

Service Competitiveness, User Friendliness, and Promotions Affecting Consumers' Decisions to Use Online Food Delivery Services in Guangxi, China

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Abstract: This study investigates the determinants of consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services in Guangxi, China. The research is guided by two primary objectives: (1) To study service competitiveness, user friendliness and promotions in relation to consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services in Guangxi, China. And (2) To analyze the effects of service competitiveness, user friendliness and promotions on consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services in Guangxi, China. A quantitative survey was conducted utilizing a structured questionnaire. Data were collected from 400 residents in Guangxi who had ordered food online within the past three months. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The findings yield the following key conclusions: First, all three factors that Service competitiveness, User friendliness, and promotions are significantly related to consumer decisions. Second, these factors have a substantial explanatory power of 59.7% ($R^2 = 0.597$) on consumer behavior. Third, promotions have the strongest positive effect ($\beta = 0.480$), indicating that price sensitivity is the dominant driver in this market. Service competitiveness ($\beta = 0.195$) and User friendliness ($\beta = 0.195$) follow, demonstrating that operational efficiency and interface design are also critical for platform success in Guangxi.

Keywords: online food delivery; service competitiveness; user-friendliness; decision to use

1. Introduction

Over the past 30 years, China's Internet has achieved a leapfrog development from non-existence to existence, from small scale to large scale, and from weak to strong. China has built the largest Internet infrastructure in the world with leading technologies. At the same time, China has also established the largest online retail market and the largest group of Internet users in the world. With the rapid development of Internet technology and the widespread use of smart phones, the online food delivery service market in China has experienced unprecedented growth^[1].

According to the 55th "Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet" released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of December 2024, the number of online food delivery users in China reached 592 million, an increase of 47.77 million compared to December 2023, accounting for 53.4% of the overall internet users. This data not only reflects the huge potential of the online platform food delivery service market but also lays a foundation for in-depth research in this field. With more and more consumers relying on online platforms to obtain meals, understanding

and meeting their demands have become crucial. This not only helps to enhance user experience but also enables platforms and service providers to better optimize their service processes and marketing strategies, thereby maintaining a leading position in the highly competitive market^[2].

The online food delivery market in China presents a duopoly pattern. Meituan and Ele.me dominate as third-party platforms. At the same time, with the addition of JD delivery, the competition in the online food delivery market has become more intense. JD delivery, with its unique positioning and resources, is expected to change the market landscape. These enterprises continuously improve their profitability through technological innovation (such as artificial intelligence scheduling and precision marketing) and market penetration in lower tier regions (such as Guangxi and Yunnan). As the only profitable and stable platform, Meituan's business model provides important references for the industry^[3].

Meituan holds a dominant position by virtue of its extensive merchant coverage and efficient delivery network; Ele.me, relying on the Alibaba ecosystem, focuses on serving users in high-tier cities; JD delivery stands out by emphasizing food safety, offering favorable merchant policies, and leveraging JD's logistics network for fast delivery^[4].

However, although online food ordering services have achieved remarkable development in Guangxi region, there is still room for improvement in their market penetration rate. One important reason is that consumers have insufficient understanding of the service quality of the platforms and there are differences in their willingness to use them. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to deeply explore the decision-making factors that influence users' choice of online food ordering services in Guangxi region.

1.1. Research Objective

1. To study service competitiveness, user friendliness and promotions in relation to consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services in Guangxi, China.

2. To analyze the effects of service competitiveness, user friendliness and promotions on consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services in Guangxi, China.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

The evolution of online food delivery services in China, particularly in regions like Guangxi, presents a dynamic market environment where platforms must navigate both technological adoption and fierce market competition. This study integrates two seminal theoretical frameworks to explain consumer decision-making: Porter's Competitive Strategy and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

Online food ordering services in China have achieved remarkable development, yet the market penetration rate in Guangxi still has room for improvement. One important reason is the insufficient understanding of service quality and the differences in willingness to use. Therefore, exploring the decision-making factors is of great practical significance. In the duopoly market pattern dominated by Meituan and Ele.me, Porter's Competitive Strategy provides a lens to understand how firms build sustainable advantages. According to Porter (2002), a company can achieve this through cost leadership, differentiation, and focus strategies^[5]. In this context, Service Competitiveness is viewed as a differentiation strategy, where platforms distinguish themselves by providing faster delivery, higher quality services, and personalized experiences to meet the specific needs of different user groups^[6].

