

The Impact of Returns Management on Electronic Fashion Trade

Raghad Nasser Al-Saeed, Dr. Amal Bint Abdullah Ibrahim Al-Bishri

Department of Fashion Design, College of Design and Arts – Department of Fashion Design,
University of Jeddah, Jeddah – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Email: RALSAEED0002.stu@uj.edu.sa, aalbishri@uj.edu.sa

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate how online fashion stores address the challenges of returns management and to analyze the impact of return policies on consumer satisfaction in online fashion stores, while also offering solutions to enhance the efficiency of returns management and increase consumer satisfaction. This research follows the descriptive-analytical method. The findings reveal that online fashion stores face several challenges, most notably the impact of returns on inventory, handling dissatisfied customers, and the difficulty of reselling returned products. In addition, free return shipping was found to be the most satisfying element for consumers in return policies. The majority of store owners (66.7%) use a customer service team to manage store returns. Several solutions exist to improve the returns management process in online fashion stores, including enhancing tracking systems, strengthening customer communication, and collaborating with logistics partners. The research concludes with recommendations, including establishing a clear return policy that is easy for consumers to understand, sending surveys to consumers to gather their suggestions for improving store return policies, and enhancing the responsiveness of customer service teams to enable fast and accurate returns, which ultimately increases customer satisfaction. Finally, it recommends analyzing the reasons behind product returns in order to improve store marketing strategies and incorporate customer feedback, such as making adjustments to returned products.

Keywords: Return Policy, Consumer Satisfaction, Supply Chain, Customer Experience

Introduction

The online fashion industry has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, driven by rapid digital transformation and an increasing preference among consumers for convenient online shopping. However, this rapid evolution has not come without challenges, with returns management emerging as one of the most complex and impactful issues affecting profitability and operational efficiency (Gupta & Venkatesh, 2020). Statistics show that return rates in this

sector range between 30% and 50%, placing a significant burden on companies, from reverse shipping costs to processing and restocking products, as well as the environmental impacts of these operations, including increased waste and carbon emissions (Chen & Liu, 2021).

The reasons for high return rates in online fashion trade vary. One of the main causes is the gap between customer expectations of a product based on its online description and images, and the actual product's reality. Despite efforts to improve image quality and detailed descriptions, many customers still struggle to visualize the actual dimensions or texture of products, leading to poor purchasing decisions. This issue is particularly evident in clothing, where size and design details significantly influence return decisions (Park & Kim, 2022). Additionally, complicated or strict return policies represent another factor that frustrates customers and drives them to seek alternatives. Companies that offer transparent and easy-to-follow return policies often succeed in strengthening customer loyalty, whereas those that lack such features struggle to retain their customer base (Roggeveen et al., 2021).

Returns management is a vital aspect that directly influences customer experience. Today's consumers highly value a seamless and fast return process, which has become an important benchmark for quality of service. Companies that fail to provide effective returns management risk losing customer trust, especially amid the growing competition in the online fashion market (Cheng et al., 2020). To balance customer experience with cost reduction, companies have started investing in artificial intelligence and advanced analytics. These technologies help collect and analyze return data to identify key causes and to develop proactive solutions that reduce return rates and enhance customer satisfaction (Lopez & Alvarez, 2022).

In light of the growing global environmental awareness, sustainable returns management has become indispensable. According to previous studies, returns represent a significant environmental challenge due to the large amounts of waste and wasted resources they generate. To mitigate these impacts, companies can adopt circular economy models that enable returned products to be reused, recycled, or donated, rather than discarded. Integrating these strategies enhances the brand image of online stores among environmentally conscious customers while also reducing the environmental footprint of returns (Ahmed et al., 2020).

These challenges demonstrate that returns management is not merely an operational issue, but rather a strategic one that affects multiple aspects of business performance. Accordingly, this research aims to analyze the impact of returns management in the online fashion trade, focusing on how online fashion stores address return challenges, the effect of return policies on consumer satisfaction, and solutions to enhance the efficiency of returns management. Thus, the research problem lies in the following questions:

- How do online fashion stores deal with the challenges of returns management?
- To what extent does the return policy in online fashion stores affect consumer satisfaction?
- How can the efficiency of returns management in online fashion stores be improved?

