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Artificial Intelligence as an Innovation Strategy: The Role of Service Performance on Customer Satisfaction and Commitment

Anelisa MEMELA
University of the Witwatersrand
anememela@gmail.com

Omphile NTELEKOA
University of the Witwatersrand
omphilentelekoa@gmail.com

Neo LIGARABA
University of the Witwatersrand
neo.ligaraba@wits.ac.za

Suvera BOODHOO
University of the Witwatersrand
suvera.boodhoo@wits.ac.za

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Abstract
Companies are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an innovation strategy to drive valuable competitive advantage to enhance their innovation strategy. This study investigates the impact of AI service performance, AI information quality, AI system quality on customer satisfaction and commitment amongst young female customers of a fashion e-retailer. Data were collected through a self-administered survey and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0. The findings show that AI service performance significantly influences AI information quality, customer satisfaction, and customer commitment, but does not significantly influence AI system quality. The results highlight the central role of AI information quality in driving positive customer experiences with AI-enabled service platforms. The study advances innovation and service quality literature by demonstrating how AI-based service attributes contribute to relational outcomes in online fashion retail. Fashion e-retailers should prioritize intuitive, interactive, and high-quality AI service interfaces to enhance customer satisfaction and encourage long-term commitment.

Keywords: : Artificial Intelligence, Service performance, Innovation, Information quality, System quality, Digital.

JEL classification: M51, M54.

Introduction

In 1956 at the world-famous Dartmouth summer workshop the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was brought forward by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester and Claude Shannone (Berente, Gu, Recker and Santhanam, 2021). Their aim for the project was to make a machine behave in a manner that would be defined as intelligent if it was a human performing the task. Over the years the definitions for artificial intelligence have been more refined and have been defined as having emulation capabilities. This is because of how it imitates human skills and capabilities as well (Berente *et al*., 2021). AI is machine technology that has the capabilities to emulate human intelligence by doing tasks such as communicating, reasoning, and learning (Nguyen, Quach and Thaichon, 2022). Many studies have aimed to develop a measurement scale that would be suitable for the new medium

ecommerce (Nguyen *et al.,* 2022). In the perspective of service quality literature, AI is a technology machine service. Businesses with an online presence use an online store to conduct ecommerce marketing and sales activities. The main sales channels in this market segment include internet retailers and online fashion retailers. According to the South African eCommerce market, South Africa is viewed as the forty second largest market. It is predicated that by 2023 revenue would increase to US$7,217.8 million, as indicated by (Fashion eCommerce Market in South Africa - Data, Trends, Top Stores, 2023) leapfrogging ahead of Romania. The South African market sales generated in 2022 by Superbalist reached US$158.3 million, this is a clear indication that Superbalist South Africa is the leader in this online market. In second place is takealot.com with a revenue of over US$111.3 million, followed by shein.com with a revenue of US$85.2 million. Superbalist has gained momentum as South Africa's leading online destination for fashion, beauty, and home products. As a user-friendly website and mobile app, including several features for secure online payment Superbalist makes online shopping a breeze (Digital financial literacy, 2023).

AI in terms of service quality specifically in the online retail fashion industry is a research area not many have studied, the existing literature on AI service quality is very limited to industries such as the hospitality industry, the financial sector, the tourism industry and the healthcare sector (Chiang *et al*., 2020; West and Allen, 2018; Chen *et al.,* 2022). The existence of AI in the retail fashion industry has shown to be a huge factor in elevating customer experience (Saponaro *et al*., 2018). Existing literature depicted that the dimensions and scales that exist for service quality are not adequate to fit in today's new AI environment (Chen *et al.,* 2022). In terms of brand relationship, Nguyen *et al*. (2022) noted that AI's introduction to customer satisfaction, behavior intentions and attitudes is still a growing area of research that is still emerging. The e-commerce industry has been largely affected by AI's tools and systems (Pillarisetty and Mishra, 2022). Few studies such as Pillarisetty and Mishra (2022) conducted research on how the different types of AI tools (machine learning, natural learning processing, learning systems and object detection) can be used to elevate customer experience and e-satisfaction.