Conversely, for the digital interface through which these services are accessed, TAM is utilized. Proposed by Davis (1989), TAM explains the level of user acceptance of information technology systems^[7]. It posits that acceptance is driven by Perceived Usefulness (the degree to which a person

believes the system improves job performance) and Perceived Ease of Use (the level of effort required). In the context of food delivery apps, User Friendliness directly corresponds to "Perceived Ease of Use," where an intuitive interface and simple operation process are critical for reducing cognitive burden and enhancing loyalty^[8].

2.2. Service Competitiveness

In the rapidly developing online food delivery market, service competitiveness is pivotal for a platform's success. It refers to establishing advantages by effectively meeting customer needs and enhancing satisfaction. Key aspects include service quality, efficiency, and customer experience. Efficient real-time fulfillment attracts consumers by ensuring quick responses and timely deliveries. Operational governance, such as reducing complaints and ensuring network security, builds consumer trust. Furthermore, reasonable pricing strategies directly influence purchasing decisions and balance the interests of the platform and its users^[9].

Meng (2016, pp.38-39) believes that service competitiveness is an important factor in determining consumers' choice of online food delivery service platforms^[10]. He emphasized that the success of a leading online food delivery service platform mainly relies on a high emphasis on service quality. Research has pointed out that the main problems of online food delivery service platforms currently are low service efficiency due to restrictions on the number of catering personnel, as well as inadequate supervision of hygiene and safety qualifications of external vendors. These problems directly affect user experience and service satisfaction. Therefore, improving service quality, optimizing delivery efficiency, and ensuring food safety are key strategies to enhance the competitiveness of current online food delivery service platforms. This indicates that in order for online food delivery service platforms to stand out in a fiercely competitive market, they must focus on improving service quality to meet consumers' high standard requirements.

Liu (2015) also emphasized the importance of service competitiveness^[11]. Research suggests that in order to attract and retain consumers, online food delivery service platforms need to continuously improve their service levels, including shortening delivery times and enhancing customer satisfaction. The article specifically mentions that improving the catering delivery system, selecting the optimal transportation mode, and ensuring that food is delivered fresh and intact to consumers are effective means to enhance service competitiveness. In addition, strict monitoring of product quality and winning the trust of users are also key to maintaining long-term stable development. Research has shown that high-quality services can not only improve consumer satisfaction, but also enhance the platform's brand image and attract more users to choose the platform. Therefore, service competitiveness has a significant impact on consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed that Hypothesis 1 (H1): Service competitiveness significantly affect the consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services through online applications in Guangxi.

2.3. User Friendliness

User friendliness refers to the ease of use and user experience of online food delivery applications, including factors such as intuitive interface design and simple operation process. It focuses on the convenience and comfort that users feel while using the platform.

The interface design of the application should be concise and clear, with a reasonable information layout, allowing users to quickly find the required functions and information. For example, clear menu classification, intuitive ordering process, etc., the operation process should be simplified as much as possible to reduce the cognitive burden on users. Features such as one click ordering, quick payment, real-time order tracking, etc. can all enhance the user experience. The loading speed and response speed of an application are also important indicators for measuring user friendliness, and an efficient application can significantly improve user satisfaction^[12].