The primary objectives of this research are to examine how online fashion stores handle the challenges associated with returns management, to analyze the effect of return policies on

consumer satisfaction, and to propose solutions that can enhance the efficiency of returns management while increasing consumer satisfaction. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the operational and strategic aspects of return management in the online fashion sector.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to offer practical insights for improving the performance of online fashion stores. By investigating the impact of return management and analyzing how return policies influence consumer satisfaction, the study provides results and indicators that can guide retailers in developing effective strategies to optimize operations, enhance customer experience, and ultimately strengthen their competitive position in the e-commerce fashion market.

Research Hypotheses

This study seeks to test the following hypotheses:

- There are difficulties in dealing with the challenges of returns management in online fashion stores.
- Return policies in online fashion stores affect consumer satisfaction.
- There are solutions to improve the efficiency of returns management in online fashion stores.

Terminology

- **Supply Chain:** A complex network of activities and processes that include all the steps necessary to manufacture and distribute products, starting from the acquisition of raw materials, passing through manufacturing processes, and ending with the delivery of final products to customers. The supply chain includes all stakeholders, including suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and end customers. (Kotler, 2017)
- **Returns:** Goods or products that customers return to the store or company after purchase, for various reasons such as mismatch with the description, defects, or customer dissatisfaction with the product. Return management is a crucial aspect of the sales process, as it impacts customer satisfaction and logistics costs. (Kumar & Sethi, 2019)
- **E-commerce:** The process of buying and selling products and services over the internet, including all commercial transactions conducted through electronic networks. E-commerce involves the exchange of financial information, offers, and services through digital platforms, facilitating access to global markets and enhancing the efficiency of business operations. (Turban, Outland, King, Lee, & Viehland, 2011)
- **Customer Experience:** The total set of interactions a customer has with a brand or company, starting from searching for products and services, to purchase processes, and ending with after-sales service. Customer experience is crucial because it directly impacts satisfaction and loyalty, ultimately leading to an improved brand reputation and increased revenues. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

Literature Review

Online Fashion Stores and the Challenges of Returns Management

Returns management poses a persistent challenge for online fashion stores, creating pressure on profitability, customer loyalty, and overall supply chain performance. Recent studies have shed light on various aspects of this issue and provided strategies to address it. Gry, Niederlaender, and Werth (2024) examined how artificial intelligence can be applied to

improve the accuracy of return predictions and provide data-driven recommendations that enhance customer experience. By analyzing industry data through AI systems, their research demonstrated that technology-driven approaches could significantly reduce return rates while offering personal recommendations that improve customer satisfaction.

Complementing this perspective, Stevenson and Rieck (2024) investigated returns management across various e-commerce sectors and countries, emphasizing global and cross-industry differences in strategies. Their findings revealed that practices vary considerably depending on sectoral and geographical contexts, but also highlighted a set of best practices that could be adopted worldwide to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and strengthen customer trust. This broader lens underscores the importance of contextualizing return management within both industry-specific and international frameworks.

Earlier work by Diggins, Chen, and Chen (2016) reviewed the literature on fashion retail returns, analyzing the causes behind high return rates and their impact on business operations. Their study identified returns as one of the most pressing challenges in retail fashion, given their adverse effect on profitability, and emphasized the critical importance of customer behavior and transparency in return policies. Together, these studies highlight both the technological opportunities and operational challenges associated with managing returns in the online fashion sector, providing valuable insights for developing strategies that strike a balance between business efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Return Policies in Online Fashion Stores and Their Impact on Customer Satisfaction

Return policies play a pivotal role in shaping customer satisfaction and influencing the overall performance of online fashion retailers. Research has consistently shown that well-structured policies can enhance customer trust and loyalty, but they also present challenges related to operational costs and efficiency.

