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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS IN CHINA AND THAILAND: A LOGISTICS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study compares logistics management practices of major Chinese and Thai e-commerce platforms by examining information, money, and material flows through the 7Rs logistics performance framework.

Methodology – A qualitative approach was employed using semi-structured interviews with eight senior logistics managers from four e-commerce platforms. Thematic analysis and cross-country comparison were applied to evaluate logistics performance across information, money, and material flows using the 7Rs framework.

Results – Findings reveal that Chinese platforms demonstrate superior logistics efficiency through advanced technology, integrated payment systems, and self-operated logistics networks, while Thai platforms rely heavily on third-party logistics and face challenges in information accuracy, reverse logistics, and infrastructure limitations.

Implications – The study suggests strategic investment in digital technologies, localized logistics systems, and reverse-logistics optimization to enhance service quality and competitiveness of e-commerce platforms in emerging markets.

Originality/Value – This research provides one of the first cross-national empirical comparisons of e-commerce logistics in China and Thailand using the 7Rs framework, offering practical insights for platform managers and policymakers.

Keywords: E-commerce logistics, China-Thailand comparison, Logistics efficiency, Infrastructure impact, 7Rs principle

Paper Type: Research Article

INTRODUCTION

The meteoric expansion of e-commerce has fundamentally re-engineered global trade patterns, and nowhere is this more evident than along the corridors shaped by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Launched in 2013, the BRI has channelled more than USD 900 billion into ports, rails, fiber-optic backbones, and digital free-trade zones across Asia (Gupta, 2014; Iqbal et al., 2023). These investments have not merely accelerated container throughput; they have created the physical and digital sinews that allow platforms such as JINGDONG (JD.com) and TAOBAO (Alibaba) to compress order-to-delivery lead times in China to under twenty-four hours in tier-one cities (Kang et al., 2022). Simultaneously, Southeast Asian markets—Thailand in particular—have experienced a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in online retail of 29% since 2015, facilitated by BRI-financed submarine cables and the Thai 4.0 digital master plan. Yet these headline figures conceal a widening logistics performance gap: Chinese platforms leverage integrated express networks and real-time mobile payments, while Thai platforms still grapple with fragmented last-mile carriers and cash-on-delivery (COD) ratios exceeding 70%. Comparing these two markets therefore offers a natural experiment on how policy, infrastructure, and platform strategy jointly shape logistics performance.

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Within this macro context, e-commerce platforms have evolved from simple online storefronts into orchestrators of complex, multi-modal supply chains. JD.com's "211 program" promises delivery before 11 a.m. on orders placed before 11 p.m. the previous day, an offering underpinned by proprietary warehouse management systems (WMS) and automated sorting centers that process 2.1 million parcels per hour at peak. On the Thai side, LAZADA has adopted a hybrid model: it owns three mega-fulfillment centers in Bangkok's Eastern Economic Corridor, yet it outsources 82% of last-mile touchpoints to local third-party logistics (3PL) partners. TikTok Shop Thailand, launched only in 2022, has bypassed asset-heavy logistics altogether by integrating social-commerce checkouts with 3PL APIs, achieving same-day delivery in greater Bangkok but two-to-four-day delivery in up-country provinces. These distinct configurations raise critical questions about how effectively each platform manages the three canonical flows of supply chain management—information, money, and material—within the constraints of local infrastructure and consumer expectations.

The theoretical lens of the 7Rs principle—Right product, Right quantity, Right condition, Right place, Right time, Right cost, Right customer—offers a structured way to interrogate these configurations. Empirical studies in China indicate that JD.com scores above 90% on the "Right time" metric through AI-driven dynamic routing yet lags on "Right cost" due to heavy capex in fulfillment automation. Conversely, Thai platforms score higher on "Right cost" because of asset-light 3PL reliance but forfeit control over "Right condition," as evidenced by a 14% damage-in-transit rate compared to 4% in China. Such discrepancies underscore the need for granular, cross-national comparisons that move beyond aggregate logistics indices.

