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CONSUMER COMPLAINTS AS EARLY WARNING SIGNALS OF STRATEGIC RISK ON DIGITAL CONTENT PLATFORMS: EVIDENCE FROM AN EMERGING MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Digital content platforms operate in highly competitive subscription-based markets where poor customer experience can lead directly to churn and damage to reputation. While consumer complaints are commonly framed as expressions of dissatisfaction, their impact within platform-based service environments remains understudied. This study, therefore, investigates unresolved consumer complaints in major digital content platforms that operate in Turkey, focusing on how different dimensions of consumer experiences are articulated in publicly accessible online complaint forums. The data of this study was collected from two different public complaint platforms (Şikayetvar and Ekşi Sözlük), using a qualitative research design. A total of 729 unresolved complaints about Netflix, BluTV, and Prime Video were examined through content analysis using MAXQDA. The findings indicate that operational and technological issues, such as difficulties with subscription cancellation, unauthorized renewals, application instability, and device incompatibility, are more salient drivers of user dissatisfaction than content-related concerns. This suggests that customer experience on digital content platforms is jointly determined by content provision and infrastructural factors such as technical reliability, pricing transparency, and continuity of service.

KEYWORDS: Consumer Complaint, E-Complaint, Digital Content Platforms, Complaint Management, Content Analysis, MAXQDA.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital content platforms have revolutionized consumers' habits of viewing streaming series, movies, and similar forms of digital media by offering an on-demand, personalized, and multi-device experience. The consumer complaints about these service disruptions have now been recognized as an indicator of systemic service issues, which move beyond being merely as post-purchase feedback mechanisms and can affect brand reputation, customer trust, and long-term platform sustainability. Unlike traditional service environments, digital platforms render unaddressed consumer complaints persistent, searchable, and continuously accessible; moreover, the continuity of the user experience depends on the effective functioning of multiple digital touchpoints, including infrastructure, interface usability, content libraries, account security, and subscription mechanisms. This also creates the opportunity where the perception of the complainant will shape the perception of consumers in general. In this regard, online complaints represent not only individual dissatisfaction but also strategic risk signals reflecting deeper disruptions in the customer experience across multiple touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Customer satisfaction has long been regarded as a critical indicator of value-creating marketing activity, which leads to the growing strategic importance of complaint management. Closely linked to the management of customer expectations, customer satisfaction plays a central role in marketing communication by shaping customer loyalty, word-of-mouth (WOM), competitive positioning, and brand image. Effective customer relationship management arises primarily through the successful communication efforts of companies that listen to their customers (Dursun and Yakın, 2019). In digital environments, complaint behavior extends beyond being a feedback mechanism for companies and increasingly functions as publicly visible content disseminated through online platforms, forums, and complaint websites. Research has shown that reviews shared on consumer complaint platforms can spread through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and influence brand perception (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Kietzmann et al. 2011).

The analysis of complaints on digital content platforms is of great importance today as a key indicator of users' evaluation of the quality of service and their experiences. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) demonstrate that online consumer reviews do not

merely serve an information-sharing but also have direct economic consequences. As the visibility of negative online reviews increases, consumers are significantly less likely to make a purchase, leading to measurable sales losses for companies. Thus, their study demonstrates that complaints and negative consumer experiences in digital environments create an actual business risk, which is not merely an abstract reputation problem. The speed that the company responds to customer complaints on social media also heavily influences consumer perceptions. Research shows that when companies respond to customer complaints within a short period of time, the negative sentiments are reduced, and customer satisfaction is greatly increased (Tax et al., 1998; Davidow, 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Conversely, delayed or absent responses reinforce negative attitudes not only in the customer who voiced the complaint but also among other users observing the interaction. This result indicates that social media complaint management is not merely functioning as operational customer relations but rather a strategic reputation and performance issue that affects the brand's overall perception and potential churns (Goh et al., 2013).

This study aims to systematically examine various user problems in digital platforms and provide insights into the complaint management and communication processes. In-depth analyses of widely used platforms such as Şikâyetvar and Eksi Sözlük, as this study focuses on, provide rich insights into how users articulate complaints, the characteristics of complaint content, and the ways platforms respond to these concerns.