Khouja, Ajjan, and Liu (2019) examined the effect of return and price adjustment policies on retailer performance, highlighting how flexible return policies coupled with strategic price adjustments can improve both financial outcomes and customer satisfaction. Using data analysis models and case studies, their research demonstrated that such policies not only strengthen customer service but also help retailers balance costs while maintaining high levels of satisfaction.

Building on this perspective, Fan, Khouja, and Zhou (2022) developed mathematical models aimed at creating “win-win” return policies for online retailers. Their study emphasized the need to balance the interests of retailers and customers by tailoring policies to specific product types and customer behaviors. Through simulations and data collected from real online stores, they showed that well-designed policies can simultaneously reduce return-related costs, improve operational efficiency, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Similarly, Baldauf, Karlsson, Oghazi, and Patel (2021) explored the impact of free return policies through a large-scale field experiment in an online retail setting. Their findings revealed that offering free returns significantly increased sales and boosted customer satisfaction but also led to a sharp rise in return rates, which posed additional challenges for operational management and profitability.

Taken together, these studies highlight the dual nature of return policies in online fashion stores. While they are crucial for improving customer satisfaction and driving sales growth, they must be carefully managed to avoid excessive costs and inefficiencies. Effective policies strike a balance between customer expectations and retailer sustainability, ensuring both short-term loyalty and long-term profitability.

Theoretical Framework

Online Fashion Stores and the Challenges of Returns Management

The fashion retail sector faces a significant challenge in the form of customer product returns, a challenge that has intensified with the growing popularity of online shopping. Despite the advantages of e-commerce, the inability of customers to try products before purchasing remains a fundamental weakness that contributes to high return rates.

Size mismatch is one of the primary reasons customers return clothing, as sizes vary across brands and sometimes even within a single brand's collection. This inconsistency confuses customers and often leads them to choose the wrong size. To address this problem, many companies have enhanced their sizing tools, provided detailed guides, and adopted new technologies, such as camera-based size measurement or augmented reality fitting tools (Diggins, Chen, & Jing, 2016).

Additionally, there is the issue of customer expectations regarding product quality, which are often influenced by images and descriptions posted online. Discrepancies in quality increase customer dissatisfaction and drive return decisions. Companies have responded to this challenge by enhancing image quality and providing more detailed product descriptions that include all relevant information. In some cases, flexible return policies help reduce returns, as offering free and easy return processes encourages customers to make more confident purchases and make faster decisions, knowing they can return products if they are dissatisfied. While flexible return policies increase sales and build customer trust, they also place an additional burden on companies in managing frequent return requests (Diggins, Chen, & Jing, 2016).

In addition to traditional reasons such as size or quality issues, the rapid changes in fashion trends and shifting customer tastes also contribute to higher return rates. Most customers tend to follow the latest fashion trends, which makes them reconsider keeping an item they purchased if a new trend emerges. This means that flexible exchange and return policies encourage customers to reevaluate their choices, thereby increasing operational pressure on the company.

On the other hand, companies bear significant operational and financial costs due to returns. The industry faces the burden of reverse shipping costs, which become especially heavy in cases where companies offer free shipping and returns, increasing expenses without any direct return. Once the returned products arrive at the company's warehouses, they require inspection and verification to ensure they have not been used. This process requires human resources, additional time, and effort, in addition to reorganizing and storing the items. Such processes raise internal operational costs, particularly since returned products may need to be discounted to be resold, resulting in reduced product value and a negative impact on profits. (Diggins, Chen, Jing: 2016)

The disposal of returned products remains a common practice in the online fashion sector. However, the expected return rates have exceeded those reported in recent studies, primarily due to variations in practices among the companies surveyed. These practices include return policies, product variety, online sales channels, and the degree of realism in presenting and describing products. Most of the surveyed companies focus on providing a seamless return experience for customers, driven by the significant influence of e-commerce markets on overall market behavior. Current market practices encourage online retailers to offer hassle-free returns, as charging fees may deter customers from shopping elsewhere. (Werth, Niederlaender, Gry: 2024)

