Consumer Emotional Needs and Strategic Marketing for Slow Fashion: A Big Data approach

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Abstract

The research uses Python to analyze over 10,000 consumer reviews of slow fashion apparel from Taobao and Tmall. Advanced analytics (TF-IDF, word cloud, semantic network, LDA topic modelling) systematically uncover emotional drivers behind slow fashion consumption. Findings indicate a shift toward personalized, value-driven experiences beyond traditional quality and comfort. Key emotional drivers include aesthetic experience, brand identity resonance, and comfort. Negative sentiments arise from unmet expectations and poor customer service. The study provides strategic insights for brands and policymakers to enhance production, marketing, and service strategies, promoting sustainable consumption and aligning with consumers' emotional and ethical demands.

Keywords: Slow fashion; Consumer sentiment; Big data analytics; Emotional drivers

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1.0 Introduction

With the rapid development of the global economy, the natural environment on which human beings depend for survival is facing unprecedented challenges, and the fashion industry is facing strict scrutiny due to its significant impact on the environment. Especially in China, slow fashion is on the rise as a responsible and sustainable way to consume, with the growing public awareness of environmental protection. It has become a new force for harmonious social, economic and environmental development (Domingos et al., 2022). Slow fashion is a consumer trend that encourages people to think about the impact of their actions on the planet and choose products that both meet their personal needs and serve the environment. However, transitioning consumers from "fast fashion" to "slow fashion" remains challenging and requires a deeper understanding of consumers' motivations in addition to traditional economic and functional factors. In this process, how to effectively guide consumers' purchasing preferences to slow fashion has become an important topic in academia and industry.

This study aims to use big data technology to dig deep into the emotional drivers of slow fashion consumers and make up for this gap. Therefore, the purpose is to ensure that the new research method can break through the limitations of traditional questionnaire survey methods and realize large-scale and real-time consumer sentiment data analysis. By systematically capturing the true emotions expressed by consumers through online reviews, we reveal the multi-dimensional complexity of the emotional needs of slow fashion consumers, going beyond a single assessment of product functionality. It provides a new perspective and path for slow fashion research, and by revealing these subtle emotional needs, brands and policymakers can develop more effective strategies to promote sustainable consumer behaviour, thereby making a significant contribution to achieving environmental and social sustainability goals.

Previous research has shown that emotion is crucial to consumers' purchasing decisions. Castro-Lopez et al. (2021) pointed out that when consumers feel satisfied and have a sense of belonging, they are more likely to support and recommend brands. Therefore, an in-depth study of the emotional needs of slow fashion consumers is essential to develop an effective marketing strategy.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Slow fashion

Driven by environmental protection and sustainable development, slow fashion, the antithesis of fast fashion, has gradually become a hotspot for academic research and business practice. Slow fashion designates a new paradigm in the clothing industry that promotes the importance of fashion goods realized with natural and durable products, empowering consumers to use the purchased clothes for a longer time, decreasing, in this case, the environmental and societal impact of fashion pieces (Puiu, 2021). However, the acceptance of slow fashion has been uneven in the global market, especially in China,

where factors such as high prices, lack of brand recognition, and design differences have limited its development (Karim et al., 2024). Nonetheless, this market shows excellent potential as Chinese consumers become more environmentally conscious.

The younger generation of consumers are increasingly aware of the fashion industry's environmental and social impact and are supporting sustainable practices. These trends indicate that the slow fashion market is expected to grow even more in the future as consumers become more environmentally conscious.

2.2 Emotion

Emotions play a key role in consumer behaviour, especially in purchasing decision-making. According to the existing literature, emotions in the consumption of slow fashion products can be categorized into three main types: positive consumer emotions, negative consumer emotions, and neutral consumer emotions (Wang et al., 2024).

Positive consumer sentiment mainly stems from consumers' positive perceptions and emotional experiences of slow fashion products. Research has shown that positive and optimistic emotional appeals can significantly increase consumers' perceived value and sense of responsibility towards slow fashion products, which in turn promotes purchasing behaviour (Wang et al., 2022). Such positive emotions increase consumers' loyalty to the brand and motivate them to be more willing to share their shopping experiences and promote the brand. On the contrary, negative consumer sentiment is caused by negative emotional appeals. Such negative emotions inhibit their willingness to buy and may damage the brand image. Therefore, establishing a transparent and authentic green marketing strategy is essential to win consumers' trust. Neutral consumer sentiment, conversely, manifests itself as a more muted emotional response to green products, with purchasing behavior being random, neither positive nor negative. This sentiment may stem from the lack of emotional response due to consumers' insufficient information and knowledge about green products. The presence of neutral emotions reminds companies to pay more attention to product promotion to enhance consumer awareness and acceptance of green products.