This study therefore sets out to achieve three objectives. First, it maps and benchmarks the end-to-end logistics practices—spanning information, money, and material flows—of four dominant e-commerce platforms: JINGDONG and TAOBAO in China, and LAZADA and TIKTOK in Thailand. Second, it evaluates each platform against the 7Rs framework to identify specific efficiency gaps and their root causes, whether technological (e.g., lack of warehouse automation), infrastructural (e.g., rural road quality), or behavioral (e.g., COD preference). Third, it distills actionable recommendations for practitioners and policymakers, pinpointing which levers—centralized data hubs, micro-fulfillment centers, tighter carrier KPIs—most effectively bridge these gaps. By synthesizing comparative evidence from two of Asia's most dynamic yet divergent e-commerce ecosystems, the study contributes original insights into how digital platforms can serve as integrative nodes within the broader BRI logistics network (Fomin et al., 2003; Gupta, 2014).

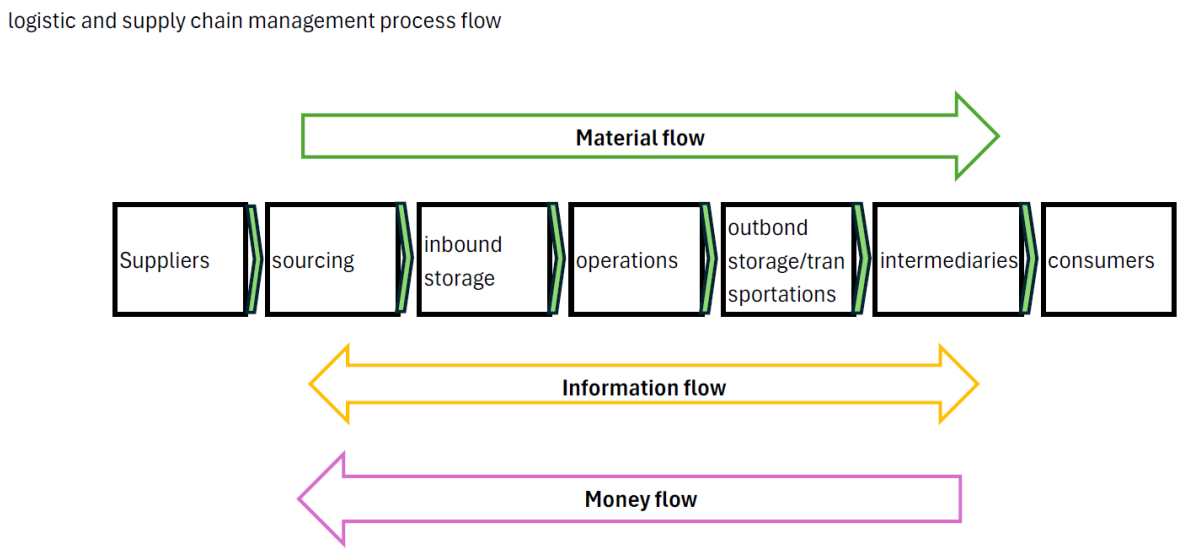

Figure 1. Logistic and supply chain management process flow (Gupta, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

E-commerce logistics involves the application of electronic information technology, network interconnection, and modern communication systems to effectively manage commodity resources and transaction activities. In contemporary supply chains, e-commerce platforms function as critical intermediaries that coordinate the delivery of goods and services, manage customer orders, and integrate overall supply chain logistics operations (Fomin et al., 2003; Gupta, 2014). A fundamental framework for understanding these operations is the concept of the three flows of the supply chain: material flow, information flow, and money flow. Material flow refers to the complete process from production to final consumer delivery, including order processing, procurement, packaging, transportation, distribution, and customer service (Michlowicz & Smolińska, 2015). Information flow supports effective coordination by transmitting product information, marketing content, technical support, and after-sales service between suppliers and consumers (Gupta, 2014). Meanwhile, money flow represents the movement of capital accompanying the transfer of goods and ownership, encompassing payments, transfers, and settlements, with online payment systems playing a vital role in improving operational efficiency and customer satisfaction (Gupta, 2014).