Furthermore, the collection of data related to return indicators is often irregular, meaning that current operations aim to improve future performance based only on the available data. Here lies the importance of AI-powered recommendation systems, which can provide insights into return drivers and deterrents based on available sales and return data—data that most e-commerce companies already possess. Displaying return rates on dashboards by product category or feature, such as fit, style, color, or size, can help companies identify specific factors behind returns and initiate processes to address these challenges. (Werth, Niederlaender, Gry: 2024)

Effective return management in e-commerce focuses on leveraging data-driven analysis to predict returns. Big data analytics systems and data-mining techniques enable online retailers to identify recurring return patterns and address them proactively. Thanks to these data-driven predictions, retailers can reduce return rates and the associated processing costs while maintaining customer satisfaction and strengthening brand loyalty.

Providing accurate and comprehensive product information, in addition to extending cancellation periods, are preventive measures that enhance customer experience and reduce the likelihood of returns. Meeting customer expectations regarding product details fosters long-term trust with the brand, which in turn decreases return rates and promotes greater customer loyalty. Following these preventive measures ensures customer satisfaction while mitigating the operational costs generated by returns.

Modern technologies also play a major role in increasing return-handling efficiency. Online retailers can use digital systems and big-data-based forecasting tools to accurately estimate expected return volumes, thereby allocating resources more efficiently. Additionally, robots can be utilized to enhance the speed and efficiency of return processing, resulting in cost savings and increased flexibility in supply chain logistics operations. (Rieck, Stevenson: 2024) Online retailers can influence customer behavior to reduce return rates by offering incentives to keep products, such as rewards or discounts on future purchases. This enhances the customer experience and encourages them to reconsider before returning products, resulting in a noticeable reduction in returns and alleviating the associated financial burden.

From a sustainability perspective, steering return management strategies toward eco-friendly practices is a crucial step. Companies can adopt policies that promote the reuse or recycling of returned products. This approach reduces the environmental impact of returns and fosters stronger collaboration between retailers and customers. Encouraging customers to comply with sustainable return policies helps reduce waste, raises environmental awareness among

customers, and positions the retailer in a positive light in the public eye. (Rieck, Stevenson: 2024)

Return Policies in Online Fashion Stores and Their Impact on Customer Satisfaction

A flexible and convenient return policy plays a significant role in enhancing customer trust and encouraging them to make purchases more freely, as they feel they have the freedom to return a product if it does not meet their expectations. Although such policies increase customer satisfaction, they also place a financial burden on retailers, as processing returns incurs high operational costs, including shipping, storage, and inspection. To address these challenges, non-cash refunds, such as gift cards, can be used as an alternative to cash refunds. This approach reduces costs and strengthens customer loyalty by encouraging them to reuse the refunded amount within the same store. (Ajjan, Khouja, Liu: 2019)

Retailers can also offer price protection, which allows customers to adjust the price if it decreases within a specific period after purchase, through a price adjustment policy. This increases customer trust and reduces hesitation to purchase during periods of regular promotions and discounts. It is especially effective when combined with a return policy, as it reduces return costs and enhances customer satisfaction in a mutually beneficial manner. These strategies require policies that adapt to customer preferences and behaviors, utilizing data analytics to ensure the retailer's profitability goals are met while enhancing the shopping experience. (Ajjan, Khouja, Liu: 2019)

Methodology

Following a comprehensive review of relevant research methodologies, literature, and prior studies, and after defining the study's objectives, the researcher adopted a descriptive–analytical approach. This methodology enables a detailed and precise examination of the research problem, facilitating the collection of sufficient data, which are then analyzed objectively to identify key influencing factors. In the context of this study, the descriptive component focused on exploring online fashion retailers and the challenges associated with return management. In contrast, the analytical component examined the impact of return policies on customer satisfaction, using an electronic questionnaire as the primary data collection tool.

