchase Intention

JEL classifications:M20, M31

1. Introduction

The department store industry has been booming in recent years andthe cosmetics industry always accounts for the largest proportion of sales and profits.The share of cosmetics in department stores is up to 80% and during the anniversary sales, 40% of profits come from cosmetics products.

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A good store design can lead customers to continue exploring the store. Three-fourth of buyers decide to purchase merchandise when they are in the store (Wang, 2008). Based on this discovery, excellent store atmosphere is a very important marketing strategy to attract consumers. Department storesshould provide good and comfortable shopping environment, appropriate service, attractive store design and decorations and various types of products so that there is a positive influence for buyers.

According toBlattberg and Nelsin (1990), sales promotion activities of the right kind can influence sales effectively and positively. Corporations are motivated by internal and external environments and use promotional activities to attract customers to purchase goods. Sales promotion is a regular means to enter the market or keep the consumers in all industries. There areseveral diverse kinds of sales promotion that can inspire buyers' purchase intentions (Chen, 2004).

Hence, we come up with a question, how can stores transfer store atmosphere and sales promotion into purchase intention which manufacturers expect.Peter and Olson (2005) posited that when customers encounter some stimulations in the store surrounding, they develop emotional reactions which affect their purchase intentions.

After customers increase their purchase intention, they decide to buy products in brick and mortar or online stores. Consumers spend more time and effort than before on searching for related products with lower price through the Internet. However, there are still some consumers who choose to go shopping in physical stores(Cheng, 2014). Therefore, inspired by the change in buying behavior, this paper also focuses on how consumers decide whether to shop online or purchase merchandise in brick and mortar.Modern department storesare the best placefor shopping, especially cosmetic counters which are always at the first floor to allure people to go around. Therefore, this paper used a questionnaire survey on cosmetics industry to explore the influence of store atmosphere, sales promotion and customer mood as a mediator on purchase intention.

After introduction, the second section of this paper presentsa quickoverview of relevant research works and literature. The third section focuses on datadescription and methodology, and the fourth section covers the resultsof the questionnaire survey, followed by conclusions of this paper.

2. Literature Review

A store's atmosphere formulates people's shopping experience which cannot be seen. Atmospherics in the store represent the aesthetics and ambience in the shop(Olahut et al., 2012). The atmospheric elements such as color, smell and window displays reflect the store atmosphere. In addition, these elements also play an important role in buyers' cognition and evaluation. Muhammad, Musa and Ali (2014)clarified that positive store atmosphere is capable of enhancing the value of goods and services so that customers tend to have emotional attachment and are willing to buy products. A wonderful shopping environment can affect people's purchasing behavior.

Sales promotion is another factor that influences customers' behavior. Dubey (2014)elucidated that sales promotion is defined as the range of techniques used to accomplish sales and marketing goals in order to save cost, with adding value to a merchandise or service for the middlemen and the final buyers. It is a short-term measure to boost purchasesby consumers. Sales promotion is also defined as a time period of marketing activity which is capable of encouraging a direct reply from marketing intermediaries and customers. Moreover, it is specific to place and consumer groupswho are provided additional benefits. Sales promotion is a short-term activity which can impact final sales. It is one of the tools of marketing to attract clients and it is also the easiest method to measure the financial condition. It is normally consideredfor promoting a new product or an extension of existing merchandise to the consumers(Waller, 2010).

After customers' purchase behavior is affected by store atmosphere and sales promotion, mood influences the behavior. According toKim and Mattila (2010), customer mood is defined as positive or negative affection to influence consumers' judgements. It also can last for longer time. Customer mood is more gentle, pervasive and is affected by many inducements. It is broader and does not have specific causes. The role of customer mood in influencing consumers' behavior is that it tries to change their decisions. It needs more time to generate feelings to push consumers to make a decision. Wang (2014) stated that customer mood can be affected by individual and group behaviors and the stimuli of environment; nevertheless, it is more affected by environmental elements. Since the process is more thought-oriented buyers might only be stimulated in their brainsand may not take action. Customer mood is hard to alter when clients are experiencing the feeling.

Consumers'behavior is influenced by their purchase intentions. If the company would like to earn more profits, it needs to sell more merchandise.