In 2024, digital content platforms recorded 354,994 complaints on Şikâyetvar, ranking second among all sectors after e-commerce (Öğütücü, 2025). This figure demonstrates that digital content platforms face significant user-experience challenges and that consumer dissatisfaction is not isolated but increasingly systematic. On the other hand, churn rates in the global streaming market have reached alarming levels. According to Antenna's data, the average monthly churn rate increased from 2% in 2019 to 5.5% by 2024; in fact, in the third quarter of 2023, this rate reached 50% in Over-the-Top (OTT) services, meaning that one in two users terminated their subscription (Brightcove, 2024).

In the present study, a range of commonly cited sources of consumer complaints, such as service quality, customer dissatisfaction, extended processing times, and communication problems, are systematically examined. The language and narrative styles users employ when voicing their complaints

provide important and meaningful insights into user interaction on platforms, making this a crucial point to consider. Therefore, this study takes processes related to complaint resolution, strategies aimed at increasing user satisfaction, and how platforms manage complaints as its key focus areas.

Additionally, effective complaint management in digital environments plays a critical role in enabling service providers to improve service quality and sustain trust. Consequently, a detailed analysis of these processes is observed to be critically important both for improving user experience and for the effectiveness of complaint management systems on platforms.

Overall, this study presents a number of contributions to the existing literature. First, it reframes online consumer complaints not merely as an expression of dissatisfaction, but as strategic risk indicators for digital content platforms operating in highly competitive subscription-based markets. Second, the study contributes to the literature by employing a comparative qualitative design that spans global and local platforms and incorporates data from two distinct public complaint environments, addressing a limitation of prior research that has largely been limited to single-platform analyses. Third, the findings of this study challenge the content-focused emphasis common in previous studies and reveal that operational and technical failures play a more decisive role than content-related concerns. Lastly, by focusing on emerging markets in particular, this study elucidates how global platform strategies are mediated by local economic and cultural conditions as reflected in consumer complaints.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Digitalization and Digital Content Platforms*

Digital publishing covers the digital production of written, audio, and visual content (Delil, 2020). It is a dynamic field that goes beyond the conversion of traditional printed materials into digital formats and refers to the process of designing, publishing, and distributing content to a wide audience through electronic media. This modern approach to publishing enriches static text with multimedia elements such as video, audio, and links, transforming the reader experience into an interactive dimension. Digitalization is not merely a technical data transformation; it is defined as the integration of technology into existing business

models, social relationships, and communication forms, thereby enabling these structures to become faster, more measurable, and more efficient (Gartner, 2020). Reis et al. (2020) highlight that digitalization is not limited to transforming analogue information into digital bits; rather, it involves a broader transformation process in which digital technologies and data produce outcomes such as revenue generation, transformation of business processes, value creation, and the development of new digital business environments.

This digitalization process has fundamentally transformed the structural characteristics of traditional media and mass communication tools and thus given them new functional dimensions. With this technological evolution, traditional media such as radio, television, and print have been integrated into computer-based systems; thus, the concept of publishing has been transferred to the Internet ecosystem and taken on a new form (Pelenk Özel and Yılmaz Sert, 2015).

Digital content platforms are socio-technical systems that integrate users, content creators, and advertisers within a single ecosystem, enabling the production, distribution, circulation, and monetization of cultural and media content through a unified online infrastructure (Nieborg and Poell, 2018). Platform studies conceptualize these services not simply as “applications,” but as emergent infrastructural systems that both enable and constrain communication and expression at scale. Accordingly, platform-based services are increasingly acquiring characteristics of infrastructure, while infrastructures are reorganized on the logic of platforms (Plantin et al., 2018).

Digital content platforms integrate Internet infrastructure with traditional broadcasting to offer an interactive experience. They also increase content diversity and thus develop customized content recommendations for different user expectations. Although sports content is the main driving force behind the proliferation of these platforms in the Turkish market, there is also significant demand for niche areas such as documentaries, series, and films. In this context, the key factors determining platform choice are the quality and quantity of curated content offered and the cost performance of service (Yurdakul, 2016).