The research population comprised online fashion stores operating within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A purposive sample of three online fashion stores located in Jeddah was selected to participate in the study. These stores received the researcher's questionnaire, which served as the basis for the empirical investigation. To collect relevant data, a structured questionnaire was developed, designed specifically to assess the impact of return management practices in online fashion retail. The questionnaire consisted of 14 items organized into four sections: (1) challenges of return management, (2) the effect of return policies on customer satisfaction, (3) strategies to improve the efficiency of return management, and (4) respondents' suggestions and evaluations. The distribution of the questionnaire was conducted electronically to facilitate the rapid collection of responses. Data collection spanned approximately two weeks, during which three complete responses were obtained. The resulting data provided valuable insights into the influence of return management practices on customer satisfaction and the operational performance of online fashion stores.

Study Results and Discussion

Results in Light of the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis states that: *“There are difficulties in dealing with the challenges of return management in online fashion stores.”*

To verify the hypothesis, the researcher prepared a questionnaire directed to online fashion stores, which included questions related to how these stores deal with return management challenges. The following tables illustrate this:

Table (1)

Responses of the sample to Question 1

No.	Question	High cost of reshipping	Impact of returns on inventory	Dealing with dissatisfied customers	Difficulty reselling returned products	Others
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
1	What are the main challenges you face in managing returns?	0	0	1	33.3%	1

Table (1) indicates the key challenges faced by online fashion retailers in managing returns. Responses varied: one respondent chose “impact of returns on inventory” (33.3%), another chose “dealing with dissatisfied customers” (33.3%), and the third selected “difficulty reselling returned products” (33.3%). This confirms the multiplicity of challenges faced by online fashion retailers.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Diggins, Chen, & Jing (2016), which also indicate that there are numerous difficulties in return management, representing a significant challenge in the fashion retail sector.

Table (2)

Responses of the sample to Question 2

No.	Question	Extremely Difficult	Difficult	Moderate	Easy	Very Easy
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
2	How difficult is it to handle return management compared to other operations?	0	0	2	66.7%	1

Table (2) shows the level of difficulty in handling return management compared to other operations. The responses revealed that two participants (66.7%) agreed that managing returns is difficult, while one participant (33.3%) considered it moderately strenuous.

The results of this study are consistent with Diggins, Chen, & Jing (2016), which also highlighted the difficulty of managing returns.

Table (3)

Responses of the sample to Question 3

No.	Question	Very Strong Impact	Strong Impact	Moderate Impact	Slight Impact	No Impact
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
3	How do returns affect the efficiency of the store's daily operations?	0	0	1	33.3%	2

Table 3 indicates the extent to which returns affect the efficiency of daily store operations. The responses showed that two store owners (66.7%) reported that returns have a moderate impact on daily operations, while one (33.3%) stated they have a strong impact. This is based on their personal experiences with returns and daily sales activities.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Fan, Khouja, & Zhou (2022), who also found that returns affect the daily operations of online retailers.

Results in Light of the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis states: "Return policies in online fashion stores affect consumer satisfaction."

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher prepared a questionnaire directed at online fashion retailers, which included questions related to return policies and consumer satisfaction. The following tables illustrate this:

Table (4)

Sample responses to question four

Q	Question	Very Flexible	Flexible	Moderate	Slightly Flexible	Not Flexible
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
4	How do you evaluate the current return policy of the store in terms of flexibility?	0	0	0	0	2

Table 4 indicates how respondents evaluated the current return policy of the store in terms of flexibility. The responses showed that 2 of them agreed that their store's current policy is moderately flexible (66.7%), while 1 of them chose a slightly flexible option (33.3%). It can be concluded that a flexible return policy may contribute to improving store performance.

These results are consistent with the study of Khouja, Ajjan, & Liu (2019), which found that implementing flexible return policies and suitable price adjustments can lead to improved store performance and higher customer satisfaction.

