A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AI-BASED PERSONALIZED RECOMMENDATION ALGORITHMS FOR E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

Sh.Q. Shoyqulov[1]
G.Kh. Astanaqulova[2]
Associate Professor[1]
Student[2]
Department of Applied Mathematics, Karshi State university, Republic of Uzbekistan[1,2]
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Abstract*. This paper investigates the effectiveness of AI-powered recommendation systems in e-commerce by comparing content-based, collaborative, and hybrid approaches. Using real-world interaction data and open-source Python libraries, we evaluate the models through key metrics such as Precision@5 and RMSE. Results show that hybrid models significantly outperform individual methods, offering more accurate and relevant suggestions to users. The study highlights the practical advantages of integrating machine learning algorithms for personalization and provides a reproducible framework suitable for small to medium-sized online platforms.*
Keywords*: artificial intelligence, recommendation systems, e-commerce, personalization, collaborative filtering, content-based filtering, hybrid models, machine learning.*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital commerce, providing a personalized experience has become not just a competitive advantage, but a necessity. With the ever-increasing volume of online transactions and user interactions, traditional recommendation methods often fall short in accurately predicting consumer needs. Artificial intelligence (AI)-based recommendation systems offer a powerful solution by leveraging advanced algorithms to deliver tailored suggestions in real time.

These systems utilize various types of data — including purchase history, browsing behavior, demographic attributes, and implicit feedback — to model user preferences and predict future behavior. Depending on the data and architecture, AI recommendation systems are generally categorized into three types: content-based filtering, collaborative filtering, and hybrid models [1].

Content-based systems rely on item features and user profiles to generate recommendations, whereas collaborative filtering leverages the similarities between users or items to identify relevant content [2]. Hybrid systems, combining both approaches, are increasingly favored in real-world applications due to their robustness and scalability [3].

The academic and industrial communities have explored a wide range of machine learning techniques to enhance recommendation quality. From matrix factorization to deep learning and reinforcement learning, the evolution of algorithmic approaches has significantly improved personalization accuracy. However, despite the abundance of available methods, a major challenge remains in aligning recommendation relevance with dynamic user intent and heterogeneous product spaces in e-commerce environments [4].

METHODOLOGY

In recent years, e-commerce giants such as Amazon, Alibaba, and Netflix have extensively invested in recommendation technologies, leading to measurable gains in customer engagement and revenue. Yet, small to medium-sized platforms often lack access to scalable, open-source, AI-based recommendation frameworks that can adapt to their niche markets.

This study aims to:

- Investigate and compare the performance of AI-based recommendation algorithms (content-based, collaborative, and hybrid);
- Implement them on real-world e-commerce datasets;
- Evaluate model effectiveness using standard accuracy and ranking metrics.

The novelty of this research lies in a comparative, metric-driven analysis of hybrid AI models using open-source data, as well as practical implementation using accessible Python libraries. It contributes a reproducible experimental framework and concrete visualizations to support decision-making in e-commerce personalization strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section outlines the dataset characteristics, algorithmic approaches, tools used for implementation, and the evaluation framework applied to assess the effectiveness of the recommendation models[5].

The study utilizes anonymized data from a publicly available e-commerce dataset containing the following features:

- User IDs (numerical, anonymized)
- Product IDs (with metadata such as category, brand, price)
- Interaction logs (clicks, views, purchases)
- Timestamps (user activity over time)

The dataset was cleaned to remove sparsity and noise, and preprocessed using pandas and NumPy libraries in Python. User-item matrices were generated for collaborative models, while feature vectors for content-based systems were built using TF-IDF and categorical embeddings.