Today many brands are being transformed into new models based off AI chat bots and digitization solutions rather than the old traditional customer service models (Cheng and Jiang, 2022). For brands, AI systems like chatbot e- services now give a brand's customers an opportunity to be able to engage with their virtual marketing services from any remote location of their choosing (Cheng and Jiang, 2022). There are however gaps in the literature of AI and brand relationship studies, most studies focus on customer loyalty and purchase intentions dimensions. Godey, Manthiou, Pederzoli, Rokka, Aiello, Donvito and Singh (2016) suggested that brand relationship and AI studies bring up dimensions such as price premium and positive word of mouth. This study aims to investigate how AI system quality and AI information systems influence the customer-brand relationship within Superbalist's online fashion shopping platform. Research Question: To what extent does AI service performance influence AI information quality, AI system quality, customer satisfaction, and commitment?

1. Theoretical framework

Three theories are used in this study, namely, the Brand relationship quality theory, Affordance theory and Service Quality performance theory.

1.1. Brand relationship quality theory

Brand Relationship Quality (BRQ) theory is a conceptual framework that focuses on understanding the dynamics of consumer-brand relationships. It was created to illustrate how consumers form and maintain long-term relationships with brands. The consumer brand

relationship concept is a crucial one as it can be very advantageous if executed correctly. When research using BRQ is conducted and applied effectively, it can lead to benefits such as increased customer acquisition, stronger brand equity, and even a reduction in marketing costs (Smit, Bronner and Tolboom, 2007). According to BRQ theory, tenets that define the whole experience and interactions between the two parties determine the quality of a brand-consumer relationship. Our conceptual model for this study was developed using brand commitment as a key construct. Below we discuss the construct in detail.

1.2. Brand commitment

Commitment is regarded as the most important component of long-term partnerships in relationship marketing (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999; Wang, 2009). When a person discovers what they think to be the best-case scenario, they will commit to their relationship and cease seeking other options. Both sides will employ commitment to demonstrate their trustworthiness in the trading connection on a consistent basis. Wang (2009) states that the term commitment has been associated with characteristics such as the desire to maintain and keep a relationship going. Commitment can also be defined as the consumers overall attitude or outlook towards the relationship which involves beliefs and behaviors toward the brand and their relationship with that brand (Wang, 2009).

1.3. Affordance theory

Affordances is defined in the context of ecological psychology Gibson (1977): "The affordances of the environment are what it offers, what it provides, either for good or ill". Over a period of time Gibson's concept has been embraced by other fields, including science, technology studies, and product design, science, and technology studies as well as educational studies, where it has been used primarily to understand what objects and technologies afford users and therefore to drive their design towards more intuitive and effective operation (Bower and Sturman, 2015; Srivastava and Shu, 2013). Researcher Gibson (1977) mentioned "things" naturally inhere affordances meaning they give out specific activities based on their characteristics such as form, time patterns, and material qualities, thus becomes human-thing-interactions (Gibson, 1977).

Therefore, Affordance is defined as a function provided by an object through an interaction with a user. According to Sahin et al., (2011) to develop an AI system that recognizes its environment requires a design methodology referred to as affordance in artificial intelligence. The existing relationship between the environment and the agent uses design methodologies that include affordance to constitute future action. The use of affordances in artificial intelligence started with the intent to build better autonomous agents such as robotics and simulation. Norman (2008) realized that Gibson's insights could be directly validated and used when designing the physical shape of products. Norman (2008) understood that a theory created for understanding and shaping physical objects could not be used universally. His example was "graphic designing user interfaces for computer applications, websites, or apps shows the number of physical affordances is dramatically reduced to click on, or drag around actions" (Norman, 2008).

As a result, there is a relationship between technology and the human actor in affordance. The affordance theoretical framework was adapted from the model of affordance perception and actualization, originated from Bernhard *et al*. (2013). The model has four steps: affordances existence, perception, actualization, and affordance effects.

1. The cognitive process of affordances existence, the interaction between IT artifacts and organization. The model from Bernhard *et al.* (2013) indicates that affordances exist from the relations between objects and users.

2. The perception process means that the organization needs to recognize IT affordances Bernhard *et al*. (2013).
3. Behavior according to Bernhard *et al.* (2013) that the organization adopt the potential for action which they perceive and then actualize the IT affordances in support of organizational goals.
4. Lastly, behavior will give out strong results.

1.4. Service quality theory (SERVQUAL)

According to Buttle (1996), the SERVQUAL model evolved from the disconfirmation model used in customer satisfaction literature. The service quality SERVQUAL was introduced in 1988 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, who stated that service quality has to do with the inconsistencies that exist between what a consumer expects from a service being offered and their perceptions of the service being received (Daniel and Berinyuy, 2010). The SERVQUAL paradigm provides researchers with technology that allows them to assess and manage service quality. As a result, the SERVQUAL model is multidimensional in nature, with ten SQ components: dependability, responsiveness, competence, access, criticism, communication, credibility, security, understanding and knowing the client, and tangibles (Buttle, 1996). However, in succeeding investigations, Parasuruman *et al.* (1988) reduced the ten components to five dimensions, which are now reliability, assurance, tangible, empathy, and responsiveness (Buttle, 1996).