Table (5)

Sample responses to question five

Q	Question	Flexibility of Return Period	Free Return Cost	Fast Exchange & Refund	Responsive Customer Service	Other
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
5	In your opinion, what most satisfies the consumer in the return policy?	0	0	2	66.7%	1

Table (5) shows what most satisfies consumers in the return policy according to respondents. The results revealed that 2 of them (66.7%) agreed that free return cost is the most satisfying factor for consumers, while 1 of them (33.3%) chose fast exchange and refund. It can therefore be concluded that free return cost is the most satisfying element of the return policy for customers.

These findings are consistent with the study of Baldauf, Karlsson, Oghazi, & Patel (2021), which showed that free return cost led to greater customer satisfaction and a significant increase in sales.

Table (6)

Sample responses to question six

Q	Question	Yes, satisfaction increased significantly	Yes, satisfaction increased slightly	No, no change	Yes, satisfaction decreased slightly	Yes, satisfaction decreased significantly
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
6	Have you noticed any differences in consumer satisfaction after changing the return policy (if a change was made)?	1	33.3%	0	0	2

Table 6 indicates whether respondents noticed differences in consumer satisfaction after changing the return policy (if such a change occurred). The responses showed that 2 of them (66.7%) did not notice any change in consumer satisfaction, while 1 respondent (33.3%) observed a significant increase in satisfaction. This may suggest that the new return policy did not result in substantial satisfaction among 2 of the fashion e-store owners.

These findings are consistent with Diggins & Chen & Chen (2016), which emphasized the importance of transparency in return policies and their impact on customers.

Results in Light of the Third Hypothesis

The third hypothesis states: "There are solutions to improve the efficiency of return management in fashion e-stores."

To verify this hypothesis, the researcher conducted a survey directed at fashion e-stores that included questions related to improving return management efficiency. The following tables illustrate this:

Table (7)

Sample responses to question seven

Question	Return Management Systems	Specialized Shipping Companies	Order Tracking System	Customer Service Team	Other
	Count	%	Count	%	Count
7	What tools are currently used in managing the store's returns?	1	33.3%	0	0

Table 7 shows the tools currently used in managing store returns. The responses indicated that 2 of the store owners (66.7%) use the customer service team to handle returns, while 1 store (33.3%) uses return management systems. It can therefore be concluded that most fashion e-stores rely on their customer service teams to manage returns.

These findings are consistent with Khouja, Ajjan, & Liu (2019), which identified customer service as one of the tools used for return management.

Table (8)

Sample responses to question eight

Q	Question	Improve Tracking System	Simplify Return Procedures	Enhance Customer Communication	Collaborate with Logistics Partners	Other
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
8	What solutions do you propose to improve the return management process?	1	33.3%	0	0	1

Table (8) shows the solutions proposed to improve the return management process. Responses were evenly distributed, with improvements to the tracking system (33.3%), enhancements to customer communication (33.3%), and collaboration with logistics partners (33.3%). This suggests that there are multiple potential solutions for improving return management in fashion e-stores.

These findings are consistent with those of Fan, Khouja, and Zhou (2022), who presented solutions for improving return management and increasing customer satisfaction, with a focus on balancing the interests of both fashion e-stores and their customers. They are also consistent with Stevenson & Julia (2024), who highlighted the existence of multiple solutions for improving and implementing return management processes.

Table (9)

Sample responses to question nine

Q	Question	Very Strong Effect	Strong Effect	Moderate Effect	Slight Effect	No Effect
		Count	%	Count	%	Count
9	In your opinion, how much does improving return management affect customer satisfaction?	1	33.3%	1	33.3%	1

Table 9 indicates the perceived effect of improving return management on customer satisfaction. Responses were equally distributed among those with a powerful effect (33.3%), a strong effect (33.3%), and a moderate effect (33.3%). This suggests that the effect ranges from very strong to moderate.

These findings are consistent with Gry (2024), Niederlaender, & Werth, which found that improving return management in online fashion retail has a significant impact on increasing customer satisfaction.

This section presents the key findings in the form of conclusions. It also highlights the main difficulties and challenges faced by the researchers and how they were overcome. It includes several recommendations to help develop the educational process, along with suggestions for further studies.

