Research Article

EXPLORING USER EXPERIENCE IN POLITE ENVIRONMENTS ON RETAIL E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid development of retail e-commerce platforms in China, their convenient and fast shopping mechanisms have boosted Chinese tourism, attracting more domestic and international travellers to enjoy a better shopping process and experience various specialty products from different regions of China. In this context, retail e-commerce platforms not only provide daily shopping services for consumers but also become an important channel for tourists' consumption in tourism scenarios. However, the performance of the platform's polite environment affects consumers' user experience. Based on this, this study takes retail e-commerce platforms as the subject and explores the connection between e-commerce politeness and user experience in depth. During the research, it analyzes the importance of building a polite environment on retail e-commerce platforms, as well as the specific manifestations of e-commerce politeness in customer service, cost-effectiveness, and preferential rights. Furthermore, it proposes strategies to optimize the user experience on retail e-commerce platforms to help them enhance their competitiveness.

Keywords: retail e-commerce platforms, e-commerce politeness, user experience, Chinese tourism, critical incident technique.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In today's digital age, retail e-commerce platforms have become an essential shopping channel for consumers due to their convenience and diversity. Their market size has expanded rapidly, and competition has become increasingly fierce. Meanwhile, the development of tourism in China attracts countless tourists, generating abundant shopping needs, with retail e-commerce platforms becoming a crucial consumption channel for them. As consumers' demands for shopping experience on retail e-commerce platforms increase, user experience has become a critical factor for these platforms to stand out in the market. E-commerce politeness refers to the user experience perception during their consumption process on e-commerce platforms. However, in the current operations of retail e-commerce platforms, there are still "impolite" incidents that lead to poor user experiences, such as inaccurate search results, excessive advertisements, and poor after-sales service. These issues not only affect user satisfaction and loyalty but also negatively impact tourists' overall perception of Chinese tourism. In the long run, they significantly constrain the sustainable development of e-commerce platforms. Therefore, reform and development of the polite environment on retail e-commerce platforms are imperative. In summary, the "polite" operation of retail e-commerce platforms influences consumers' shopping experiences. This study takes the polite environment of Chinese retail e-commerce platforms as an example to explore critical incidents in the user experience process, providing improvement measures for the sustainable development of retail e-commerce platforms, thereby enhancing user experience and promoting the further development of the e-commerce industry.

In Summary, the "polite" operation of retail e-commerce platforms significantly influences consumers' shopping experiences. This study takes the polite environment of Chinese retail e-commerce platforms

as an example to deeply explore critical incidents in the user experience process. The goal is to provide improvement measures for the sustainable development of retail e-commerce platforms, thereby enhancing user experience and promoting further development of the e-commerce industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Retail E-Commerce Platforms

As the frequency of e-commerce activities continues to grow, the consumer market is undergoing rapid transformation. The retail industry, as one of the key areas of this revolution[1], holds a significant position in the e-commerce market. In the context of new retail, shopping on retail e-commerce platforms has become the primary choice for market participants and consumers[2]. The sales prices of online channels are generally lower than those of offline channels[3], and the services and convenience provided by platforms make consumers more inclined to shop online. Platforms also rely on a comprehensive e-commerce customer service system to ensure that consumers' reasonable demands are responded to and resolved promptly[2]. In today's business environment, customer experience is closely linked to customer loyalty. Service experience, website, product, logistics, and payment experience have the most significant positive impact on customer loyalty[4]. However, as service costs decrease, consumers' preferences for e-commerce platforms and their requirements for retail services have increased[5] Especially in terms of online consumption, there is a direct correlation between platform service quality, platform satisfaction, and platform loyalty[6].