Zhou & He (2021,pp.38-42) delved into the key impact of user friendliness on decision-making regarding the use of online food delivery services^[13]. Research has shown that food delivery platforms should focus on the interaction experience between users and interfaces, ensuring that various functions are easy to discover and operate, thereby improving overall user satisfaction. Good availability design enables users to intuitively understand how to use the platform's various features, such as quickly finding restaurants, easily browsing menus, and seamlessly completing the ordering process. In addition, the study emphasizes the importance of feedback mechanisms, as real-time order status updates and clear operational guidelines can enhance users' trust and security. Therefore, a food delivery platform with good user friendliness can not only attract new users, but also increase the loyalty of existing users, making them more willing to use the platform for long-term ordering.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed that Hypothesis 2 (H2): User friendliness significantly affect the consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services through online applications in Guangxi.

2.4. Promotions

Promotions refers to various promotional activities and incentives provided by food delivery platforms, such as discounts, coupons, member rewards, etc. These promotional methods aim to stimulate consumers' purchasing desire, increase their preference and loyalty to specific platforms.

For example, the platform launches activities such as full discounts and first order discounts to reduce users' actual payment costs, attract new users, and promote repeat purchases. Through a points system or membership level system, users are encouraged to frequently use the platform, such as earning points after consuming a certain amount of money, which can be used to redeem coupons or other gifts. Some platforms will launch limited time special offers to create a sense of urgency and encourage users to place orders as soon as possible, such as limited time flash sales, daily special dishes^[14].

Research indicates that promotions play a significant role in consumers' choice of food delivery services. Price-sensitive consumers are more inclined to opt for platforms offering discounts or promotional deals. Furthermore, price sensitivity varies significantly across different income groups, with lower-income groups exhibiting higher sensitivity to price^[15].

Therefore, when designing pricing strategies, food delivery platforms should take into account the price sensitivity of different consumer segments. By implementing reasonable pricing and promotional activities, platforms can attract a broader user base.

Lai & Ning (2024,pp.89-93) conducted a survey on consumers in Chengdu who use food delivery services through online platforms, collecting 785 valid questionnaires^[16]. Their research found that price sensitive consumers are more inclined to choose platforms with discounts or promotional offers.

Zhang et al (2022,pp.525-528). conducted a questionnaire survey on consumers of Beijing university students who use food delivery services through online platforms, and confirmed that consumers are more inclined to choose products with discounts^[17].

Li (2015,p.25) conducted a questionnaire survey using college students from six universities in Wenzhou, China as samples to study the influencing factors of consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services^[18]. Among the 400 collected questionnaires, more than half of the people used online food delivery services because of promotions. New users can save nearly half of the price and also receive additional gifts. Therefore, the author believes that promotions is the main reason for consumers to use online food delivery services.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed that Hypothesis 3 (H3): Promotions significantly affect the consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services through online applications in Guangxi.

2.5. Research Hypothesis and Conceptual Framework

In this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Service competitiveness significantly affect the consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services through online applications in Guangxi.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): User friendliness significantly affect the consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services through online applications in Guangxi.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Promotions significantly affect the consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services through online applications in Guangxi.