Conclusions

Considering the research results and their discussion, the study revealed that fashion e-stores face numerous challenges in managing returns. These challenges include the impact of returns on inventory, the difficulty of dealing with dissatisfied customers, and the complications involved in reselling returned products. Compared to other store operations, return management was found to be more difficult, with the level of difficulty ranging from moderate to high. This complexity directly affects the efficiency of daily operations, with the degree of impact varying from strong to moderate depending on the scale of returns and the systems in place to handle them.

The findings also showed that the flexibility and clarity of return policies are closely related to increased customer satisfaction. In particular, free return costs emerged as the most satisfying element of return policies from the customers' perspective. However, it was evident that any change in return policies can significantly influence customer satisfaction, highlighting the sensitivity of consumers to these policies and their terms.

The research further revealed that most store owners rely heavily on customer service teams to manage returns, underscoring the central role of human support in this process. At the same time, several solutions were identified to improve return management, including enhancements to tracking systems, more effective communication with customers, and increased collaboration with logistics partners. Overall, the study concluded that improving return management practices has a direct and positive impact on customer satisfaction, making it a crucial area for fashion e-stores to invest in and further develop.

Recommendations

The present study recommends establishing a clear return policy that consumers easily understand. It is also suggested to send surveys to customers to gather their feedback and determine whether they have any suggestions for improving the store's return policy. This approach would ensure that return policies align with customer expectations, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction.

Improving the responsiveness of the customer service team is another key recommendation. By allowing consumers to return products quickly and accurately, stores can significantly increase customer satisfaction and foster trust in their services. Efficient and timely support helps reduce frustration and enhances the overall shopping experience.

Ultimately, the study underscores the significance of examining the reasons behind product returns to inform and enhance the store's marketing strategies. Taking customer feedback into account, including making adjustments to returned products, can help stores refine their offerings, reduce future returns, and better meet customer needs. This proactive approach not only enhances operational efficiency but also strengthens customer loyalty.

Theoretical and Contextual Contribution

This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of e-commerce operations by emphasizing the relationship between return management practices and customer satisfaction within the fashion industry. It extends existing theories of customer behavior and service quality by demonstrating how operational policies—particularly return management—serve as critical determinants of consumer trust and loyalty in online retail settings. Contextually, the study offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by fashion e-stores, highlighting how logistical, communicative, and policy-related factors shape customer experiences in digital marketplaces. By identifying the practical mechanisms through which return management influences satisfaction, the research bridges the gap between theory and practice, providing a foundation for further studies aimed at improving e-commerce performance and customer retention.

Challenges and Difficulties Faced by the Researcher

The researcher encountered several challenges throughout this study. One significant difficulty was accessing accurate information from foreign research, which was essential for understanding global best practices and contextualizing the findings within the broader literature. Another challenge involved accurately translating foreign texts. Ensuring that the meaning of complex academic and technical content was preserved required careful attention to detail and linguistic precision. Identifying online fashion stores that offer return features also posed a challenge. Since not all e-stores provide such services, finding suitable participants for the study required additional effort and verification. Lastly, the short timeframe for conducting the research added pressure, limiting the duration available for data collection, analysis, and follow-up with participants, which required the researcher to manage time efficiently to complete the study within the allotted period.

Suggestions for Future Research

For future research, several avenues are suggested to expand the understanding of return management in the fashion industry. One area of study is examining the impact of return management on the fashion industry and its environmental effects, which could provide insights into sustainable practices and the ecological implications of high return rates.

Another promising direction is exploring the use of artificial intelligence to reduce returns. AI technologies could enhance prediction accuracy, personalize recommendations, and optimize inventory management, ultimately minimizing unnecessary returns.

Additionally, the role of augmented reality in reducing returns warrants investigation. By helping customers select the correct sizes and visualize products more accurately, augmented reality could improve purchase satisfaction and lower return rates.

Finally, future studies could examine the feasibility of developing biodegradable fashion products. Such innovations may reduce the environmental burden of returned items while encouraging more sustainable consumption practices in online fashion retail.

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