1.5. Empirical literature

This section of the literature review discusses the constructs within the proposed conceptual model.

A. AI service performance

A fifteen-item scale for drivers of artificial intelligence service performance includes five characteristics namely, timeliness, currency, flexibility, artificial intelligence accuracy and reliability. Service quality refers to the level of excellence in service delivery that fulfils or surpasses customer expectations (Parasuraman, 1996; Prentice, 2013; Shi et al., 2014). It is expressed in assessments, and the perceptions of customers is artificial intelligence quality. Customer satisfaction is firmly connected to the characteristics of the service provided (Chow, 2014) and the reaction to service quality experience stimulates customer satisfaction (Rust et al., 1995; Woodside et al., 1989; Zeithaml *et al*., 1996; Cronin et al., 2000). In accordance with the two-dimensional model of service quality, customer satisfaction can be managed through both information and system-related dimensions. Substantial research in service marketing verifies that service quality is a key factor of customer satisfaction and subsequent behaviors that drive profitability. Authors Cronin *et al*., (2000) and Kim *et al*., (2016) argue that this pattern is deemed to remain true in artificial intelligence applications too.

B. Satisfaction

Bloemer and Kasper (1995) define satisfaction—specifically brand satisfaction—as the comparison between customers' expectations and the brand's actual performance. The post-consumption response known as satisfaction can be further described as the disappointment or feelings of pleasure that arises when consumers compare pre-service expectations with the overall perceived performance (Prentice, Weaven and Wong, 2020). In the online fashion retail, customer satisfaction in the context of artificial intelligence indicates the amount of accomplishment felt by the user from choosing to purchase products from the online fashion

brand merchants and the fulfilment from using the online stores websites (consisting of AI tools), to make a purchase or to browse while shopping.

C. Commitment

Jung and Soo (2012) define commitment as the willingness of a consumer to want to pursue allying with a particular brand. Moreover, allegiance in the online brands climate, the current literature provides crucial insights on consumer commitment by focusing on commonly purchased brands rather than premium products and investigating how customers assess competing options. The construct of commitment is increasingly being used in consumer research for analyzing customers' comparison of brands (Shukla, Banerjee and Singh, 2016).

1.6. Conceptual framework and hypotheses development

The development of the proposed hypotheses relating to the conceptual model is elaborated on in this section. A sum of five hypotheses statements (see Figure 1) is suggested presuming the association between customer satisfaction and commitment, AI system quality, AI information quality and AI service performance.

Hypotheses development and Conceptual model of the study

AI service performance, AI information quality and AI system quality.

Bolton *et al*. (2018) indicated that by streaming transactions, AI plays a critical role in service organizations thereby enhancing customer experience (Morosan and Bowen, 2018). According to Wixom and Todd (2005) artificial intelligence is a technology-driven service that encompasses both information and system characteristics, which molds user's perceptions of information and system quality and eventually determines their overall satisfaction. Furthermore, Wixom and Todd (2005) indicate that information quality pertains to the precision, readiness, coherence and completeness of the information provided through AI-based services. The quality of a system is determined by the adaptability and sensitivity of AI-powered tools to a variation of demands made by users/customers in a timely manner (Wixom and Todd, 2005). As an object indicator AI services effects object-based reliance whilst customers assessments and perceptions are determined by service quality. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. AI service performance is positively related to AI information quality.

H2. AI service performance is positively related to AI system quality.

AI information quality, AI system quality and customer satisfaction

Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) indicated that service quality is a view based on an individual's object-based frame of mind which rests in the theory of planned behavior displays a level of satisfaction (Wixom and Todd, 2005). Oliver (1980) definition of customer satisfaction stems from the all-embracing feeling of experiencing pleasure or disappointment which manifest itself because of differentiation between perceived performance of a service with pre-service expectations. Furthermore, customer satisfaction can be sustained with distinct elements or events through transaction-specific measures, for example AI information quality and AI system quality, or as an extensive assessment of overall experience (Cronin *et al.,* 2000; Gustafsson *et al.,* 2005; Veloutsou, 2015). Customer satisfaction is concerned with service quality. Research reveals that an antecedent to customer satisfaction is service quality (; Rust *et al.,* 1995; Woodside *et al.,* 1989; Zeithaml *et al.,* 1996; Cronin *et al.,* 2000). Customer satisfaction can be executed into information and system measurements with consistent service quality that is two-dimensional. It is suggested by Jun *et al*. (2004) that there is a definite connection between overall service quality and customer satisfaction. As a broadly accepted

antecedent of customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions, service quality drives organizational prosperity (Kim *et al.,* 2016; Zeithaml *et al.,* 1996; Cronin *et al.,* 2000), hence the derived hypotheses:

H3. AI information quality is positively related to customer satisfaction.

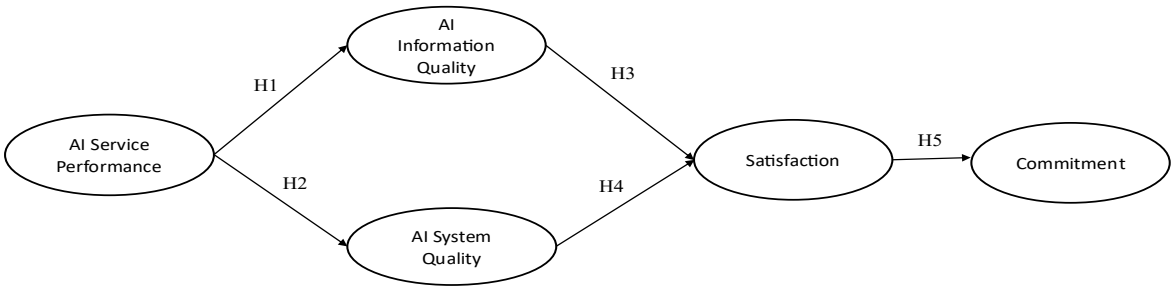
H4. AI system quality is positively related to customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction and commitment

Customer satisfaction is known to be an important marketing concept. Customer satisfaction has been defined as a measure that describes the feelings of happiness of customers towards a brand's products, capabilities, and services (Jun *et al.,* 2004; Rather and Sharma, 2017). Commitment is regarded as a key component of long-term relationships in relationship marketing (Wang, 2009). Together commitment and customer satisfaction has been linked many times in literature, Bansal, Irving and Taylor (2004) in their study supported this relationship by stating that the commitment in customer services will be greater and stronger when the satisfaction of customers grows stronger and greater first. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H5. Customer satisfaction is positively related commitment.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Source: Authors' own construction (2024)

2. Research methodology

2.1. Data collection

To test the proposed hypotheses of this study the sample consisted of young adults (university students) who were Superbalist online female customers in South Africa, between the ages of 18 and 35 years who had used Superbalist online platforms for shopping. However, only 93 respondents responded to the online survey, the 93 responses were valid.

2.2. Measurement instrument

All the items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" 1 to "strongly agree" 5. The conceptual model consists of AI Service performance construct which consists of 15 items, AI information quality construct which consists of 3 items, AI system quality construct which consists of 3 items adopted from Wixom and Todd (2005); satisfaction construct which consists of 3 items adopted from Aaker *et al.,* (2004) and commitment construct which consists of 3 items adopted from Fullerton (2003).

2.3. Data analysis

The data collected from the respondents through the online survey that was administered on google forms was examined by utilizing partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) through Smart PLS 4.0. The study employs this widely used statistical software to

aid in producing descriptive statistics of the biographical information of respondents, the scales were estimated through reliability and validity.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Respondent profile

Depicted in Table 1 is a summary of the respondent's demographic profile. A total of 93 responses were valid. In the beginning of the questionnaire a screening question was included to ensure that only individuals who had utilized the Superbalist website and applications in the last two years (prior to the study) participated. All the 93 respondents were female. The demographic variables used to undertake the study included the respondents age, highest education level and employment status.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–23	47	50.5
	24–28	13	14
	29–35	33	35.5
Education	High school	8	8.6
	Diploma	50	53.3
	Degree	28	30.1
	Postgraduate	7	7.5
Employment status	Student	64	68.8
	Employed	22	23.7
	Self-employed	5	5.4
	Unemployed	2	2.2

Source: Authors own construction based on PLS-SEM (2024)

The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 35 years. As indicated in table 1 above most of the respondents indicated by 50.5% fell within the age group of 18-23 years of age. Respondents that were between the ages of 29-35 years of age made up 35.5% of the sample and the remaining 14.0% of respondents were between 24-28 years of age. The majority of respondents were in possession of a diploma as indicated by 53.8%. Respondents with degrees represented 30.1% of the sample. Only 8.6% of respondents indicated that they had a high school diploma and 7.5% of respondents. 68.8% of respondents were university students. Respondents that were employed represented 23.7% of the sample. Only 5.4% of respondents indicated that they were self-employed and the remaining 2.2% indicated that they were unemployed.