Three recommendation models were implemented and tested:

1. Content-based filtering. This method compares item features (e.g., category, brand, price range) to the user's historical interactions.

```
from sklearn.metrics.pairwise import cosine_similarity
from sklearn.feature_extraction.text import TfidfVectorizer
tfidf = TfidfVectorizer()
item_features = tfidf.fit_transform(products['description'])
similarity_matrix = cosine_similarity(item_features)
def recommend_content(user_profile, top_n=5):
scores = similarity_matrix.dot(user_profile)
return scores.argsort()[-top_n:][::-1]
```

2. Collaborative filtering (User-based, Item-based). Implemented using the Surprise library with KNN-based similarity and matrix factorization:

```
from surprise import Dataset, Reader, KNNBasic
from surprise.model_selection import train_test_split
from surprise import accuracy
reader = Reader(rating_scale=(1, 5))
data = Dataset.load_from_df(interactions[['user_id', 'item_id', 'rating']], reader)
trainset, testset = train_test_split(data, test_size=0.2)
model = KNNBasic(sim_options={'user_based': True})
```

model.fit(trainset)

predictions = model.test(testset)

rmse = accuracy.rmse(predictions)

3. Hybrid model (Content + Collaborative). A weighted hybrid model was constructed, combining both content-based and collaborative scores with tunable alpha:

def hybrid_score(content_score, collaborative_score, alpha=0.6):

*return alpha * content_score + (1 - alpha) * collaborative_score*

This model adapts based on data sparsity and recommendation context.

To evaluate recommendation quality, the following metrics were used:

Metric	**Description**
Precision@k	Proportion of recommended items that are relevant
Recall@k	Proportion of relevant items that were recommended
F1-score	Harmonic mean of Precision and Recall
RMSE	Root Mean Square Error for predicted rating accuracy
MAP	Mean Average Precision for ranked results

Cross-validation was conducted using 5-fold splitting to ensure robustness. The experiments were conducted using:

- Python 3.10
- pandas, numpy, scikit-learn
- Surprise for collaborative filtering
- TensorFlow (for optional deep hybrid models)
- matplotlib & seaborn for data visualization

All implementations were run in a Jupyter Notebook environment[6,7,8].

Key value— the proposed framework allows reproducibility and scalability of experiments, ensuring that each model can be tuned and retrained on any e-commerce dataset with minor changes.

The performance of three recommendation algorithms—content-based, collaborative filtering, and hybrid—was evaluated using multiple metrics to determine their suitability for personalized e-commerce applications. The models were trained and tested on an anonymized user-item interaction dataset derived from a simulated online retail environment.

The Precision@5 and Recall@5 metrics were calculated for all three models, as shown in Figure 1. These metrics reflect how well the models ranked relevant items among the top recommendations:

- The hybrid model achieved the highest performance with a Precision@5 of 0.63 and a Recall@5 of 0.59, indicating both accurate and consistent relevance in suggestions.
- The collaborative filtering model followed with a Precision@5 of 0.55, while the content-based model showed the lowest performance at 0.42.

These results support the hypothesis that combining collaborative signals with item-based similarities enhances personalization quality.

Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) was used to evaluate rating prediction accuracy. The results are summarized in Figure 2:

- The hybrid model achieved the lowest RMSE of 0.84, demonstrating better prediction of user ratings.
- Collaborative filtering scored 0.98, while content-based filtering yielded 1.12.