While prior research has extensively explored functional drivers of slow fashion consumption, such as price and quality, it has overlooked the emotional and experiential dimensions critical to modern consumer behaviour. Emotions play an important mediating variable in the shopping lifestyle and impulse buying. For example, factors such as shop atmosphere, discounts, hedonic shopping motives, and fashion involvement influence impulse buying through positive emotions, promoting unplanned buying behaviour (Gamaya & Suardana, 2024). Overall, emotions directly drive consumer purchasing behaviour and act as a bridge between other influences.

2.3 Data-driven approach to emotion research

Big data technologies have revolutionized the way we obtain information about consumer sentiment. Within the last five years, approaches to studying green consumer sentiment have focused on exploring how consumers' emotional factors influence their green

purchase intentions through quantitative analysis methods such as questionnaires, structural equation modelling (SEM), and partial least squares (PLS-SEM). For example, according to Yu et al. (2024), data were collected using questionnaires, and the impact of emotional perceptions on green furniture purchase intentions was analyzed using PLS-SEM.

However, these research methods have some drawbacks. First, quantitative studies rely on self-reported data, leading to bias and doubt. Second, questionnaires typically require large sample sizes to ensure statistical significance, which increases research costs and time. In addition, although structural equation models can deal with complex causal relationships, their assumptions are strict, and the normal distribution of data is required, which may limit the models' application scope. In contrast, big data technology breaks through the time limitations of traditional research methods, making emotion capture more real-time. For example, Hasan and Sutikno (2021) show that social media emotion-tracking systems can quickly analyze a large amount of text data to realize micro-dynamic monitoring of emotional attitudes. This ability has led to significant methodological innovations in applying consumer sentiment research. It improves the efficiency and accuracy of sentiment analysis and provides new perspectives and tools for an in-depth understanding of consumer behaviour.

Big data technology offers the slow fashion space the possibility of an in-depth understanding of the drivers of consumer emotions, and emotional values are playing an increasingly important role in consumers' purchasing decisions. Future research can further explore how to use big data technology to more accurately capture and respond to changes in consumer sentiment, and how to enhance the market competitiveness of slow fashion brands through emotional marketing strategies. At the same time, for enterprises, understanding and meeting the emotional needs of consumers will help them stand out in the fierce market competition.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research design

The research design uses big data analysis technology and multi-step research methods to explore the emotional driving factors of slow fashion consumers. First, Python web crawler technology was used to grab about 10,000 slow-fashion consumer reviews from e-commerce platforms. After data processing, the core visualization is extracted through the bag of words model and TF-IDF calculation, and consumers' emotional needs are focused. Combined with semantic network analysis and visualization tools (such as LDAvis), we can deeply understand the keywords and emotional correlation features in consumer reviews, comprehensively understand the emotional drive of consumer behaviour, and lay a theoretical foundation for the formulation of slow fashion industry strategies.

3.2 Web crawler technology

Web crawler technology is the first step in data collection that allows us to automatically obtain and extract information from the Internet. The Taobao and Tmall platforms of China's Alibaba Group, which are among the largest e-commerce websites in China, have a large amount of consumer review data. These two platforms selected ten slow fashion apparel brand shops as data sources. These shops were selected because they represent popular trends slowly and have an active user base. Using Python, consumer review data can be grabbed, including review text, ratings, user information, etc. In this study, we successfully crawled about 10,000 consumer review contents for data preprocessing.

3.3 Text processing

Text processing is an important step in converting raw text data into a structured format suitable for further analysis. This study converts consumer reviews into numerical representations to facilitate statistical analysis. The big data approach focuses on identifying the most important keywords to help extract meaningful information from text data.