3.2. Research model analysis

This study employed partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyze measurements and structural models. Factor loadings of AA1 and AT1 were below approved limit of 0.5 and were eliminated. As recommended by Hair et al. (2017) all remaining factor loadings were above the recommended threshold of 0.5. The range of the Cronbach alpha values spanned from 0.795 to 0.862 which exceeds the 0.7 threshold suggested by Fields (2018) threshold.

The composite reliability (CR) was between 0.880 and 0.921 showing internal consistency across the constructs. With the exception of AI Service Performance (0.477), the

AVEs of all four dimensions of the model (AI Information Quality, AI System Quality, Commitment, Satisfaction) were greater than 0.5. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), an AVE of 0.4 is acceptable when the construct's composite reliability (CR) is above 0.7. In this study AI service performance AVE is 0.477 which is acceptable as the CR values as all dimensions were above 0.7 thus corroborating the claim of convergent validity and reliability.

Table 2. Construct reliability and validity

	Cronbach's alpha	**Composite reliability**	**Average variance extracted (AVE)**
AI Information Quality	0.795	0.880	0.709
AI Service Performance	0.908	0.921	0.477
AI System Quality	0.862	0.916	0.784
Commitment	0.848	0.906	0.763
Satisfaction	0.802	0.885	0.721

Source: Authors own construction based on PLS-SEM (2024)

Table 3: R-square (R^2)

	R-square
AI Information Quality	0.665
AI System Quality	0.398
Commitment	0.120
Satisfaction	0.490

Source: Authors own construction based on PLS-SEM (2024)

The R2 value was 0,665 for AI Information Quality, 0,398 AI System Quality, 0,120 Commitment and 0,490 Satisfaction. R2 should be greater than 0.10 which is 10% (Hair et al., 2017) (see Table 3).

3.3. Assessment of the structural model

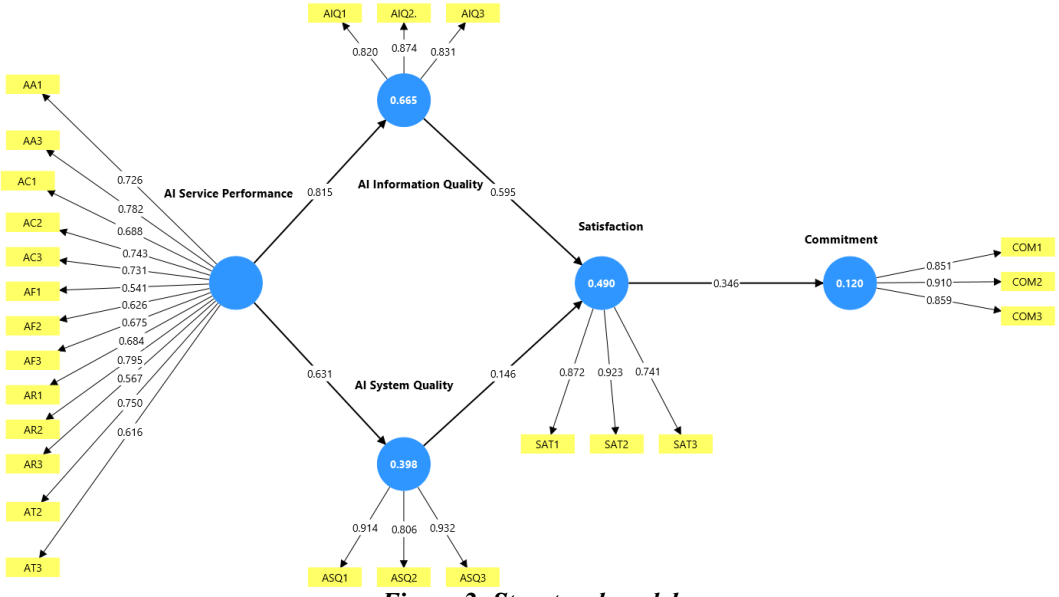


Figure 2: Structural model

Source: Authors own construction (2024)