E-Commerce Politeness

E-commerce politeness is a crucial communication medium linking online merchants and consumers on retail e-commerce platforms. It concerns whether the three parties can maintain positive interactive relationships and foster subsequent return usage and repurchase motivation. The relationship diagram of e-commerce politeness on

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retail e-commerce platforms is shown in Figure 1. In the new retail environment, digital tools are redefining value creation and delivery methods, integrating live streaming, video, and e-commerce to bring new vitality to the industry. In this context, fully utilizing new online retail key lies in strengthening politeness frameworks[7]. On e-commerce platforms, Brian Whitworth and Adnan Ahmad proposed five definitions of politeness: respecting user rights, transparency of actions, providing useful information, remembering users, and faithfully responding to users[8][9]. This clearly shows that e-commerce politeness is related to the user experience in the consumption process. At the same time, consumers actively avoid various forms of impoliteness in virtual storefronts, which undoubtedly harms online merchants. Research even shows that various forms of impoliteness within platforms are harmful to merchants[10]. Therefore, in today's e-commerce era, politeness management is very important for merchants with online stores. Likewise, retail e-commerce platforms must also pay attention to politeness issues within the platform.
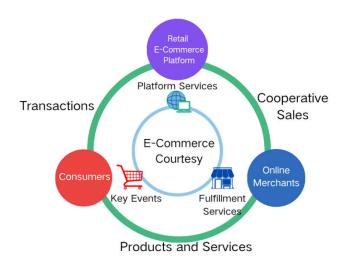

Figure 1: The relationship diagram of e-commerce politeness on retail e-commerce platforms

In conclusion, e-commerce politeness management is crucial for both retail e-commerce platforms and online merchants. This study collects information from consumer feedback on retail e-commerce platforms, analyzes the manifestation of politeness in various operational stages of the e-commerce platform, and investigates its impact on consumers' purchasing intentions. This helps platform managers to deeply understand the significant role of politeness management in the development of retail e-commerce platforms, thus providing targeted improvement suggestions for the sustainable development of retail e-commerce platforms.

RESEARCH METHODS

Critical Incident Technique (CIT)

This study employs the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), a method proposed by Flanagan in 1954, which aims to collect direct observations of human behavior. CIT has the potential to solve practical problems and develop psychological principles. CIT adheres to two principles: first, reporting behavioral facts is preferred over collecting interpretations, ratings, and opinions; second, the reporting scope is limited to behaviors that significantly contribute to the activity[11]. The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) includes five steps: defining the overall goals of the activity; developing plans and standards for collecting factual examples of the activity; collecting data through interviews or written reports; summarizing and

describing the data efficiently for practical application; and interpreting and reporting the requirements of the activity [11].

Currently, the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) has been widely applied in research both domestically and internationally. For example, it has been used in modern approaches to analyze human resource development research[12], studies on the impact of online hotel reviews on potential consumers' booking intentions[13], qualitative process evaluations of interventions[14], and cross-sectional studies of anesthesiologists[15], among others. This demonstrates that CIT has extensively and deeply penetrated various research fields, establishing a highly mature and robust methodology. Therefore, CIT is undoubtedly suitable for this study. To explore user experience in the polite environment of retail e-commerce platforms, this study will utilize CIT for related discussions.

Research Design

In the shopping environment of retail e-commerce platforms, consumers' perception of the platform environment greatly influences their shopping experience and loyalty. Therefore, this study focuses on the impact of a polite environment on consumer user experience on retail e-commerce platforms. It employs the qualitative research method of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to comprehensively collect the most satisfactory and least satisfactory critical incidents experienced by consumers due to the politeness of the platform environment during their use of retail e-commerce platforms. These critical incidents will serve as an important basis for an in-depth analysis of user experience in the polite environment of retail e-commerce platforms[16]. Based on this analysis, the questionnaire items required for this study will be skillfully designed. Consequently, this study will deeply explore the critical incidents of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction during the use of retail e-commerce platforms, and understand how to improve the mechanisms for handling dissatisfaction to regain consumers' willingness to use the platform.