In this research, we employ the Bag of Words (BoW) model and the TF-IDF (Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency) method to convert textual data of consumer reviews into numerical representations suitable for machine learning and statistical analysis. Bag-of-words (BoW) modelling represents text in a numerical form that does not consider the order of words but only counts the frequency of their occurrence in the text. We first constructed a dictionary using the Dictionary class from the Gensim library, which maps each word in the text to a unique integer identifier. Subsequently, the textual data was converted into a bag-of-words model representation by removing words with very low or high frequency of occurrence in the text set.TF-IDF is a measure of the importance of a word in a collection of documents, which combines the word frequency (TF) and the inverse document frequency (IDF). The higher the TF-IDF value, the more important the word is in the document, whilst it occurs less frequently throughout the collection of documents. By calculating the TF-IDF value, we can identify the keywords that contribute the most to the document's topic, which is essential for understanding the document's content and for effective information retrieval.

LDA is an unsupervised machine learning algorithm for discovering hidden topic structures from a collection of documents. Perplexity is one of the important indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of subject models such as LDA models. It reflects the ability of the model to predict the word distribution in the document. The degree of confusion represents the degree of fitting of the model to the data. The lower the value, the better the interpretation of the model to the text and the more reasonable the topic division. Excessive choice confusion (such as information overload) can instead enhance consumers' perception of the emotional value of slow fashion, as consumers tend to seek emotional satisfaction (such as reducing post-purchase regret) by simplifying the decision-making process (Puiu, 2021). Combining the LDA model and sentiment analysis, users' emotional tendencies towards different topics can be analyzed in more detail, mainly by analyzing

consumers' online comments and feedback to reveal the deep structure of consumer behaviour and preferences.

Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) was selected for its proven ability to uncover hidden themes within large text datasets, making it ideal for analyzing complex relationships in consumer reviews. Its probabilistic framework supports the study's goal of slowly exploring multi-dimensional emotional drivers by revealing nuanced patterns and sentiment associations.

Compared to alternatives like Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) and Non-negative Matrix Factorization (NMF), LDA offers clear probabilistic interpretations of topics and their relationships, enabling more profound insights into consumer behaviour. Additionally, perplexity optimization ensures that the extracted topics comprehensively represent emotional needs. Finally, LDA's integration with tools like LDAvis enhances result visualization, facilitating intuitive interpretation and actionable insights for practical applications.

3.4 Semantic network-based feature association analysis

The co-occurrence matrix is a tool to represent the frequency of co-occurrence between terms. We first extract keywords from the data after segmentation and cleaning and then calculate the co-occurrence times of each pair of keywords in all documents to construct the co-occurrence matrix. The co-occurrence network graph provides an intuitive way to see the connections between keywords, helping us understand how the topics and concepts discussed by consumers in reviews relate to each other. By analyzing the node connection patterns in the network graph, we can identify the central nodes (i.e., the frequently occurring keywords) and the edge nodes (the less frequently mentioned keywords), thereby revealing the core issues that consumers are discussing. By analyzing high-frequency co-occurrence keywords, we can identify the characteristics that consumers pay attention to in slow fashion product reviews, such as quality, comfort, price, design, etc. These shared concerns may be closely related to consumer purchasing decisions and brand loyalty, providing a basis for slow fashion brands to improve their products and services.

4.0 Results

4.1 Draw word cloud diagrams

To see more intuitively the consumers' concerns and demand for the enterprise's green products, this paper draws word cloud diagrams of the review texts after completing data collection and data cleaning. By obtaining the word cloud generated, as shown in Fig. 1, the top twenty high-frequency words, as shown in Fig. 2, the word cloud is generated, as shown in Fig. 2. The research found prominent 'wear,' 'comfortable,' 'colour,' 'fabric,' 'size' and other characteristic words intuitively express consumers' demand for slow fashion products.

Figure 1: Word cloud
(Source: developed by the author)

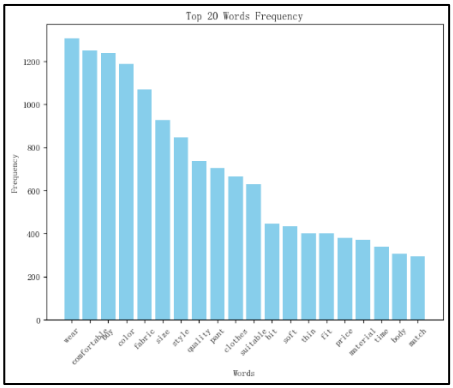

Fig. 2: Top 20 words frequency
(Source: developed by the author)

4.2 Analysis based on the change of perplexity with the number of themes

Perplexity is one of the important indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of subject models such as LDA models. It reflects the ability of the model to predict the word distribution in the document. The degree of confusion represents the degree of fitting of the model to the data. The lower the value, the better the interpretation of the model to the text and the more reasonable the topic division.