2.2 *Global and Local Dynamics in Digital Publishing*

The digital publishing ecosystem is a symbiotic relationship between technological infrastructure and content strategy. Founded in 1997 and

completing its digital transformation in 2007, Netflix has reached 223 million subscribers as of 2022 with its sophisticated personalization algorithms and award-winning original content (Barr, 2011; Ulukan, 2022). However, Netflix's success is not limited to content alone; Gomez-Urbe and Hunt (2015) note that the platform's personalization and recommendation system prevents over \$1 billion in churn each year. Since 2020, Amazon Prime Video has emerged as a distinctive actor in the Turkish market by combining its streaming subscription with broader retail advantages as part of an ecosystem strategy (Sarı, 2021; Mayo, 2022). As for the local market, BluTV rose to a leading position with a 44% market share in 2021 by producing projects such as *Masum*, Turkey's first streaming series, and integrating traditional live broadcasts into its digital platform (Yıldırım, 2021; Dönmez, 2022). According to Jenner (2018), these types of platforms dismantle the impositional structure of traditional streaming by granting viewers "curatorial" authority and individualizing broadcasting.

Although the number of studies highlighting content diversity and recommendation algorithms as the key drivers of the platform's success is increasing, this perspective tends to underestimate the role of operational reliability and service continuity. In subscription-based digital environments, even minor technical glitches or non-transparent pricing practices can overshadow satisfaction with the content and trigger immediate churn.

2.3 Consumer Complaint Behavior

Consumer complaint behavior refers to a range of responses, including voicing dissatisfaction to the seller, engaging in negative WOM, and appealing to third-party entities. Singh (1988) classifies consumer complaint behaviors as communicating dissatisfaction to the retailer or manufacturer, negative WOM in the private circle, and third-party action. With digitalization, complaint websites and forums have gained visibility, and complaints have become a more public and lasting type of content.

With the digitalization process, consumers' media consumption habits have shifted from traditional broadcasting to digital broadcasting platforms that offer on-demand content. The growing competitive pressures among platforms have made consumer preferences and complaint behavior more central in consumer dissatisfaction. Cevher and Çubuk (2023) illustrated that "content richness" and "ease of use" were the most important criteria in choosing a digital platform. When these expectations are not met (e.g., technical glitches, insufficient amount of content, or

difficulties in the subscription cancellation process), consumers exhibit various complaint behaviors.

Digital platform users are more likely to actively use digital channels rather than traditional methods when they experience platform dissatisfaction. Complaints are generally grouped into three main categories:

- *Direct Voice Response*: Users seeking solutions through the platform's live support lines or email services.
- *Negative eWOM*: Sharing the experience with the public via platforms such as Şikayetvar.com, Ekşi or social media (X, Instagram). The social proof inherent in digital environments means that negative reviews exert a direct influence on potential subscribers' decision-making (Cheung and Lee, 2008).
- *Exit Behavior*: Cancellation of subscription. The prevalence of non-commitment subscription models on digital platforms shifts consumer responses away from complaint behavior and toward churn.

Johnen and Schnittka (2019) argue that complaint management in online environments is not only a customer service task but also a strategic competitive tool for protecting brand image. In highly competitive digital content markets (e.g., Netflix, Prime Video, BluTV), timely and solution-oriented responses to consumer complaints play a critical role in restoring consumer confidence. In contrast, limited access to customer support or persistently unresolved technical problems may trigger strong negative emotional responses, potentially escalating into brand hatred, which can quickly spread through digital networks (Marangoz, 2023).

Existing research typically treats online complaints as post-consumption reactions or communicative acts; however, in platform-based services with low switching costs, complaints may signal irreversible trust erosion rather than compensation-seeking behavior.

2.4 Related Research

Research in Turkey has mainly relied on content analysis of complaint data from platforms such as Şikayetvar and on user preference determinants, while international studies have adopted more technically oriented approaches to complaint management, notably sentiment analysis and churn prediction.