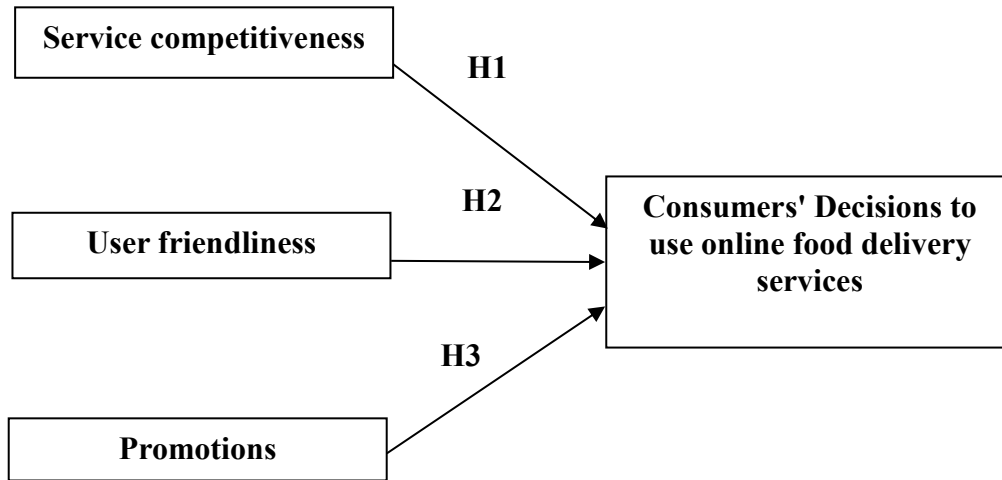


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research design

This research adopts quantitative research methods, aiming to verify the research hypotheses through statistical analysis and provide corresponding conclusions and suggestions. Specifically, data is collected through questionnaire surveys and analyzed to determine the influence of Service competitiveness, User friendliness, and Promotions on the decision-making of online food delivery services by Guangxi consumers. This study used purposive sampling to select respondents. The advantage of target sampling is that it is highly targeted and can accurately select individuals who meet specific characteristics, ensuring high sample quality and close correlation with the research core. The disadvantage of target sampling is that the representativeness of the sample is limited, making it difficult to generalize to a wider population, and it relies on the subjective judgment of researchers, which poses a risk of selection bias.

3.2. Research Site and Population

The research primarily focuses on major cities in Guangxi, such as Nanning (the capital city), Liuzhou, and Guilin, while also considering some representative county-level cities or rural areas. The research subjects are users aged 18-50 in Guangxi who use online food delivery services.

3.3. Sample Size Determination

The formula developed by Yamane (1973) was found to be appropriate for determining the sample size^[19]. Therefore, 400 customers were determined as the total sample size of the study.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{50.47 \times 10^6}{1 + 50.47 \times 10^6 \times (0.05^2)} \approx 400$$

Where:

n: signifies the sample size

N : signifies the population under study

e : signifies the margin error (it could be 0.10, 0.05 or 0.01)

3.4. Measurement of Variables

All constructs in this study were measured using a structured questionnaire developed from the conceptual framework and prior literature. A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was applied.

Service Competitiveness was measured using 5 items, assessing factors such as delivery speed, complaint resolution efficiency, and service reliability during peak hours.

User Friendliness was measured using 5 items, focusing on the intuitive interface design, ease of operation, loading speed, and features like one-click ordering.

Promotions was measured using 5 items, evaluating the impact of discounts, coupons, membership rewards, and first-order incentives on consumer choice.

Decision to Use was measured using 5 items to evaluate the behavioral intention and satisfaction regarding online food delivery services.

3.5. Validity and Reliability analysis

Validity ensures that the questionnaire accurately measures what it is intended to measure. Content validity was assessed through 3 experts evaluation, and the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was computed for the survey questionnaire.

IOC Calculation: The IOC index ranges from +1 to -1, with three possible ratings for each item: +1: Experts strongly agree that the item measures the objective. 0: Experts are neutral about whether the item measures the objective. -1: Experts strongly disagree that the item measures the objective. The total score for each item is divided by the number of experts. The resulting value must be equal to or above 0.50 to indicate acceptable validity^[20].

Using reliability analysis to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales used in this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was employed. A higher Cronbach's Alpha value (ranging from 0 to 1) indicates stronger reliability, meaning that the items consistently measure the same underlying factor.

If Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than or equal to 0.7, it indicates that the questionnaire has good internal consistency; If the value is below 0.7, the questionnaire may need to be adjusted or redesigned^[21].

This study will calculate Cronbach's alpha coefficient by collecting 30 test questionnaires to verify the reliability of the questionnaire.

4. Results

4. 1. Validity and Reliability Analysis Results

Three experts were invited to conduct validity tests on the questionnaire. The results confirmed

the good content validity of the questionnaire.