As can be seen from table1, there are 11 topics in total. They are environmental protection and sustainability, quality and durability, personalization and design, brand reputation and trust, price and value balance, social responsibility and public welfare, shopping experience and service, emotional resonance and brand identity, transparency and information disclosure, innovation and technology application, social interaction and interaction.

First of all, observing the trend of perplexity (Fig. 3), it can be found that perplexity gradually decreases as the number of topics increases. This means that the model's fit to the data is improving. However, when the number of themes increases to 7, the decrease in perplexity begins to decrease, showing a clear inflexion point. This phenomenon

suggests that seven themes are an appropriate number to effectively capture the important information in the data while maintaining the stability of the model.

Secondly, observing the changing trend of the degree of confusion, it can be found that with the increase in the number of topics, the degree of confusion gradually decreases. This means that the model's ability to fit data is constantly improving. However, when the number of topics increased to seven, the reduction in confusion began to decrease, showing a clear inflexion point. This means that slow fashion consumption is undergoing a profound transformation. Companies must pay close attention to the changes in consumers' emotional needs and meet the emerging trend of slow fashion through flexible production and sales. The continued downward trend in assets may also reflect slow fashion consumers' focus on the emotional value of products rather than simple materiality.

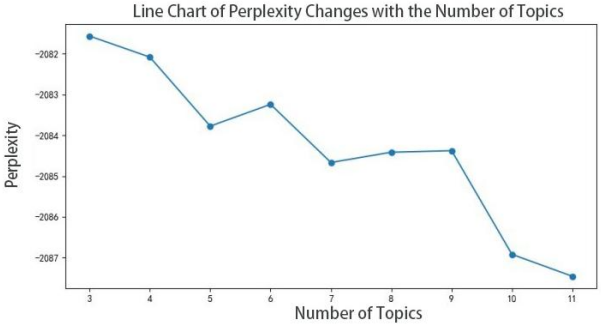

Fig. 3: The line chart of perplexity changes with the number of topics
(Source: developed by the author)

4.3 LDAvis visualisation analysis

Intertopic Distance Map This map shows the distance relationship between different subjects and visually reflects the similarities and differences between subjects. For the research on slow fashion consumption, we can find themes such as "sensibility," "experience," and "value" together from the map, indicating that these themes may be more relevant to the emotional demands of slow fashion consumers. Consumers pay more attention to the sensory experience brought by the product rather than the simple functionality.

This section shows the various inscriptions related to slow fashion consumption and their frequency of occurrence in the text. We can see that some words related to emotion, such as "image," "comfort," "feeling," etc., appear more frequently. This also shows that mining and meeting consumers' emotional needs will have an advantage in the fierce market competition. Brands need to comprehensively consider product quality, design, brand image, service experience, and other factors in marketing to create an overall image that meets consumers' emotional demands.

Therefore, when conducting market positioning and consumer-driven emotion analysis, slow fashion brands should focus on multiple dimensions to create a brand image and shopping experience that meets the needs of modern consumers.

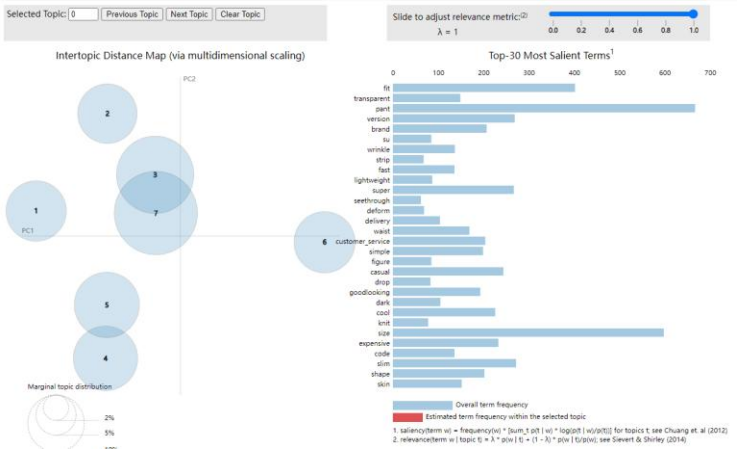

Fig. 4: Visualization results when the number of topics in the overall review is 7.
(Source: developed by the author)