Kayakuş and Sine (2025) applied text-mining methods to a dataset of 1,400 user-generated comments sourced from social media and app store platforms in Turkey, with Netflix as the primary focal

platform. The research revealed that user satisfaction was shaped not only by content but also by technical infrastructure, subscription pricing, and customer service. Thematic expressions such as "script," "series," and "character" increase satisfaction, while price increases trigger adverse sentiments.

In a related study, Cevher and Çubuk (2023) compared Netflix, Disney+, BluTV, and YouTube using the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and the Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution (TOPSIS). The findings indicate that "content richness" is the primary factor underlying complaints and preferences, followed by "ease of use" and "variety of children's content." Most of the complaints focus on the insufficient content or interface errors.

In a study conducted by QUID (2022), user comments posted on social media platforms concerning digital content services such as Netflix and Disney+ were analyzed. The findings indicate that the primary sources of consumer dissatisfaction were service interruptions, content removal, and the discontinuation of popular series. HBO received the lowest reliability score due to interface errors and app crashes, while Netflix was selected as the platform with the most negative sentiment due to price increases.

Fiarni and Cellose (2024) analyzed 32,000 user reviews with sentiment analysis and demonstrated that consumer complaints consistently converged around three core dimensions: technical performance (e.g., application instability and image quality), economic factors (perceived misalignment between subscription fees and value), and content-related limitations (a lack of original content).

Despite extensive attention to the determinants of consumer dissatisfaction on digital content platforms, prior research predominantly frames consumer complaints as descriptive endpoints, rather than as embedded structural risk indicators that signal systemic vulnerabilities within platform-based service ecosystems. Consequently, a more theoretically grounded reconceptualization of online consumer complaints is essential to advance research on digital platforms.

2.5 The Re-Conceptualization of Online Complaints in Platform Economy

In highly competitive digital platform markets, unresolved consumer complaints take on a function beyond feedback mechanisms. Public visibility, permanence, and algorithmic retrievability transform consumer complaints into salient reputation risk signals that shape evaluations among

both current users and potential subscribers. From this perspective, online complaints represent more than isolated dissatisfaction; they serve as early warning signals of systemic breakdowns across multiple customer experience touchpoints.

Building on this conceptualization, the analysis of unresolved consumer complaints must extend beyond thematic categorization to systematically incorporate their contextual and discursive construction. Accordingly, this study adopts a qualitative research design to systematically analyze publicly available consumer complaint narratives across multiple digital platforms, as such narratives provide rich, unsolicited accounts through which emerging strategic risks can be meaningfully identified and interpreted. The following section summarizes the data, analytical procedures, and methodological framework of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

Consistent with the conceptualization of online complaints as publicly visible signals of customer experience breakdowns, this study employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative design is particularly well suited to capturing the contextual meanings, interpretive practices, and discursive patterns through which consumers articulate dissatisfaction. Accordingly, the analysis centers on publicly available, unresolved complaints, enabling an in-depth examination of how dissatisfaction is constructed and communicated across digital content platforms and complaint forums.

The analytical prioritization of unresolved complaints rests on their capacity to signal enduring, structural deficiencies in the customer experience rather than temporary dissatisfaction. Whereas resolved complaints typically reflect issues that have been mitigated through service recovery or perceptual recalibration, unresolved complaints expose persistent breakdowns in the technical, operational, and managerial infrastructures of digital content platforms. As such, unresolved complaints constitute a critical empirical perspective through which points of customer experience failure and the progressive erosion of user trust can be systematically identified and examined.

In line with Creswell's (2017: 4) qualitative inquiry framework, the research process unfolds through a systematic and iterative sequence of phases, beginning with the formulation of research questions and analytic procedures, followed by the collection of data in naturalistic settings. The analysis proceeds inductively through the identification of recurring patterns and themes in the data, with meanings

progressively constructed through interpretive engagement.