This study draws on case examples from leading e-commerce platforms operating in China and Thailand. Lazada, founded in 2012 and acquired by Alibaba in 2016, has become one of Thailand's dominant platforms, emphasizing logistics efficiency and user experience, with logistics-related activities accounting for approximately 65–70% of its transactions (Luo, 2020; Ruanguttamanun & Peemanee, 2022). TikTok Shop has also rapidly expanded its presence in Thailand, capturing a 21% market share in 2023 by leveraging social media influence and a massive user base to stimulate e-commerce transactions (Profeta et al., 2024). In China, JINGDONG.com, established in 1998 and headquartered in Beijing, has developed a globally competitive position through strong supply chain management and advanced logistics technology (Luo, 2020). Similarly, TAOBAO, founded in 2003 in Hangzhou, maintains a significant market share with nearly 500 million registered users as of 2023, reflecting the scale and maturity of China's e-commerce ecosystem (Luo, 2020).

An efficient logistics and distribution system forms the operational backbone of e-commerce success. Such a system focuses on building fast and reliable delivery networks, minimizing logistics costs, and enhancing visibility and transparency throughout the supply chain (Salvén, 2013). Through optimized warehousing, transportation planning, and real-time tracking, e-commerce platforms can respond more effectively to customer demands while maintaining operational efficiency. These capabilities not only strengthen service reliability but also serve as a strategic advantage in increasingly competitive digital markets.

To further enhance logistics performance, the concept of logistics service quality is often explained through the 7Rs framework, originally proposed in 1974. This framework emphasizes delivering the right product, at the right time, to the right place, at the right price, using the right channel, in the right condition, and with the right information. Collectively, these seven standards guide organizations in maintaining service consistency, protecting product quality during transportation, ensuring accurate information exchange, and selecting appropriate delivery methods. Empirical studies indicate that effective implementation of the 7Rs significantly improves logistics service quality, strengthens customer satisfaction, and enhances overall supply chain efficiency (Li & Liu, 2014; Wang et al., 2018; Jiang, 2023; Tran, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Population and Samples

The study focuses on four major e-commerce platforms in China and Thailand: JINGDONG and TAOBAO in China, and LAZADA and TIKTOK in Thailand. In 2023, JINGDONG and TAOBAO collectively held 65% of China's e-commerce market share, while LAZADA and TIKTOK accounted for 70% of Thailand's e-commerce market share.

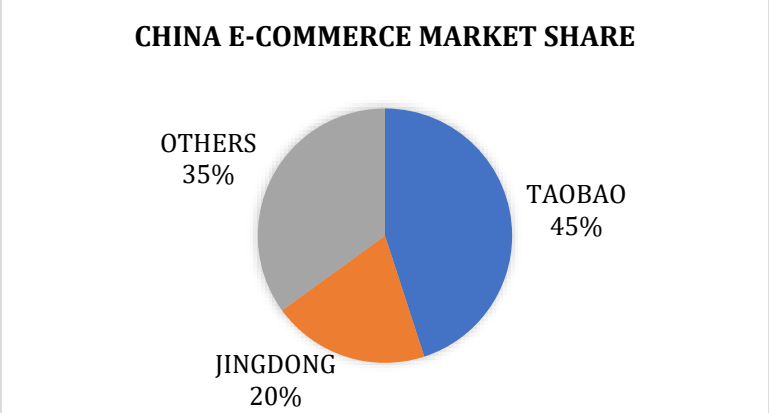

Figure 2. China e -commerce market share

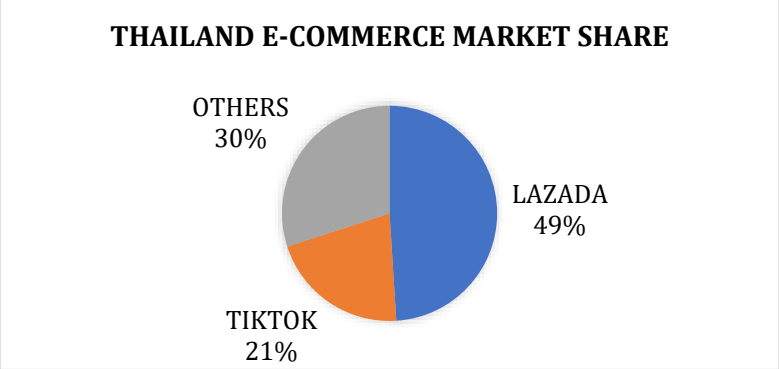

Figure 3. Thailand e -commerce market share

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument used in this study is expert interviews. Given the time constraints and geographical considerations, interviews were conducted via ZOOM. Each company's logistics manager, who is well-versed in the company's logistics operations, was interviewed. Additionally, industry professionals familiar with the logistics landscape of these platforms were included. The interviews aimed to gather in-depth insights into the logistics strategies and practices of the selected e-commerce platforms. China have 2 platforms are: JINGDONG and TAOBAO, In 2023, JINGDONG have 20%, TAOBAO have 45%, so in China JINGDONG and TAOBAO have 65% in total China e-commerce market share, Thailand have 2 platforms are: TIKTOK and LAZADA, In 2023, Lazada have 49%, TikTok have 21%, so in Thailand, LAZADA and TIKTOK have 70% in total Thailand e-commerce market share.