This study will collect data through an online questionnaire, targeting consumers who frequently use retail e-commerce platforms. The questionnaire will require consumers to record the most satisfactory and least satisfactory critical incidents related to the polite environment of the platform, based on their shopping experience. The questionnaire will be distributed from December 1, 2024, to December 21, 2024, for a total of 21 days. Upon completion of data collection, the data will be integrated and analyzed to provide support for researching user experience in the polite environment of retail e-commerce platforms.

DATA ANALYSIS

Basic Information

The study collected a total of 105 questionnaires. To ensure the reliability of the research, the collected questionnaires were strictly screened, and invalid questionnaires with missing content, non-matching answers, or brief descriptions of critical incidents were excluded. After excluding 7 invalid questionnaires, a total of 98 valid questionnaires remained, with 98 "satisfactory" incidents and 93 "unsatisfactory" incidents. Flanagan (1954) in his research on the Critical Incident Technique (CIT)[11] pointed out that for simple and well-defined activities, analyzing 50-100 incidents is sufficient; for complex activities, thousands of incidents are needed. This study's questionnaire collection was targeted and straightforward, with a sample size that meets the requirements of this research method. Regarding the gender proportion of valid respondents, 62.2% were female participants (61 individuals), while 37.8% were male

participants (37 individuals), with slightly more female participants than male. In terms of respondents' ages, the majority were in the 19-25 age group, accounting for 74.3%, indicating that this age group is the primary customer base for retail e-commerce platforms.

Classification Principles

After collecting these data, the researchers carefully reviewed each critical incident, scientifically and reasonably classified them, and gave them corresponding names. The satisfactory incidents were divided into six categories: "Customer Service," "Logistics and Delivery," "Cost-effectiveness," "Discounts and Benefits," "Accurate Recommendations," and "Special Features." The unsatisfactory incidents were divided into five categories: "Customer Service," "Logistics and Delivery," "Cost-effectiveness," "Discounts and Benefits," and "Advertisement Pushes." The four themes of "Customer Service," "Logistics and Delivery," "Cost-effectiveness," and "Discounts and Benefits" have consistent attributes in both satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents, hence they use the same naming. Table 1 clearly shows the classification names and detailed descriptions of the critical incidents

Table 1: Classification Names and Detailed Descriptions of Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory Critical Incidents

Classification Names	Detailed Descriptions
Customer Service	Refers to the e-commerce platform addressing customer inquiries about product information, handling returns and exchanges, and resolving related issues.
Logistics and Delivery	Refers to activities such as picking, processing, packaging, sorting, and assembling items, as well as delivering them on time to the designated location.
Cost-effectiveness	Refers to the measure of how well a product or service's quality, functionality, and performance match its price.
Discounts and Benefits	Refers to various discount policies and benefits, including forms such as discounts, threshold-based reductions, coupons, free gifts, points redemption, membership privileges, and more.
Accurate Recommendations	Refers to methods for providing users with personalized and precise product, content, or service recommendations based on behavioral data, interest preferences, consumption history, and other relevant information.
Special Features	Refers to the unique functions or characteristics that distinguish the platform from other similar platforms.
Advertisement Pushes	Refers to the proactive delivery of advertising information to users through various technologies and channels.

In terms of the background of the classifiers, Classifier 1 and Classifier 2 are both e-commerce platform operation specialists, and Classifier 3 is an experienced e-commerce customer service representative. These three classifiers have a deep understanding of the shopping environment on retail e-commerce platforms and have been closely monitoring user experience feedback for a long time. Therefore, this study specifically invited these three classifiers to verify the classification of critical incidents related to user experience in the polite environment of retail e-commerce platforms and to check for any deviation from the main theme. The subsequent classification work will only commence once all three classifiers unanimously agree with the categories of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents identified in this study.