3.1 Scope and Significance of the Study

The increasing availability of Internet access in Turkey and the widespread use of smartphones in households have significantly increased interest in digital content platforms. Young users, in particular, prefer to watch series and movies via online platforms rather than traditional television broadcasts. While digital content platforms substantially enhance access to content, insufficient attention to customer experience frequently manifests in user complaints. Addressing and effectively resolving these complaints is critical to ensuring customer satisfaction and, consequently, developing customer loyalty. Within this framework, the main purpose of the study is to investigate user complaints on digital content platforms. By doing so, the findings offer empirically grounded insights that inform how digital content platform managers can reconfigure service delivery processes to mitigate strategic risk and improve user experience.

3.2 Methods

The research was conducted based on online complaints directed at the three platforms with the highest user prevalence and market visibility among digital content platforms operating in Turkey as of 2023. The data was obtained from publicly available complaints and user narratives on the Şikayetvar and Ekşi Sözlük platforms.

The deliberate integration of two distinct public complaint channels enables a comparative analysis of how online consumer dissatisfaction is articulated

across differing communicative logics. Şikayetvar represents an institutionally structured complaint environment oriented toward resolution and formalized company–consumer interaction, whereas Ekşi Sözlük constitutes a less regulated public forum in which users narrate their experiences through more interpretive, affect-laden, and discursively open forms of expression. This contrast allows the study to capture variation in both the tone and meaning-making practices through which dissatisfaction is publicly constructed.

Analysis of user-generated content on the Şikâyetvar platform allows for a systematic investigation of both the content and discursive structure of consumer complaints. The data consists of a variety of cases in which users articulate dissatisfaction with digital platforms, allowing analytical depth and comparative insight. These complaints have been analyzed as part of a structured categorization and classification process given the underlying nature of the problems reported. Alongside this, data from Ekşi Sözlük, a widely used online forum where users share opinions and experiential accounts, were incorporated to capture broader interpretive framings and informal evaluations of platform-related experiences. The complaints circulating in this environment reveal users' dissatisfaction with products and services, while also reflecting the platform's unique communication style. The main elements to be analyzed include the linguistic structure of the complaints, the density of their content, and the level of detail in the shared experiences. The data collected from these platforms were analyzed through a four-stage analytical procedure.



Figure 1: Flow Diagram of Data Collection.

Content analysis was employed to systematically organize the dataset and to identify overarching themes, categories, and subcategories relevant to the research objectives. As a rigorous analytical approach, content analysis enables the systematic examination of qualitative data through theoretically and analytically defined coding categories (Geray, 2004: 133). In this approach, data that exhibit semantic similarity are systematically classified around specific concepts and themes; these concepts and themes are then organized and interpreted within a coherent structure that enables clear comprehension by the reader (Yıldırım and Şimşek,

2011: 227).

3.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study examines user complaints directed at digital content platforms that remained unresolved between January 1, 2024, and August 31, 2024. This period corresponds to a phase of relative operational stability in the Turkish digital content market, during which platform usage practices were well established and widely understood by users. The selected time frame was therefore intentionally chosen to reduce the influence of atypical technical disruptions, short-lived promotional campaigns, or platform-specific

crises, allowing the analysis to capture routine patterns of consumer dissatisfaction rather than episodic anomalies.

This study has several limitations. First, the empirical material is drawn exclusively from Şikayetvar and Ekşi Sözlük, and the veracity of user-submitted complaints is assumed rather than independently verified. Second, the findings are temporally bounded and reflect only the dynamics of digital complaint expression at the time of data collection.

3.4 Coding System and Analysis

The data of this study were analyzed using MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software. The

complaint texts were subjected to a detailed, systematic examination, with each complaint individually coded to enable thorough categorization. Categories were derived inductively, grounded in the thematic focus of the complaints, ensuring that codes directly reflected the issues raised by consumers. This coding process followed an approach developed directly based on the complaint texts (Creswell, 2017). As a result of the coding, complaints were evaluated individually, grouped under themes based on their similarities, and the process of creating main and sub-themes was carried out. Consequently, a total of 4 main themes and 32 sub-themes were identified. Information about the main and sub-themes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Main and Sub-Themes of Complaints.