Therefore, the company must address consumers' purchase intention in order to sell more products in the future. Purchase intention can be clarified as the acquisition and consumption that involve diverse activities that lead to the decision-making before and after behavior. During the continuous decision-making process, clients are able to finish the transaction. On accomplishing the purchasing behavior, customers gain benefits and that results in enhanced purchase intention(Lin, 2013). Purchase intention is customers' concern and expression when they buy the products. It is a human behavior to consume tangible or intangible goods. Moreover, it refers to the final customer behavior thatleads to buying products or services for individual and household consumption(Purcarea & Rusanescu, 2011).

Besides knowing how buyers make the purchase decision, it is also significant to discuss where they can buy products. Customers are able to purchase merchandise in various channels. Bricks and mortar and online stores are the common places where consumers buy goods they want or need. In bricks and mortar, employees provide consultation service and organize the merchandise to help clients acquire the information they need. In online store, consumers gain the information from diverse websites(Wu, 2000).Taher et al. (1996)illustrated that the most attractive factor in bricks and mortar is the interaction with employees. Through the process of interaction with salesmen who play important roles, the joy is irreplaceable in online buying and is even better than shopping itself. Besides, people can pick up the package immediately and receive detailed product information.

Consumers understand the difference between bricks and mortar and online storeand are capable of deciding which channel is better for them to purchase goods.Chung (2006)illustrated that because brick and mortar is the traditional channel to purchase merchandise, people who have regular life-stylesdo not alter their purchasing methods. In addition, in online shopping it is hard to guarantee product quality and safety of the purchasing process. Some of the brick and mortar's benefits are difficult to replace, such as customized service, interaction with employees and getting goods immediately.Some of the brick and mortar's benefits are difficult to replace, such as customized service, interaction with employees and getting goods delivered immediately. Those merits are the main reason why customers buy products in brick and mortar. Online store cannot provide those services. That is why regular stores are still not replaced by online stores(Huang, 2004).

Extant literature has rarely examined customer mood as one of the factors that affects the purchase intention.Different from the previous literature,this paper examines the significance of customer mood. There are various factors that influence purchase intention, however, customer mood is seldom related to consumers'buying decisions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Frameworkand Hypotheses

In order to explore the relationships between store atmosphere, sales promotion and purchase intention through customer mood, store atmosphere and sales promotion are considered as independent variables, purchase intention is a dependent variable and customer mood is a mediator variable. Based on the research framework, the proposed hypotheses are as follows:

H1   Store atmosphere has a positive impact on customer mood

H2   Sales promotion has a positive impact on customer mood

H3   Customer mood has a positive impact on purchase intention

H4   Customer mood is a mediator variable between store atmosphere and purchase intention

H5   Customer mood is a mediator variable between sales promotion and purchase intention

3.2 Data Collection

This paperusesquestionnaire surveyto examine behaviors of female customers who purchase cosmetics at department store, in order to identify the impact of store atmosphere, sales promotion, customer mood and purchase intention. The questionnaire distinguishesfive parts, opinion on store atmosphere at the cosmetics counter at department store, opinion oneffects of sales promotion, opinion on customer mood in cosmetics counter at department store, opinion on purchase intention andbasic information.The samples are collected from all regions in Taiwan.

3.3 Sample

Those who have been to cosmetics counters in department store have been used as the samples. The final valid questionnaires were 276. After running analysis, the description of sample in age 21~30 is the majority in all interviewers. The education level of majority is bachelor degree.In occupation, professional, scientific and technical services industry accounted for the majority. Single is the majority in marriage.Last, the annual income distribution fell under NT$500, 000(US$16,436.55).[3]

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[3]Exchange rates used in the tables were taken from the historical exchange rate data are released by Board of Governors of Federal Reserve System in May 2016 (NT$ 30.42/1 USD).

3.4 DataAnalysis

SPSS was used as the analytical toolanda Likert five points scale with 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree was used. Data were sorted by title with 1 as first considering reason and 6 as last considering reasonfor conducting statistical analysis, reliability analysis, validity analysis, one-way ANOVA analysis and regression analysis.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

The paper applied Cronbach's α as a reliability standard.The Cronbach's α in this paper all exceeds 0.70 which is considered high reliability. Content and constructs validity was tested. The content validity is based on domestic and foreign literature review and scholars' experience, indicating substantial content validity. Construct validity in thispaper adopted KMO and Bartlett test of sphericity as the standards.The KMO value in this paper falls between 0.615~0.823while the results of Bartlett test of sphericity approached significance difference ($p < 0.01$) and all factors loading values were greater than 0.5, indicating this paper has construct validity.