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability

The reliability analysis of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) classification generally includes "Individual Classification Consistency" and "Inter-Classifier Consistency." According to CIT classification reliability assessment standards, if the classification results of two or more classifiers have an agreement level exceeding 0.8, the classification is considered consistent and reliable [11]In this study, the three classifiers first reached an agreement on the classification of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents and conducted the initial classification. After 30 days, they performed a second classification. The comparison of the two sets of data yields the study's reliability. The specific data on inter-classifier consistency is shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Number of Inter-Classifier Consistencies - Satisfactory Incidents

Number of Consistencies	Classifier 1	Classifier 2	Classifier 3
Classifier 1	79	——	——
Classifier 2	54	86	——
Classifier 3	67	53	82

Table 3: Number of Inter-Classifier Consistencies - Unsatisfactory Incidents

Number of Consistencies	Classifier 1	Classifier 2	Classifier 3
Classifier 1	78	——	——
Classifier 2	66	85	——
Classifier 3	62	59	75

Based on the data from Tables 2 and 3, this study verifies the inter-classifier consistency among the three classifiers. The formula for calculating consistency is as follows:

$$A = \frac{\frac{2M_{12}}{n_1+n_2} + \frac{2M_{23}}{n_2+n_3} + \frac{2M_{13}}{n_1+n_3}}{N} \#(1)$$

$$R = \frac{(N \times A)}{1 + [(N-1) \times A]} \#(2)$$

Where,

R=Reliability

N= Number of Classifiers

A= average interjudge agreement

M= Number of Consistent Classifications Among Classifiers（For example, M_{12} represents the number of samples where the first classifier and the second classifier classified the same.）

n= Number of Samples Judged by Each Classifier（For example, n_1 represents the number of samples judged by the first classifier.）

By using the above formula for detailed calculations, we successfully obtained Table 4: Classification Reliability Table.

Table 4: Classification Reliability Table

Categorization	Average Inter-Rater Agreement（A）	Reliability（R）
Satisfaction	0.706	0.878
Dissatisfaction	0.782	0.915

As shown in Table 4, the reliability of both satisfactory and unsatisfactory incidents in this study exceeds 0.8. This indicates that the classification process for satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents demonstrates acceptable reliability among different classifiers[11]. Therefore, the classification results of this study meet the requirements for inter-classifier consistency. Through the reliability test, this study provides reliable data and a classification basis for subsequent research.

Validity

When exploring user experience within the politeness environment of retail e-commerce platforms, validity analysis plays a crucial role in ensuring the reliability of research findings. Expert Validity: Industry experts were invited to participate in the research design and result evaluation. Their professional knowledge ensured that the research dimensions were scientific and that critical incidents accurately captured user satisfaction and dissatisfaction, providing strong support for the accuracy of the study[17]. Content Validity: The study thoroughly reviewed whether it comprehensively covered all aspects of user experience within the politeness environment of retail e-commerce platforms. Through in-depth analysis of critical incidents, it ensured that the classification items truly reflected user experience, avoiding the partiality of the research content[18]. Face Validity: Attention was given to the outward appearance of the research tools, making them intuitive and reasonable. This made the research content easily understood by the public, enhancing the dissemination and practicality of the research findings[19]. By integrating these three types of validity analysis, the study not only delved into user experience but also helped retail e-commerce platforms optimize their politeness environment based on the research findings, providing users with a higher quality service experience.

Classification Results

After comprehensively collecting and analyzing critical incidents, this study categorizes them according to classifications by three classifiers. In each category of satisfactory and unsatisfactory critical incidents, two typical cases are selected as shown in Table 5 and Table 6. Based on the classification results, the proportions and rankings of each major category are calculated.

Table 5: Typical Cases of Satisfactory Incidents

Event Classification	Typical Cases
Customer Service	Some platforms offer instant refunds, so you don't have to wait for a long time. When I had an issue with a product I bought on Taobao, the platform automatically helped me apply for a refund.
Logistics and Delivery	After making a purchase, you can always check the logistics information on the platform. There is specialized cold chain delivery for buying seafood.
Cost-Performance Ratio	There are billion-yuan subsidies, making it relatively cheaper. The prices of products on the Pinduoduo platform are cheaper than on other platforms.
Discount Benefits	Taobao members can receive exclusive discount coupons during promotions. Vipshop offers SVIP users seven major privileges, including an additional 9.5% discount on top of existing discounts and Super VIP subsidies.
Personalized Recommendations	The platform recommends products I like based on my browsing and purchase history.