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES (Customer Complaints Translation)
Content-Related Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Censorship of content • Ads being shown in content • Repeated actors and similar themes appearing in content • Content that promotes anti-Turkey propaganda • Removal of content without informing customers • Content containing profanity, sexual material, or violence • Improperly translated or subtitled dubbing • Lack of Turkish dubbing or subtitles • Too few live channels • Insufficient amount of content • Lack of up-to-date content
App / Platform-Related Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems connecting to the app • Cannot download content to computer • Requiring internet connection to watch downloaded content • Unusable app or confusing user interface • Content not loading • Family plan limited to a single IP address • Security issues • Subtitle/dubbing synchronization and related problems • App and Smart TV incompatibility (TV not supporting platform) • Low video quality • Audio problems • Need to relaunch app or content repeatedly • Freezing and interruptions
Customer Service / Technical Support Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to reach support channels • No response to messages (email/live support) • Insufficient resolution of complaints • Rude customer service / technical support
Cancellation Process & Billing Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscription cancelled but still being billed • Renewals and charges without customer's knowledge • Duplicate charges • High subscription fees and frequent price increases

3.5 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, the concept of validity and reliability is related to the extent to which the collected data and the interpretations based on this data correctly

reflect the true conditions of the individuals, groups, and institutions under investigation. The records and interpretations produced during the entire process of research are regarded as valid to the degree that they truthfully represent reality, and reliable if the results

produce consistent and similar findings when other researchers carry out the research using similar sets of circumstances (Karagöz, 2017). Accordingly, ensuring credibility, validity, and reliability constitutes a fundamental requirement for establishing the scientific rigor of qualitative inquiry.

Validity in qualitative research is largely achieved through consistency, which refers to the internal coherence of data grouped under themes and the ability of these themes collectively to explain the findings within the scope of the study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). In this research, thematic patterns were derived through systematic coding and iterative comparison across the dataset, and the coherence of themes was evaluated in relation to the overall analytical framework. This process strengthened the credibility and internal consistency of the findings by ensuring coherent thematic interpretation across the dataset.

One factor that strengthens the validity of the research is the researchers' long-term and intensive interaction with the data (Argan and Dursun, 2020). In line with this practice, the study examined complaints covering a long period of time, and the data were reviewed and analyzed repeatedly during the coding process. To ensure the validity of the findings, data from multiple sources were systematically compared, revealing a high degree of consistency in complaint content across these datasets.

The coding process was independently performed by two researchers, and inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa coefficient. Cohen's Kappa coefficient (Cohen, 1960) is a widely recognized metric for evaluating agreement between evaluators in

qualitative research. The analysis produced a Kappa value of 0.88, demonstrating excellent reliability and confirming the objectivity of the coding procedure.

4. FINDINGS

The findings show that complaints directed at digital content platforms do not point to a single area of dissatisfaction. The explored themes are an expression of users' perceptions of content delivery in some cases and, in other cases, an expression of their experiences related to platform users and their relationship processes and trust systems. The findings presented below have been described taking these different dimensions of experience into account. The number of complaints collected from Şikayetvar and Ekşi Sözlük is as follows

Table 2: The Number of Complaints.

	Şikayetvar	Ekşi Sözlük	Total
BluTV	194	71	265
Netflix	171	126	297
Prime Video	62	107	177
Total	427	302	729

A total of 729 complaints were examined in detail based on the emergent complaint themes. During the analysis process, negative words, phrases, and emphases that frequently recurred in user complaints were evaluated. While some user complaints were found to only fall within a single main theme and sub-theme, some complaints were found to be linked to multiple main themes and sub-themes. Based on this analysis, the general distribution of codes for the three digital content platforms is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of Complaints.