4. Results

4.1 Purchase Consideration

After analyzing the data to predict purchase intention, the sequence of considerations isas below.First reason that consumers choose to go shopping in brick and mortar is that a store gives face to face service. Most buyers enjoy the service which stores provide; nevertheless, online shopping cannot supply this kind of service so that it is hard to compete with brick and mortar. Second reason is that in online shopping one cannot personally confirm the quality of goods while clients want to see the products immediately to confirm its quality; online shopping is not able to provide this service so that people go shopping in brick and mortar. Third reason is that store provides various sales promotions. Fourth reason is that store launches marketing experience; for example, store gives buyers some samples to test so that customers will understand whether they like it. Fifth reason is that consumers can experience the atmosphere which store creates; however, it hard to feel the atmosphere on website. Final reason is that clients are not very worried about online shopping postal shipping.

4.2 Testing of Hypotheses

For exploring the relationships among store atmosphere, sales promotion,customer mood, and purchase intention, hypotheses are proposed to test the relationshipsamong those factors. The results are as follows.

One-way ANOVA is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between mean values of three or more independent (unrelated) groups. Therefore, this study used one-way ANOVA to test age, education level, occupation, marriage and annual oncome. The results showed there were significant differences in age and annual income. Based on the results, regression analysis was carried out, using age and annual income as control variables.

Table 1 presents which element has a higher degree of impact on clients' interests. The beta of sales promotion (0.664) is higher than the beta of store atmosphere (0.490). In other words, compared to store atmosphere, buyers are more interested in sales promotion.

Table 1 also presents the relationships among store atmosphere, sales promotion and customer mood. The beta of store atmosphere on customer mood reaching 0.490 means per unit increase in store atmosphere will lead to 0.490 customer mood and $p<0.05$ shows store atmosphere is significantly related to customer mood. Hypothesis 1 was accepted. When customers are evaluating merchandise with different factors, this influences their mood to buy products. Store atmosphere is capable of increasing buyers' good mood. Therefore, when cosmetics counter at department store establishes a satisfactory atmosphere it enhances clients' good mood to buy products.

Table 1 also symbolizes the relationship between sales promotion and customer mood. The beta of sales promotion on customer mood reaching 0.664 means per unit increase in sales promotion will lead to 0.664 customer mood and $p<0.001$ demonstrates sales promotion is significantly related to customer mood. Hypothesis 2 was accepted. During the time customers are making their decisions to buy goods, it is easier to be attracted by store's sales promotion so that those activities have a big possibility to increase their good mood to buy merchandise. Hence, when cosmetics counter at department store offers charming promotion activities it raises buyers' good mood to buy products.

Table 2 explains the relationship between customer mood and purchase intention. The beta of customer mood on purchase intention reaching 0.683 means pre-increasing customer mood leads to 0.683 purchase intention and $p<0.001$ explicates customer mood is significantly related to purchase intention.

Hypothesis 3 was accepted. When customers have a good mood, they are more willing to purchase goods, and vice versa. Namely, customer mood can enhance purchase intention. Therefore, at the moment when clients are in a good mood or bad mood in cosmetics counter at department store, their purchase intentions are affected.

Baron and Kenny (1986)demonstrated that the test of mediator variable should meet four conditions:1.Independent variable is significantly related todependent variable;2.Independent variable is significantly related to mediator variable;3.In regression analysis, when independent variable and mediator variable are used to predict dependent variable, mediator variable is significantly related todependent variable;and 4.In number three condition, the regression coefficient of independent variable to predict dependent variable must be lower or even become not significant than the regression coefficient of independent variable individually to predict dependent variable.

Table 1 and 3 summarize the relationships among store atmosphere, customer mood and purchase intention. According to Table 3, Model 2 elucidated the beta of store atmosphere on purchase intention reaching 0.694 which means per unit increase in store atmosphere will lead to 0.694 purchase intention and p<0.001 expounds store atmosphere is significantly related to purchase intention that represents store atmosphere has a positive impact on purchase intention. Therefore, Condition 1 is met. In Table 1, Model 2 supports the beta of store atmosphere on customer mood reaching 0.490 which means per unit increase in store atmosphere will lead to 0.490 customer mood and p<0.05 explains store atmosphere is significantly related to customer mood that represents store atmosphere has a positive impact on customer mood. Hence, it meetsCondition 2.