Table 1. Validity Results

Item		Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) Score			Total Score	Average Score	Result
		Expert1	Expert2	Expert3			
Part 2 : Usage Behavior							
1.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
2.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
3.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
4.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
5.		1	1	0	2	0.67	Accept
Part 3 : Evaluation of influencing factors							
Service competitiveness	1.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	2.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	3.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	4.	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accept
	5.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
User friendliness	6.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	7.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	8.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	9.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	10.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
Promotions	11.	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accept
	12.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	13.	1	0	1	2	0.67	Accept
	14.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
	15.	1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
Part 4 : Decision-making behavior							
1.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
2.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
3.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
4.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept
5.		1	1	1	3	1.00	Accept

During the pre-test phase, a total of 30 test questionnaires were distributed and collected for preliminary reliability and validity testing. The results indicate that the questionnaire has good construct validity.

Table 2. Reliability Result

Dimension	Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CITC)	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Service competitiveness	1.	0.873	0.887
	2.	0.734	0.914
	3.	0.747	0.914
	4.	0.839	0.893
	5.	0.827	0.894
User friendliness	6.	0.784	0.802
	7.	0.420	0.870
	8.	0.739	0.805
	9.	0.662	0.817
	10.	0.800	0.776
Promotions	11.	0.694	0.807
	12.	0.821	0.743
	13.	0.735	0.776
	14.	0.597	0.845
	15.	0.569	0.830

Therefore, after expert review and empirical testing, the questionnaire of this study has met the predetermined standards in terms of reliability and validity, and has good measurement quality, which can be used for subsequent formal data collection and analysis work.

4.2. Descriptive analysis results

Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of consumer behavior habits and preferences. Regarding Gender, the distribution is relatively balanced, with Female (52.50%) slightly exceeding Male (47.50%). The Age structure is dominated by younger groups, with the 18-25 category having the highest proportion at 39.50%. In terms of Educational Level, respondents generally have a high level of education; the Bachelor's degree category is the highest at 42.00%, followed by Diploma/Vocational or Associate degree (22.00%) and Master's degree (20.75%). For Monthly Income Level, the sample is concentrated in the middle-income brackets, with 5,000-7,999 yuan accounting for the highest percentage (29.75%), followed by 8,000-9,999 yuan (22.00%). Overall, the sample primarily consists of young, highly educated, and middle-income females.

Table 3. Consumer behavior habits and preferences

Demographic	Category	Quantity	Percentage
Gender	Male	190	47.50
	Female	210	52.50
Age	18 - 25	158	39.50
	26 - 35	113	28.25
	36 - 45	84	21.00
	46 - 50	45	11.25
	High school or below	38	9.50
Educational Level	Diploma / Vocational or Associate degree	88	22.00
	Bachelor' s degree	168	42.00
	Master' s degree	83	20.75
	Doctoral degree	23	5.75
	Below 3,000	30	7.50
Monthly Income Level (yuan)	3,000 - 4,999	85	21.25
	5,000 - 7,999	119	29.75
	8,000 - 9,999	88	22.00
	Above 10,000	78	19.50

On average, the service competitiveness score is the highest, at 3.43, with a rating of "high". Indicating that respondents generally selected "agree" or "strongly agree" for this item.

The average score of user friendliness is 3.38, ranking second. Rated as "medium". Reflecting neutral tendencies among respondents.

The average score for promotions is 3.37, which is very close to the user friendliness score and ranks third. Rated as "medium". Tendency toward "neutral" responses.

The standard deviation of the three variables ranges from 0.76 to 0.78, indicating that the respondents have relatively consistent views, and there is not much difference in opinions.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpret	Ranking
Service competitiveness	3.43	0.76	High	1
User friendliness	3.38	0.78	Medium	2
Promotions	3.37	0.77	Medium	3

4.3. Results Related to Research Objective 1

Objective 1 : To study service competitiveness, user friendliness and promotions in relation to

consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services in Guangxi, China. Table 5 shows the results of the variable correlation analysis. The independent variables include Service competitiveness , User friendliness , and Promotions . The dependent variable is used for consumers' decisions. Statistical significance is reported at three levels, where ** represents $p < 0.01$, indicating the strength of the relationship between predictor variables and consumer decision outcomes.