Coding System	BluTv	Netflix	Prime Video	Total	
Content-Related Complaints					Total
• Censorship of content	0	0	29	29	284
• Ads being shown in content	0	0	7	7	
• Repeated actors and similar themes appearing in content	0	19	0	19	
• Content that promotes anti-Turkey propaganda	0	10	0	10	
• Removal of content without informing customers	1	6	9	16	
• Content containing profanity, sexual material, or violence	5	9	2	16	
• Improperly translated or subtitled dubbing	0	12	21	33	
• Lack of Turkish dubbing or subtitles	4	27	24	55	
• Too few live channels	15	0	0	15	
Insufficient amount of content	21	34	15	70	
• Lack of up-to-date content	2	10	2	14	
App/ Platform-Related Complaints					
Problems connecting to the app	15	8	1	24	355
Cannot download content to computer	2	3	0	5	
Requiring internet connection to watch downloaded content	25	0	1	26	
Unusable app or confusing user interface	23	1	20	44	

Content not loading	15	3	7	25	
Family plan limited to a single IP address	0	39	0	39	
Security issues	5	4	3	12	
Subtitle/dubbing synchronization and related problems	13	16	16	45	
App and Smart TV incompatibility (TV not supporting platform)	13	39	1	53	
Low video quality	16	4	3	23	
Audio problems	1	2	4	7	
Need to relaunch app or content repeatedly	14	0	2	16	
Freezing and interruptions	31	0	5	36	
Customer Service / Technical Support Complaints					
Inability to reach support channels	18	21	9	48	116
No response to messages (email/live support)	11	1	2	14	
Insufficient resolution of complaints	32	9	3	44	
Rude customer service / technical support	6	3	1	10	
Cancellation Process & Billing Complaints					
Subscription cancelled but still being billed	42	16	8	66	184
Renewals and charges without customer's knowledge	39	14	4	57	
Duplicate charges	2	14	3	19	
High subscription fees and frequent price increases	1	41	0	42	
TOTAL	372	365	202	939	

Complaints about content reflect users' perceptions and expectations about the content delivery they expect from digital content platforms. Complaints grouped under this theme focus on the expression of experiences in the public domain addressing the diversity, currency, and degree of localization of content provided by the platforms.

Application-related complaints capture users' dissatisfaction with the technical performance and functional usability of platforms during active engagement. This theme emphasizes the critical importance of delivering a seamless, accessible, and reliable service experience, distinct from issues related to content delivery.

Complaints about customer service and technical support reveal users' experiences with the communication and support processes they engage in with the platform when encountering issues. The statements expressed within this theme highlight how experiences related to the support mechanisms and user-platform interaction is articulated in the public discourse.

Complaints related to cancellation processes and billing reflect users' experiences with contractual relationships and financial processes with the platform. This theme focuses on making user experiences visible in relation to billing, cancellation, and fee practices, independent of content delivery or application performance.

Table 3 presents a thematic analysis of complaints across three digital content platforms, revealing that the most frequently cited issues pertain to the application itself, while complaints regarding "Customer Service and Technical Support" are notably the least common. Within sub-themes,

"Insufficient amount of content" emerges as the predominant concern, followed by complaints about "Subscription cancelled but still being billed" and "Renewals and charges without customer's knowledge." Conversely, users reported the fewest difficulties with "Cannot download content to computer," alongside "Audio problems," which also rank among the least reported issues.

Comparative analysis of the total complaints across the platforms indicates no significant disparity; however, BluTV received the highest number of complaints, whereas Prime Video registered the fewest. These findings suggest that while user experiences across platforms shared core problem areas, the frequency with which these issues were reported varied.

The analysis performed using MAXQDA software generated a Code Matrix Browser, which facilitates a comprehensive comparative evaluation of the selected companies. By visually and quantitatively mapping the distribution of themes and sub-themes across platforms, the Code Matrix Browser enables a nuanced understanding of the prevalence and variation of complaint types. This visualization illuminates both commonalities and divergences in thematic patterns across digital content platforms.

The visual developed for a comparative analysis of the three digital content platforms in this study presents the distribution of complaint themes across platforms from a holistic perspective, thereby facilitating the interpretation of the findings. This comparison offers insights into strategic decision-making processes and the improvement of the service quality of digital content platforms.