According to Table 3, Model 3 expounds the beta of customer mood on purchase intention reaching 0.611 which means per unit increase in customer mood will lead to 0.611 purchase intention and p<0.001 states customer mood is significantly related to purchase intention that represents customer mood has a positive impact on purchase intention. Therefore, it meetsCondition 3. Based on Table 4, from Models 2 and 3, the beta of store atmosphere changed from 0.694 (p<0.001) to 0.634 (p<0.001) and R^2 changed from 0.531 to 0.671 (F=73.968,p<0.001). The higher R^2 represents the better regression effect. Hence, it meetsCondition 4. Last but not least, Hypothesis 4 was accepted. When the store built an enjoyable store atmosphere, it brings a positive effect on consumers so that customers have a huge chance to be in a good mood, resulting in the fact that their purchase intention will increase, and vice versa. Hence, if clients experienced a wonderful store atmosphere in cosmetics counter at department store, they will be in a good mood so that enhancing their purchase intention, and vice versa.

Tables 1 and 4 outline the relationships among sales promotion, customer mood and purchase intention. According to Table 4, Model 2 shows the beta of sales promotion on purchase intention reaches 0.633 which means per unit increase in sales promotion will lead to 0.633 purchase intention and $p<0.001$ clarifies sales promotion is significantly related to purchase intention that represents sales promotion has a positive impact on purchase intention. Therefore, it meetsCondition 1. Based on Table 1, Model 2 explicates the beta of sales promotion on customer mood reaching 0.664 which means per unit increase in sales promotion will lead to 0.664 customer mood and $p<0.001$ illustrates sales promotion is significantly related to customer mood that represents sales promotion has a positive impact on customer mood. Hence, it meetsCondition 2.

According to Table 4, Model 3 states the beta of customer mood on purchase intention reaching 0.525 means per unit increase in customer mood will lead to 0.525 purchase intention and $p<0.05$ describes customer mood is significantly related to purchase intention. Therefore, it meetsCondition 3. Based on Table 4, Models 2 to 3, the beta of sales promotion changed from 0.633 ($p<0.001$) to 0.569 ($p<0.001$) and R^2 changed from 0.455 to 0.473 (F=74.191,$p<0.001$). The higher R^2 represents the better regression effect. Hence, it meetsCondition 4. In the end, Hypothesis 5 was accepted. Whenthe store provides worthy promotion activities, that has a positive effect on consumers so that customers have a huge chance to be in a good mood, leading to enhanced purchase intention and vice versa. Therefore, if buyers encounter an economical sales promotion in cosmetics counter at department store, they are going to be in a good mood which raises their purchase intention, and vice versa.

5. Conclusion

Customers evaluate merchandise on different factors which influence the intention to buy products. First, cosmetics counter at department store establishes satisfactory atmosphere,which enhances clients' desire to buy products. Second, when cosmetics counter at department store offers charming promotion activities that raises buyers' desire to buy products. Third, at the moment,whether clients are in a good mood or bad mood in cosmetics counter at department store, their purchase intentions are affected. Fourth, when clients experience a wonderful store atmosphere in cosmetics counter at department store, they are in a good mood which enhances their purchase intention, and vice versa.

Last, when buyers encounter an economical sales promotion in cosmetics counter at department store, they are going to be in a good mood which raises their purchase intention, and vice versa.

After comprehending the elements that affect purchase intention, the benefits of the channel to buy merchandise are also worthy ofattention. Based on the analyses, brick and mortar's benefits are more than online store. Most buyers enjoy the service which stores provide, i.e. clients get to see the products immediately to confirm quality and physical storesalso provide buyers some samples to test so that customers understand whether they like it.These finds provide somepractical recommendations for industries as a reference. First, department stores can expand market by using store atmosphere and sales promotion. Next, department store can enhance profits by paying attention to customer mood. Last, department store can attract more customers by laying stress on employee service.

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Tables

Table 1. Results of regression analysis among store atmosphere, sales promotion and customer mood

Dependent variable	Customer mood	
Control variable:	Model 1	Model 2
Age	0.064*	0.054*
Annually income	0.030	0.063
Independent variable:		
Store atmosphere		0.490*
Sales promotion		0.664***
R^2	0.035	0.403
ΔR^2	0.028	0.592
F	4.900**	87.286***

Note: *** Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.001; ** Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.01;

* Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.05.