Special Features	Quickly find the required products, and there are multiple filtering options to help users narrow down their choices. JD Logistics "Next-Day Delivery" and "Same-Day Delivery" Pinduoduo's Flash Delivery service can deliver products within 30 minutes.

Table 6: Typical Cases of Unsatisfactory Incidents

Event Classification	Typical Cases
Customer Service	There are fake human customer service agents, making it impossible to communicate issues. Slow response to complaints on Taobao
Logistics and Delivery	Delivery speed is slow, and there are frequent delays. Buying frozen food without cold chain delivery
Cost-Performance Ratio	Bought a branded down jacket, but upon receiving it, found out it was a counterfeit. The product does not match the description, and there is no shipping insurance.
Discount Benefits	They give out many coupons, but those coupons have restrictions. They give out many coupons, but those coupons have restrictions.
Ad Push Notifications	Sometimes various ads pop up frequently on the page, and those ads are not liked. Sometimes various ads pop up frequently on the page, and those ads are not liked.

Based on Table 7, in terms of satisfactory key events, the six categories are ranked as "Discount Benefits," "Customer Service," "Special Features," "Cost-Performance Ratio," "Logistics and Delivery," and "Accurate Recommendations." Among them, "Discount Benefits" ranks first with 25.5%, indicating that discount policies and benefits are crucial for users. "Customer Service" follows with 23.5%, highlighting the importance of courteous customer service in enhancing user experience. "Special Features" ranks third with 22.4%, showing that unique features help retail e-commerce platforms differentiate themselves. "Cost-Performance Ratio" and "Logistics and Delivery" tie at 10.2%, suggesting that platforms should optimize the supply chain to provide well-balanced products in terms of quality and price, while also ensuring efficient and courteous delivery services. Although "Accurate Recommendations" ranks last, it should not be overlooked, as many users expect platforms to recommend products based on their needs, reducing selection costs.

Table 7: Summary of Satisfactory Types in This Study

Translation: Six Classifications	Satisfactory						Sum	
	Category Classifier 1		Category Classifier 2		Category Classifier 3			
	Number of Items	%	Number of Items	%	Number of Items	%	Average Number of Items	%
Number of Items	26	26.5	21	21.4	23	23.5	23	23.5
Logistics and Delivery	10	10.2	5	5.1	15	15.3	10	10.2
Cost-Performance Ratio	10	10.2	8	8.2	11	11.2	10	10.2
Discount Benefits	19	19.4	35	35.7	20	20.4	25	25.5
Accurate Recommendations	9	9.2	8	8.2	8	8.2	8	8.2
Special Features	24	24.5	21	21.4	21	21.4	22	22.4
Sum	98	100	98	100	98	100	98	100

Based on Table 8, in terms of unsatisfactory key events, the five categories are ranked as "Customer Service," "Ad Push Notifications," "Cost-Performance Ratio," "Discount Benefits," and "Logistics and Delivery." Among them, "Customer Service" ranks first with 32.3%, indicating that the platform's courtesy, problem-solving efficiency, and attitude in this area should be emphasized. "Ad Push Notifications" ranks second with 29.0%, indicating that excessive, inaccurate, and impolite push notifications have become a pain point for users, and the platform needs to optimize its push mechanism. "Cost-Performance Ratio" and "Discount Benefits" both account for 16.1%, indicating that the actual value of goods does not match their prices, and complex and difficult-to-understand discount rules that are not genuinely fulfilled make users dissatisfied. Although "Logistics and Delivery" ranks relatively low, it still receives user attention, and its unsatisfactory events will affect the overall experience of the platform's courtesy environment.