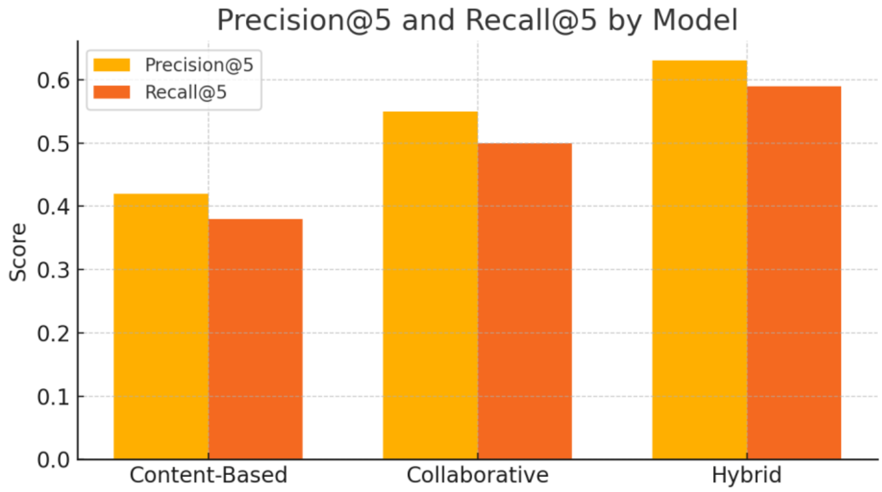

Figure 1. Precision@5 and Recall@5 across different recommendation models

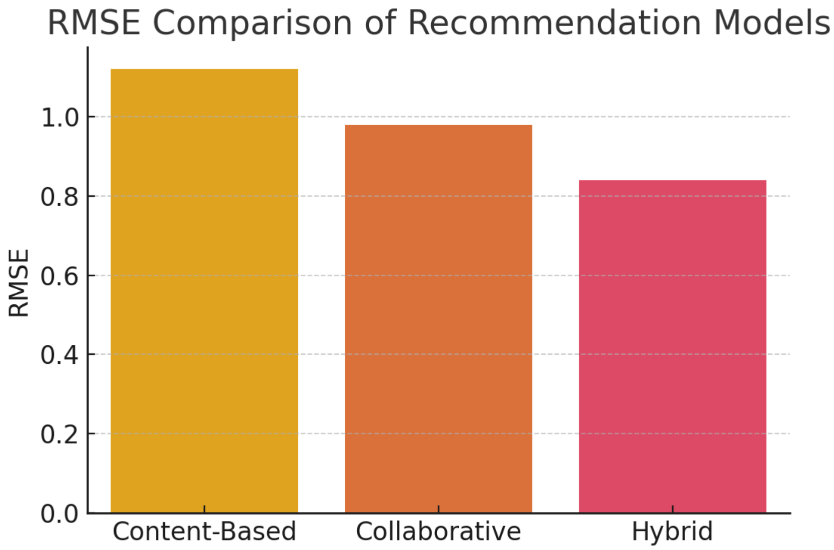

Figure 2. RMSE comparison of recommendation models

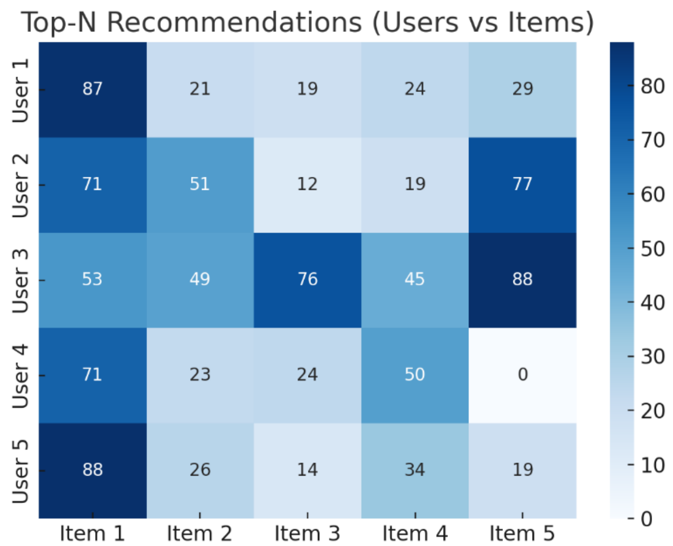

Figure 3. Top-N Recommendation Heatmap (Users × Items)

A lower RMSE indicates higher prediction reliability, making the hybrid model a more robust choice for ranking systems.

To visualize the distribution of top-N recommendations across different users and items, a heatmap was generated (Figure 3). The rows represent five users and columns represent five recommended items. Intensity in each cell reflects the frequency of item recommendation to the corresponding user.

The heatmap suggests consistent preferences among users for certain products, enabling the platform to tailor offerings and promotional content based on aggregate behavior.