Table 2. Results of regression analysis between customer mood and purchase intention

Dependent variable	Purchase intention	
Control variable:	Model 1	Model 2
Age	0.095*	0.070
Annually income	0.119	0.108
Independent variable:		
Customer mood		0.683***
R^2	0.056	0.519
$\triangle R^2$	0.049	0.510
F	8.126***	92.178***

Note: *** Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.001; * Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.05.

Table 3. Results of customer mood is a mediator variable between store atmosphere and purchase intention

Dependent variable	Purchase intention		
Control variables:	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	0.095*	0.067	0.052
Annually income	0.119	0.135	0.123
Independent variables:			
Store atmosphere		0.694***	0.634***
Customer mood			0.611***
R^2	0.056	0.531	0.671
$\triangle R^2$	0.049	0.522	0.559
F	8.126***	73.690***	73.968***

Note: *** Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.001; * Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.05.

Table 4. Results of customer mood is a mediator variable between sales promotion and purchase intention

Dependent variable	Purchase intention		
Control variables:	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	0.095*	0.090*	0.076*
Annually income	0.119	0.157*	0.143*
Independent variables:			
Sales promotion		0.633***	0.569***
Customer mood			0.525*
R^2	0.056	0.455	0.473
$\triangle R^2$	0.049	0.446	0.461
F	8.126***	76.639***	74.191***

Note: *** Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.001; * Denotes the p statistic is less than 0.05.

Appendix

Questionnaire of Purchase Intention in Cosmetic Counter at Department Store

I.   The opinion on store atmosphere in cosmeticscounter at department store

1.   The physical facilities at cosmetics counters are attractive.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

2.   The merchandise in cosmetics counters appear organized.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

3.   The colorin cosmetics counters is pleasing

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

4.   The lighting in cosmetics counters is bright and warm

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

5.   The scent in cosmetics counters smells good and appropriate.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

6.   There are enough employees in cosmetics counters to serve customers.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐Agree

☐Strongly agree

7.   The employees in cosmetics counters provide appropriate service.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

8.   The employees in cosmetics countersare friendly and helpful.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

II.   The opinion on sales promotionat cosmetics counters at department store

1.   I can be expected to buy products due to the price reduction.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

2.   I be expected to buy products due to the coupon.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

3.   I can be expected to buy products due to the rebate.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

4.   I can be attracted by sample to buy products.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

5.   I can be attracted by sweepstakes to buy products.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

6.   I can be attracted by premium [???] to buy products.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

III.   The opinion on customer mood atcosmeticscounter at department store

1.   I feel pleased when I am shopping at cosmetics counters.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

2.   I feel my mood facing good influence when I am shopping at cosmetics counters.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

3.   I feel annoyed when I am shopping at cosmetics counters.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

4.   I feel my mood facing bad influence when I am shopping at cosmetics counters.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

IV. The opinion on purchase intention in cosmeticscounters at department store

1. I might consider purchasing products atcosmetics counters at the department store.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

2. I think there is a high possibility that products at cosmetics counters at the department store are worth buying.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

3. I am willing to buy productsat cosmetics counters at the department store.

☐Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Average

☐ Agree

☐Strongly agree

4. What reasons will influence you to buy products in brick and mortar instead of online shopping?(Please sort the order from one to six to indicate your priorities. 1 as first consideration or reason and 6 as the last reason.)

____Store creates atmosphere

____Store launches marketing experience

____Store provides sales promotion

____Store gives face to face service

____Online shopping postal shipping

____Online shopping cannot provide personal confirmation of the quality of goods

V.   Basic Information

1.   Age:

☐ Under 20

☐ 21~30

☐ 31~40

☐41~50

☐ 51~60

☐Above 61

2.   Education level:

☐Junior high school degree

☐ High school degree

☐Bachelor degree

☐ Master and Doctor degree

3.   Occupation:

☐ Agricultural,Forestry,Fishery and Husbandry

☐ Manufacturing and construction

☐ Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

☐ Art, Entertainment, Tourism

☐ Retail, Warehousing, Transportation

☐ Military, Civil and Teaching Staff

☐ Student

☐ Other

4.   Marriage:

☐ Single

☐ Married

5.   Annually income:

☐ Under NT$500,000(US$16,436.55)

☐ NT$500,001~1,000,000(US$16,436.59~32,873.11)

☐ NT$1,00,001~1,500,000(US$32,873.14~49,309.66)

☐ NT$1,500,001~2,000,000(US$49,309.70~65,746.22)

☐Above NT$2,000,001(US$65,746.25)