Table 8: Summary of Unsatisfactory Types in This Study

Five Classifications	Satisfactory						Sum	
	Category Classifier 1		Category Classifier 2		Category Classifier 3			
	Number of Items	%	Number of Items	%	Number of Items	%	Average Number of Items	%
Customer Service	38	40.9	28	30.1	24	25.8	30	32.3
Logistics and Delivery	7	7.5	5	5.4	7	7.5	6	6.5
Cost-Performance Ratio	10	10.8	18	19.4	16	17.2	15	16.1
Discount Benefits	11	11.8	15	16.1	18	19.4	15	16.1
Ad Push Notifications	27	29.0	27	29.0	28	30.1	27	29.0
Sum	93	100	93	100	93	100	93	100

Understanding how to improve mechanisms for handling customer dissatisfaction is crucial to regain their willingness to use the service, and this is a key aspect of this study. Through statistical analysis of data from 98 valid questionnaires, it was found that 72.4% of respondents would be willing to repurchase if dissatisfaction was handled properly, while 27.6% would not. This indicates that a majority of consumers' loyalty to the platform to some extent depends on its ability to handle negative incidents, making consumers' attention to unsatisfactory key events higher than that for satisfactory key events. This highlights the importance of effective handling of customer dissatisfaction to maintain customer loyalty and satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The research results show that the six categories of satisfactory events for users of retail e-commerce platforms are ranked as follows: "Discount Benefits," "Customer Service," "Special Features," "Cost-Performance Ratio," "Logistics and Delivery," and "Accurate Recommendations." The five categories of unsatisfactory events are ranked as follows: "Customer Service," "Ad Push Notifications," "Cost-Performance Ratio," "Discount Benefits," and "Logistics and Delivery." This reflects the problem-oriented issues users encounter during usage. Additionally, 72.04% of respondents indicated that if unsatisfactory events are properly handled, they would be willing to repurchase. This demonstrates that users' willingness to repurchase is somewhat related to the quality of the platform's courtesy. Properly handling user experience helps improve consumer loyalty to the platform. It can be seen that there is still significant room for improvement in enhancing user experience on retail e-commerce platforms. Platforms need to further optimize the courtesy environment to increase user satisfaction and loyalty.

Recommendations

Based on the above analysis, this study will provide the following recommendations from four perspectives: government, retail e-commerce platforms, online platform merchants, and users:

1. Government Perspective

The government should formulate and improve relevant laws and regulations regarding the courtesy environment of retail e-commerce platforms, clarifying the responsibilities and obligations of platforms and merchants in terms of service attitude, privacy protection, and other aspects. Strict penalties should be established for discourteous behavior. At the same time, incentive policies such as tax breaks and financial subsidies should be introduced to encourage platforms to develop more specialized tourism product pages and provide multi-language service support, aiding the integration and development of China's tourism and e-commerce industries.

2. Retail E-Commerce Platform Perspective

Retail e-commerce platforms should establish clear platform courtesy standards, such as customer service communication terminology and merchant entry review standards. They should warn, fine, or even remove merchants who violate these standards to ensure an overall courteous environment on the platform. At the same time, they should use big data and artificial intelligence technologies to optimize search algorithms, reduce ineffective search results, minimize ad interference for users, and simplify after-sales service processes by clarifying after-sales policies to improve service efficiency and quality.

3. Online Platform Merchant Perspective

Translation: Merchants should enhance employee training to improve courteous service awareness, maintaining a polite and enthusiastic attitude from pre-sale consultation, and follow-up during the sale, to after-sale services, and promptly responding to user needs. Additionally, they should accurately describe product information, ensure product quality, provide precise logistics information, and avoid discourteous behaviors like false advertising and misrepresentation, to establish a good brand image.

4. User Perspective

When users encounter discourteous events during their shopping experience, they should promptly report the issue to the platform or merchant to ensure that the problem is resolved. At the same time, they should recognize and encourage courteous service from the platform, creating positive reinforcement. When interacting with merchants or other users on the platform, users should maintain civility and courtesy, contributing to a harmonious shopping environment.

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