Data Collection

Data collection involved both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data included existing literature on logistics infrastructure, government policies, and industry reports. This data provided a foundational understanding of the logistics landscape in China and Thailand. Primary data was collected through interviews with key stakeholders, including logistics managers, policy makers, and e-commerce experts (2 people from each company).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was conducted through several systematic steps to ensure comprehensive and reliable results. First, qualitative analysis was performed using thematic analysis of the interview transcripts in order to identify recurring themes and key insights related to logistics strategies. Next, a comparative analysis was undertaken to examine and contrast the logistics practices of JINGDONG and TAOBAO with those of LAZADA and TIKTOK, with particular emphasis on information flow, money flow, material flow, and the logistics 7Rs framework. Finally, a cross-country analysis was carried out to compare logistics systems between China and Thailand, highlighting both similarities and differences in operational structures and strategic approaches.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, the study employed multiple data sources and rigorous analysis techniques. The inclusion of expert opinions from logistics managers and industry professionals added credibility to the findings. The thematic analysis of interview transcripts and comparative analysis of logistics practices across platforms ensured that the results were grounded in empirical evidence. Additionally, the cross-country comparison provided insights into the broader context of e-commerce logistics in China and Thailand.

RESULTS

Efficiencies and Inefficiencies in Each Market

Table 1. Information Flow

	LAZADA	TIKTOK	JINGDONG	TAOBAO
Efficiencies	- Invested heavily in technology for real-time tracking and efficient communication. - Fully managed JIT system for real-time inventory and order monitoring. - Centralized management of inventory, logistics, and customer service. Human customer service available 7 days a week, with intelligent customer service	- Fully managed model reducing the burden on merchants. - Leveraged social media for innovative tracking and communication. - Uses FLASH EXPRESS for comprehensive cargo tracking.	- Technology-driven data management for improved information communication. - Self-built logistics and smart sorting centers with AGV operating consoles. - Real-time monitoring system for business operations.	- Invested in RFID and IoT for real-time monitoring. - Uses third-party logistics for nationwide distribution. - CRM system for customer feedback and improved communication.
Inefficiencies	- Non-systematic processes relying on back-end labor for logistics abnormalities. - Issues with updating logistics tracking numbers and freight companies within 48 hours.	- Insufficient transparency in logistics information. - Data accuracy and security issues in logistics printing and order management.	- Slow inventory management response during peak seasons.	- High uncertainty and risk in logistics and distribution. - Poor information sharing between parties.

From the Table 1, the study indicated that all four e-commerce platforms demonstrate significant efforts in developing information flow through technological investment, real-time tracking systems, and integrated communication structures, while each platform also exhibits specific weaknesses related to system coordination, data accuracy, transparency, responsiveness, and information sharing within logistics operations.

Table 2. Money Flow

Theme	LAZADA	TIKTOK	JINGDONG	TAOBAO
Efficiencies	- Payment methods include transfer and cash on delivery. - Third-party financial platforms like PAYONEER for fund management.	- Payment methods include transfer and cash on delivery. Third-party financial platforms for fund management	- Payment methods include transfers, JD.com Baita, Alipay, and WeChat. - Fast refunds and self-operated financial platform "JD Finance."	- Payment methods include transfers, Alipay, and Huaibei. - Self-operated financial platform for faster management.

Table 2. (Cont.)

Theme	LAZADA	TIKTOK	JINGDONG	TAOBAO
Inefficiencies	- Long capital withdrawal cycles, especially for cash on delivery. Complex fund withdrawal issues and risks.	- Longer fund collection periods and increased risks.	- No significant issues reported.	- Unclear refund and compensation responsibilities.