Table 5. Result of correlation analysis of variables

	Service competitiveness	User friendliness	Promotions	Consumers' decisions
Service competitiveness	1			
User friendliness	0.626**	1		
Promotions	0.675**	0.628**	1	
Consumers' decisions	0.640**	0.618**	0.733**	1

Note:** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.4. Results Related to Research Objective 2

Objective 2 : To analyze the effects of service competitiveness, user friendliness and promotions on consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services in Guangxi, China. The regression model for consumers' decisions to use online food delivery services was found to be statistically significant. The predictors (Service Competitiveness, User Friendliness, and Promotions) jointly explained approximately 59.7% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.597$), $p < 0.001$. This result indicates that the proposed model provides strong explanatory power and confirms the theoretical expectation that these three factors are critical determinants of consumer decision-making behavior in the Guangxi market. Table 5 provides detailed analysis of variance and coefficient results.

Table 6. Result of multiple regression analysis of variables

Variables	B	Std.Error	Beta	t	p
Intercept	0.588	0.1218		4.83	<.001
Service competitiveness (H1)	0.190	0.0452	0.195	4.21	<.001
User friendliness (H2)	0.185	0.0417	0.195	4.44	<.001
Promotions (H3)	0.460	0.0444	0.480	10.36	<.001
R2 = 0.597 a constant = 0.480					

5. Conclusions

This study empirically validated a comprehensive model in the specific context of Guangxi, China, combining Porter's competitive strategy with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Research has shown that the decision-making process of consumers in emerging regional markets is not only driven by technology acceptance, but also by strategic interactions between cost leadership, service differentiation, and availability. For industry practitioners and managers operating in the fiercely competitive food delivery field in Guangxi, although promotions has been proven to be the main means of quickly acquiring users and market penetration, sustainable competitive advantage must be built on the dual guarantees of service competitiveness and user friendliness.

6. Discussion

Promotions has been proven to have the greatest impact, which may be due to the fact that food delivery services belong to high-frequency and low intervention consumption, resulting in users being highly sensitive to price fluctuations and tending to seek maximum transaction utility through price comparisons. This confirms Zhang et al. (2022) study on price sensitivity bias. The significance of service competitiveness indicates that in the current situation of platform function convergence, delivery timeliness and performance stability have become key criteria for consumers to avoid waiting risks and establish trust, which supports Meng (2016) view on building differentiated barriers to service quality. The impact of user friendliness reveals that intuitive interface design can effectively reduce users' cognitive load and operational anxiety, thereby improving perceived usability, which is consistent with Lu (2016) explanation based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This may reflect the strong price sensitivity of consumers in emerging regional markets such as Guangxi, where promotional incentives remain an important driver of online purchasing behavior.

7. Recommendations

7.1. Practical Recommendations

(1) Build a Marketing System Combining "Precise Promotions and Long-Term Incentives"

Leverage data for targeted promotions while building long-term loyalty through membership tiers and reward points to reduce price sensitivity.

(2) Strengthen Service Competitiveness as a Foundation for Trust and Retention

In a low-switching-cost market, build trust by optimizing delivery speed, strictly managing merchant quality, and ensuring efficient complaint resolution.

(3) Optimize User Experience to Reinforce Perceived Value

Prioritize intuitive navigation, fast loading speeds, and streamlined checkout processes. Implement user-friendly features like one-click repurchasing to reduce friction.

7.2. Recommendations for Future Research

(1). Longitudinal study of consumer behavior

Track how consumer preferences evolve over time alongside platform policy and AI technology changes.

(2). Expand to a wider geographical area

Geographical Expansion: Extend research to tier-1 cities, rural areas, or other countries to test generalizability.

(3). Include additional variables

Include Additional Variables: Incorporate factors like perceived risk, trust, and social influence to improve model explanatory power.

(4). Qualitative and mixed methods

Mixed-Methods Approach: Combine quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to uncover deeper emotional drivers and motivations.

(5). Post purchase behavior investigation

Post-Purchase Behavior: Focus future studies on post-purchase satisfaction, long-term retention, and word-of-mouth intentions.

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