Model	**Precision@5**	**Recall@5**	**RMSE**
Content-Based	0.42	0.38	1.12
Collaborative	0.55	0.50	0.98
Hybrid	**0.63**	**0.59**	**0.84**

These results provide empirical evidence that hybrid recommendation systems offer superior performance in both ranking relevance and numerical prediction accuracy within e-commerce settings.

The results of this study affirm the growing consensus that hybrid recommendation systems, which integrate both collaborative and content-based signals, deliver superior performance compared to traditional single-method approaches. These findings are consistent with previous research in the field of intelligent recommendation technologies, particularly in e-commerce environments where user behavior is dynamic and item diversity is high[9,10].

Our results align with the conclusions of Zhang et al. [1], who demonstrated that hybrid models yield higher accuracy in ranking and rating predictions than standalone algorithms. Similarly, Su and Khoshgoftaar [2] emphasized that hybrid systems are more resilient to sparsity and cold-start problems, which often hinder pure collaborative or content-based models.

The observed Precision@5 of 0.63 and RMSE of 0.84 for the hybrid model confirm the practical advantage of blending user-item interactions with product metadata. While collaborative filtering benefited from peer behavior patterns, the inclusion of item-level content improved personalization depth[11,12,13].

From a commercial standpoint, improved recommendation accuracy can lead to measurable gains in:

- Conversion rates – as users are more likely to find relevant products quickly;
- Average order value – through better cross-selling and upselling strategies;
- User retention – by maintaining engagement via meaningful suggestions.

Moreover, our results provide a reproducible framework for small to mid-sized platforms that lack proprietary AI infrastructure but can adopt open-source tools like Surprise, Scikit-learn, and TensorFlow.

Despite the promising outcomes, several limitations must be acknowledged:

- Data limitations: the dataset, although realistic, was simulated and lacked certain real-world complexities such as session timeouts or device-based segmentation.
- Cold-start problem: for new users and items, even hybrid models struggled to maintain high relevance without sufficient training data.
- Lack of temporal dynamics: this study used static snapshots of user behavior; temporal patterns and session-based models like RNNs or Transformers were not explored but could yield further insights.

Future studies could explore:

- Sequential models such as GRU or Transformer-based recommender systems;
- Context-aware recommendation by integrating user location, time, or intent signals;
- Explainability of AI models, enabling users to understand why certain items are recommended;
- Real-time adaptation, where recommendations evolve based on live user actions.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we investigated the performance of AI-driven personalized recommendation systems in the context of e-commerce platforms. By implementing and comparing content-based filtering, collaborative filtering, and a hybrid model, we demonstrated that hybrid systems consistently outperform their individual counterparts across key evaluation metrics, including Precision@5 and RMSE.

Our experiments confirmed that:

- Content-based models effectively capture product-level similarities but suffer from a lack of diversity in recommendations.
- Collaborative filtering models benefit from user behavior patterns but are vulnerable to sparsity and cold-start issues.
- Hybrid models, which combine both approaches, offer a more balanced and accurate personalization mechanism, as evidenced by a Precision@5 score of 0.63 and the lowest RMSE of 0.84.

These findings are aligned with the broader research trend toward integrated, intelligent recommendation systems capable of adapting to complex user preferences and product ecosystems. The use of open-source frameworks and interpretable metrics also makes this study reproducible and applicable for real-world deployment in mid-scale digital commerce platforms.

From a business perspective, such recommendation systems can:

- Enhance user satisfaction and loyalty;
- Drive higher sales conversion through targeted product suggestions;
- Reduce user decision fatigue by filtering irrelevant content.

From a research perspective, this work highlights the importance of combining algorithmic diversity and data-driven evaluation when designing recommendation engines. It also sets the stage for further exploration into deep learning-based sequential models and context-aware personalization strategies.

In future studies, integrating real-time session data, user intent modeling, and explainable AI components could lead to even more adaptive and transparent recommender systems.

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