From the Table 2, the study indicated that the four platforms employ diverse payment mechanisms and financial management systems, with notable differences in transaction efficiency, refund processing, fund management structures, and associated financial risks, particularly in relation to cash-on-delivery operations and fund withdrawal procedures.

Table 3. Material Flow

Theme	LAZADA	TIKTOK	JINGDONG	TAOBAO
Efficiencies	- Multiple delivery options with standard and fast delivery times. - Inventory management system with JIT technology. - Use of third-party logistics like FLASH and J&T.	- Big data for real-time consumer behavior analysis with FLASH EXPRESS for door-to-door delivery. - Use of multiple third-party logistics companies.	- Self-built logistics system for improved efficiency. - Intelligent handling and sorting processes. - Big data for predictive analysis and fast return services.	- Logistics evaluation system for continuous improvement. - Expanded logistics network with third-party logistics. - Use of AI and AR for product visualization.
Inefficiencies	- Lack of effective logistics and distribution networks. - Unstable transportation timeliness during promotions. - Low degree of standardization in logistics operations	- Weak logistics infrastructure and cumbersome shipping processes. - Prominent logistics and transportation problems with rapid growth.	- No significant issues reported.	- Inconsistent logistics policies affecting customer experience

From the Table 3, the study indicated that the platforms demonstrate varying levels of logistics capability in material flow management, reflecting differences in delivery structures, inventory control, technology utilization, logistics infrastructure, and operational consistency, alongside distinct challenges in network stability, standardization, and customer experience management.

Table 4. Logistics 7Rs

Theme	LAZADA	TIKTOK	JINGDONG	TAOBAO
Right Time	Ensures timely delivery through local logistics partners.	Real-time product information and social media influence for timely delivery.	Fast delivery options and efficient inventory management	Efficient supply chain management and data-driven predictions

Table 4. (Cont.)

Theme	LAZADA	TIKTOK	JINGDONG	TAOBAO
Right Place	Accurate delivery in remote areas with localized services	Door-to-door delivery with FLASH EXPRESS	Extensive logistics network for quick and accurate delivery.	Diverse logistics options for accurate delivery.
Right Product	Offers a wide range of products meeting diverse needs.	Diverse product range with engaging product displays	Genuine products through direct sales model	Wide range of products from small businesses and individuals.
Right Price	Flexible pricing strategy to adapt to market demands.	Controlled pricing within $10-$50 range	Competitive pricing with strict quality control	Flexible pricing based on market data.
Right Channel	Fully managed model with third-party logistics	Fully managed model with third-party logistics	Self-built logistics with third-party support	Self-operated financial platform for diverse payments.
Right Condition	Ensures product quality through appropriate packaging and transportation.	Ensures product quality during transportation	Advanced logistics technology for product quality.	Focus on packaging and protective measures
Right Information	Real-time order tracking and inventory management.	Real-time data monitoring and transparency in logistics	Real-time logistics updates and data-driven insights.	Comprehensive logistics information system with real-time updates

From the Table 4, the study indicated that the logistics performance of LAZADA, TIKTOK, JINGDONG, and TAOBAO can be systematically evaluated across all seven dimensions of the 7Rs framework, highlighting platform-specific strengths and operational practices in delivery timeliness, product availability, pricing strategy, distribution channels, product condition management, and information accuracy.

Table 5. Comparing the Four Companies

LAZADA	TIKTOK	JINGDONG	TAOBAO
- Significant presence in Thailand with localized logistics solutions. - Effective use of JIT systems and third-party logistics. - Needs further investment in logistics infrastructure.	- Innovative social commerce model with real-time interaction. - Relies heavily on third-party logistics. - Needs improvement in information flow management and logistics efficiency.	- Strong overall performance in logistics management. - Self-operated logistics system and advanced technology. - High efficiency in information flow and money flow. - Excellent implementation of the 7Rs principle.	- Increased focus on customer satisfaction and information flow. - Strong investment in localized logistics networks. - Needs improvement in logistics service quality management.

From the Table 5, the study indicated that the four platforms exhibit distinct strategic positions in logistics management, reflecting differences in infrastructure investment, technology adoption, reliance on third-party logistics, service quality management, and overall effectiveness in implementing logistics performance frameworks.