4.4 Semantic network-based feature association analysis

By building a network model based on semantic relationships, researchers can explore the correlations between different topics and how those correlations affect consumers' purchasing decisions. In this graph, nodes (circles) represent different words, and edges (lines) represent the relationships between those words. The lines' thickness may indicate the association's intensity or frequency. There are several central nodes in the figure, such as "quality," "price," "comfortable," etc. These words have more connections with other words, indicating that they are the core concepts in the discussion.

The emotional attributes of consumers are the most prominent, and many concepts such as "feeling," "experience," and "comfort" are gathered together, indicating that in slow fashion consumption, consumers' emotional needs and experiences are critical. Secondly, there are some concepts related to product attributes, such as "texture," "version," "soft," etc., which indicate that in slow fashion consumption, through the adjustment of product design, it can meet the emotional demands of consumers, and it is also worth discussing the focus. Words like "brand" and "image" also appear in the thematic correlation chart, indicating the brand's position in slow fashion consumption. Consumers may express self-identity and social status through brands, which is an emotional driver that companies must focus on.

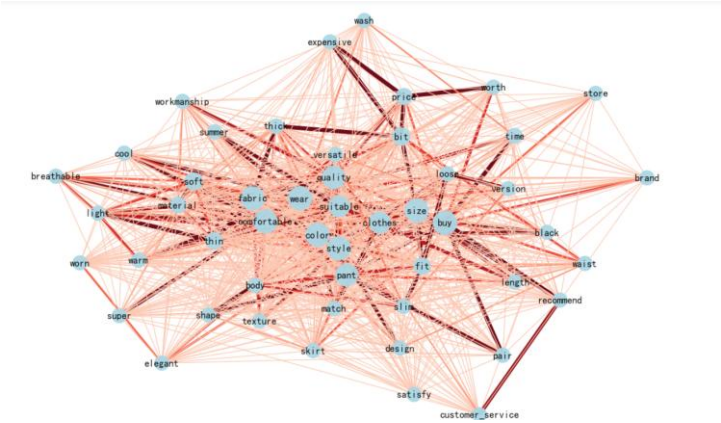

Fig. 5: Semantic map of the web for slow fashion products
(Source: developed by the author)

5.0 Discussion

This research focuses on the emotional driving factors of slow fashion consumers and uses oversized data analysis methods to identify and refine their core needs systematically. The findings show that consumers are concerned about the quality and price of products, the brand's responsibility, and environmental values, and these emotional factors play a crucial role in purchase decisions.

The key findings of this study are consistent with some theories in the existing literature; for example, the study found that positive emotional appeals significantly enhance consumers' perceived value and promote purchase behaviour, which is consistent with the findings of Wang et al. (2022). However, there are some new insights. Firstly, concerning consumers' concern for the environment, previous studies have generally pointed to sustainability as an important driver of slow fashion consumption, emphasizing the relationship between brand trust and loyalty. The present study further confirms the importance of slow fashion in brand development, especially in terms of its role as an effective driver that not only influences consumers' purchasing decisions but also profoundly affects identification and emotional resonance with the brand (Zheng, 2024). In the past Švajdová (2024) study, consumers increasingly value personalized and customized products and services in their slow fashion consumption. Through LDAvis visual tools and semantic network analysis, this study further shows an important emotional connection between personalized service and the shopping experience of slow fashion consumers. It reveals the transformation of consumers from functional consumption to value consumption.

