An experimental exploration of retail service recovery: Role of service agent, product type, and consumer dark traits

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Abstract

The study examines the impact of service agents and product types on service recovery outcomes in retail. Additionally, it explores the moderating effects of consumers' dark personality traits on relationships. An experimental study was conducted with 269 online retail shoppers randomly assigned to one of four hypothetical scenarios to investigate the impact of service recovery efforts on customer behavior. The findings reveal that human service agents significantly enhance positive consumer behaviors, particularly in experiential products. In contrast, chatbots are more effective for search products. Furthermore, retail consumers with higher levels of dark triad traits demonstrate more negative responses, especially in chatbot interactions. The study provides unique insights into the importance of aligning service agent types and product characteristics with consumer personality traits for effective service recovery, enriching the literature on virtual agents in retail.