Table 6. Comparing China and Thailand

CHINA	THAILAND
- Emphasis on technology-driven logistics efficiency. - Use of automated warehousing and real-time tracking. - Strong infrastructure and advanced logistics systems.	- Need for more investment in logistics infrastructure. - Challenges in diverse geography and localized logistics solutions. - Growing market with potential for further technological adoption.

From the Table 6, the study indicated that China and Thailand demonstrate contrasting logistics environments, characterized by differences in technological development, infrastructure capacity, geographic challenges, and growth potential, which collectively shape the performance and strategic direction of e-commerce logistics in each market.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

The research focused on the management of four key logistics flows—information flow, money flow, material flow, and their impact on logistics service quality. The study sought to identify the advantages of these companies in improving logistics service quality based on the 7Rs framework. The findings of this study align with existing literature in several key areas. Previous research has consistently highlighted the importance of advanced logistics infrastructure and technology in enhancing e-commerce efficiency. As summarized in Table 7, the current study found that Chinese ecommerce platforms, such as JINGDONG and TAOBAO, benefit significantly from their advanced logistics systems and robust infrastructure, which enable faster delivery times and better inventory management.

Table 7. Comparison of Chinese and Thai E-commerce Platforms

	Information Flow	Money Flow	Material Flow
Chinese Platforms	JINGDONG and TAOBAO have advanced systems for data collection, analysis, and sharing, enabling more informed decisions and improved customer satisfaction.	Established payment systems and integrated financial services allow for efficient payment processing and risk management	Benefit from better infrastructure and technology, optimizing inventory levels, reducing transportation costs, and improving delivery times
Thai Platforms	LAZADA and TIKTOK are improving but still face challenges in data accuracy and timeliness.	Developing payment systems but face challenges related to currency exchange rates and cross-border payment regulations.	Need to address issues such as warehouse capacity and transportation efficiency.

These findings strongly support the arguments of Fomin et al. (2003) and Gupta (2014) that the effective integration of information, money, and material flows is fundamental to achieving superior performance in e-commerce logistics systems. The dominance of Chinese platforms further confirms the conclusions of Wang et al. (2018) and Jiang (2023), who emphasize that advanced logistics infrastructure and technology-driven operations significantly enhance logistics service quality and customer satisfaction. In contrast, the persistent challenges faced by Thai platforms highlight the critical role of infrastructural readiness and system integration in shaping logistics competitiveness.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance logistics service quality in e-commerce platforms. First, platforms should continue to invest in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain to improve information flow, enhance tracking capabilities, and optimize overall supply chain operations. In addition, greater localization of logistics services is essential to effectively serve diverse markets by taking into account cultural differences and varying consumer preferences. As e-commerce transactions continue to expand, platforms must also strengthen payment security by implementing multi-layer security measures and consistently updating network security practices to prevent financial losses and protect consumer trust. Furthermore, optimizing warehousing and distribution systems is crucial for reducing delivery time and increasing operational efficiency; therefore, strategies such as regional warehousing, timely inventory management, and partnerships with local logistics providers should be emphasized. Finally, with the growing volume of online returns, platforms should improve reverse logistics by simplifying return procedures, offering flexible return options, and efficiently managing returned products to enhance customer satisfaction and operational sustainability.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

This study acknowledges several limitations and proposes directions for future research. First, data availability was constrained due to limited access to detailed operational information from the selected platforms. In addition, the scope of the study was restricted to four major e-commerce platforms, which may not fully represent the diversity of the entire e-commerce market. Moreover, the geographical focus on China and Thailand limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions. In light of these limitations, future research could expand the scope by incorporating more platforms and countries to provide a broader market perspective. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to observe trends and changes over time. Furthermore, future studies should investigate the impact of emerging technologies on logistics service expansion and examine the role of customer feedback in improving logistics performance and customer satisfaction. Finally, greater emphasis on customer-centric research, particularly regarding user experience and satisfaction across different platforms, would provide valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

CONCLUSION

The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the logistics management practices of major e-commerce platforms in China and Thailand. The findings highlight the importance of advanced technology, localized logistics services, secure payment systems, and efficient reverse logistics in enhancing logistics service quality. The study's contributions include providing actionable recommendations for improving logistics practices and identifying areas for future research. By understanding and optimizing these processes, e-commerce platforms can improve service quality, meet customer expectations, and gain a competitive advantage in the dynamic e-commerce environment.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest found in this research.

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