Table 4. Hypotheses results

		Original sample (O)	**Sample mean (M)**	**Standard deviation (STDEV)**	**T statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P values**	**Result**
H1	AI Service Performance -> AI Information Quality	0.815	0.816	0.043	18.772	0.001	Supported
H2	AI Service Performance -> AI System Quality	0.631	0.633	0.099	6.357	0.001	Supported
H3	AI Information Quality -> Satisfaction	0.598	0.594	0.099	6.073	0.001	Supported
H4	AI System Quality -> Satisfaction	0.143	0.146	0.104	1.374	0.170	Not Supported
H5	Satisfaction -> Commitment	0.346	0.356	0.086	4.008	0.001	Supported

Source: Authors own construction based on PLS-SEM (2024)

For H1: the results (β = 0.815; p = 0.000) indicate that AI service performance has a positive and significant influence on AI information quality. Thus, H1 is accepted. Accuracy and currency show that information provided via the online fashion retail is accurate and current. The results indicate that customers trust valid, current updated information on online fashion retails is important in their buying decision-making. The finding is consistent with literature (Prentice, 2013; Shi et al., 2014) stress that customer responses are positive because services are guaranteed and reliable. However, in online fashion retailers the accuracy of quality information is based on guarantees and dependability. In general, a digital platform such as online store which is AI computer operated should provide correctness, current and reliable information. For H2: the results (β = 0.631; p = 0.000) indicate that AI system quality has a positive and significant influence on AI system performance. Thus, H2 is accepted. This is in line with the study of Carlini and Wagner (2017). This means that reliability and timeliness are significantly related to AI system quality. For H3: the results (β = 0.598; p = 0.000) indicate that customer satisfaction is undeniably impacted by AI information quality. Hence, we accept H3. For H4: the results (β = 0.143; p = 0.170) indicate that there is no support for the relationship between AI system quality and customer satisfaction. Thus, H4 is not accepted. This finding has been previously echoed by Castillo et al. (2021) who found that AI-powered interactions may encounter setbacks, potentially causing anger, confusion, and customer dissatisfaction. For H5: the results (β = 0.346; p = 0.000) indicate that customer satisfaction has a positive influence on commitment. Thus, H5 is accepted. Commitment is an enduring desire based on emotional attachment. This is in line with previous study of Morgan and Hunt (1994) that explains commitment to a partner as it requires maintaining a long-lasting relationship. Customers who are satisfied with online store services develop an emotional bond with the store resulting in interactions and commitment. Fullerton (2003) stated that

commitment in online services can strengthen brand relationship quality and maintain a relationship which gives them a competitive advantage.

4. Conclusion, recommendations and future research

4.1. Theoretical contributions

The study proposes AI as a service tool and adopts the affordance theory to build relation between service performance (SERVQUAL), customer satisfaction and commitment within online fashion retails. This study contributes to the existing literature on IT domains discussed by Wixom and Todd (2005). Over time, this theoretical domain has evolved to include research on information and system attributes as experienced by marketing or commercial customers who engage with AI technologies. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact off AI service performance, AI information quality, AI system quality satisfaction and commitment amongst young female customers in the online fashion industry. The findings indicate that technology-based AI can be considered an innovative tool for managing online services and enhancing customer satisfaction, which may ultimately lead to greater customer commitment.

4.2. Managerial implications

This study offers actionable insights for IT and marketing management in online service contexts. AI functions as a technology-driven service that can enhance user experience and serve as a market research tool, ultimately improving customer satisfaction. IT professionals should prioritize optimal AI service performance and design user-friendly systems, as customers may not fully distinguish between AI information quality and system quality. From a marketing perspective, AI can be leveraged to strengthen satisfaction and commitment. Transparent, informative, and authentic content is essential. Younger female consumers are more likely to share positive experiences, suggesting the need for segment-specific engagement strategies. Finally, the findings highlight opportunities for online fashion retailers to enhance customer experience through innovative AI applications. As AI evolves, firms must identify technologies that effectively connect with customers while ensuring seamless and intuitive online shopping experiences.

4.3. Limitations of the study

The study focused specifically on young female customers aged 18 to 35, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other age groups and demographic segments

4.4. Recommendations for future research

Considering the limitations of this study, future studies could extend the investigation beyond young adults to include older populations, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. Replicating this study with a larger and more diverse sample would not only build on the current results but also provide a deeper understanding of the underlying phenomena related to AI adoption, service performance, and customer-brand relationships in online fashion retail.

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