This study fills this gap by comprehensively analyzing the multi-dimensionality of emotional drivers. It provides a new theoretical contribution to the study of slow fashion consumer behaviour, highlighting consumers' comprehensive evaluation and emotional dependence on brands rather than just focusing on a single element. The implications of

this research extend beyond the slow fashion industry, providing valuable insights into industries such as green technology, ethical consumerism, and sustainable food production. Emotional branding and sustainability initiatives can foster deeper consumer loyalty and advocacy in these industries. For example, companies promoting eco-friendly innovation can adopt strategies emphasizing emotional engagement to increase consumer interest. By highlighting sustainable consumption's emotional and social rewards, businesses and policymakers can craft campaigns that resonate with consumers and encourage a shift to more environmentally responsible lifestyles. This research demonstrates the transformative potential of emotional drivers in shaping consumer preferences, providing viable strategies for academic and practical applications across multiple fields.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study utilized big data analytics to examine emotional drivers behind slow fashion consumption, drawing on more than 10,000 consumer reviews from China's leading e-commerce platforms. Through text mining techniques including TF-IDF weighting, LDA topic modelling, and semantic network analysis, the findings revealed that consumers are transitioning from prioritizing traditional product attributes—such as price and durability—to a greater emphasis on emotional, aesthetic, and ethical values. Key emotional motivators identified include comfort, sensory experience, personalized style, brand identity alignment, and environmental responsibility. In contrast, negative sentiment was mainly associated with inconsistent service, unmet expectations, and a lack of trust in brand authenticity. These findings highlight the pivotal role of emotional experiences in shaping both satisfaction and sustainable purchase intentions within the slow fashion market.

6.2 Conceptual Contribution

This research makes a significant contribution to the understanding of sustainable consumer behaviour by introducing a multidimensional emotional framework grounded in large-scale sentiment data. Unlike conventional approaches that focus on economic or functional consumption factors, this study emphasizes how emotional resonance—such as perceived meaning, lifestyle compatibility, and aesthetic pleasure—drives consumer engagement with slow fashion. The integration of big data analytics into consumer sentiment research represents a methodological advancement, offering real-time, large-sample insights into affective motivations. Moreover, the findings reinforce the theoretical understanding that emotional values act as mediators between sustainability awareness and actual purchasing behaviour, thus enriching the literature on ethical and experiential consumption.

6.3. Practical Implications

The results of this study provide strategic guidance for businesses, designers, and marketers operating in the slow fashion space. To appeal to emotionally motivated consumers, brands must adopt storytelling approaches that highlight authenticity, ecological consciousness, and social values. Marketing efforts should communicate emotional benefits such as comfort, self-expression, and identity reinforcement rather than merely promoting functional advantages. Product development should emphasize design uniqueness, tactile quality, and visual aesthetics, responding to consumers' demand for meaningful fashion experiences. Additionally, seamless post-purchase service and transparent communication are essential for sustaining positive sentiment and customer loyalty. At a broader level, emotional analytics can serve as a valuable tool for real-time consumer monitoring, enabling businesses to adapt swiftly to emerging expectations and sentiment trends.

6.4. Limitations of the Study

While the study offers important insights, it is limited by its data scope and geographical focus. The dataset was exclusively drawn from Chinese online platforms, which may introduce regional and cultural biases. Emotional expression, ethical values, and fashion sensibilities can vary significantly across global contexts, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the study relied solely on text-based data, which, although rich in volume, lacks the depth of personal context that qualitative interviews or ethnographic methods might offer. Emotional complexity and psychological underpinnings could not be fully captured through textual analysis alone.

6.5. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should consider expanding the geographic and cultural scope of analysis by incorporating multilingual datasets and cross-cultural comparisons. Investigating emotional drivers across diverse fashion markets would offer a more holistic understanding of global slow fashion adoption. Integrating mixed-method approaches, such as combining sentiment analysis with qualitative techniques like focus groups or in-depth interviews, could enrich the interpretation of emotional nuance. Additionally, longitudinal studies would be valuable for tracking how consumer sentiment evolves, particularly in response to global events, environmental campaigns, or technological disruptions in the fashion industry. Exploring the impact of emerging tools such as AI influencers or virtual fashion experiences on emotional engagement may also represent a promising direction for future inquiry.

Article Contribution to Related Field of Study

The paper contributes to the field of commercial/retail/service environments. The study used big data analysis (LDA, TF-IDF, semantic network) on 10,000+ e-commerce reviews to reveal emotional drivers in a slow fashion, highlighting multi-dimensional needs beyond quality and comfort.

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