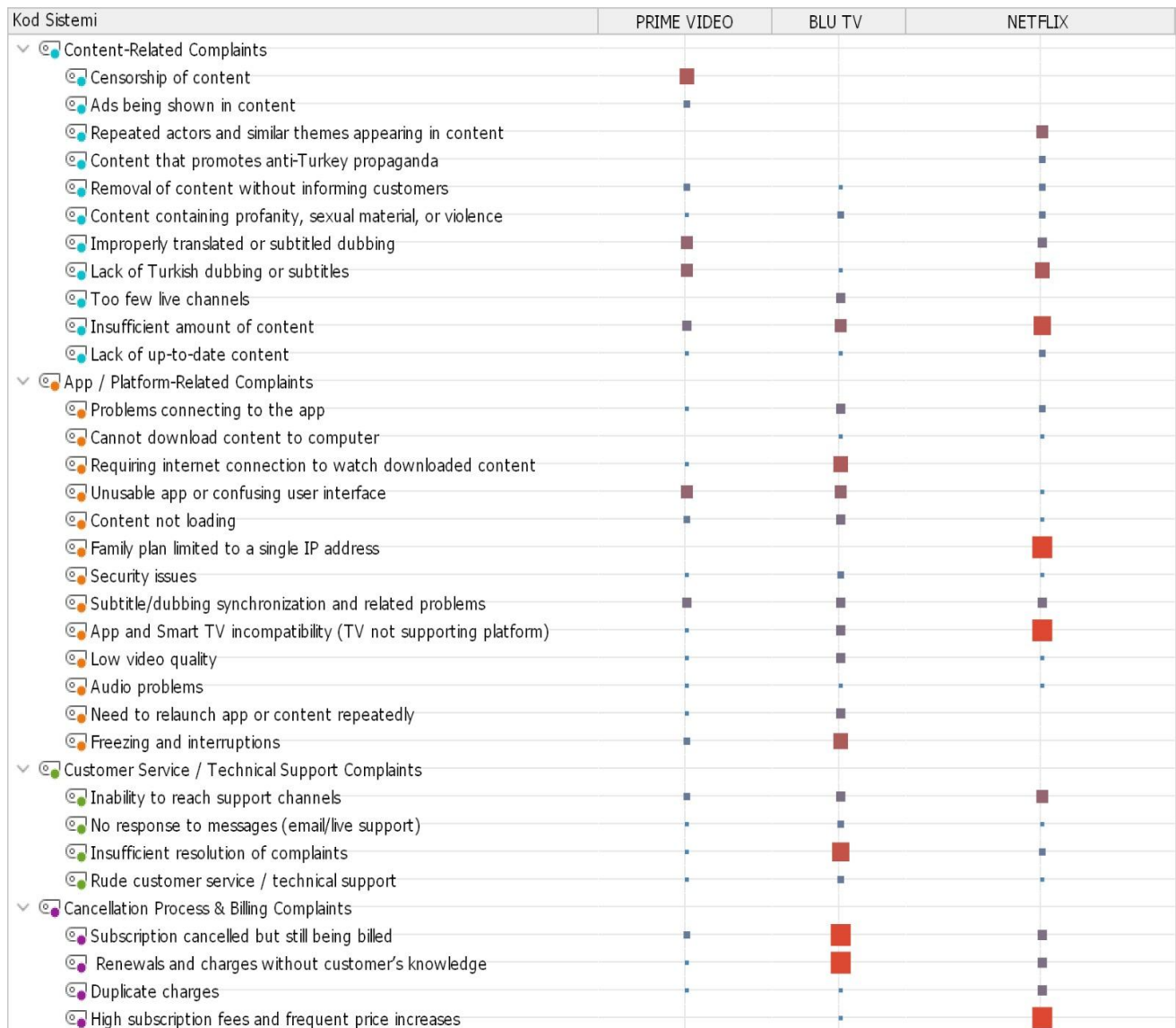


Figure 2: The Code Matrix Browser.

In the Code Matrix Browser, the columns represent different documents, and the grid size formed by the sub-themes in the rows indicates the frequency of the relevant code in that document. Accordingly, as the squares get larger, it indicates that the code in question is repeated more frequently in that document. Based on this interpretation, Figure 1 shows that the most common complaint about BluTV was "Subscription cancelled but still being billed". The predominant complaint for Netflix centers on 'high subscription fees and frequent price increases,' a concern that similarly emerges as the most significant issue among Prime Video users.

Single-Case Model was used to examine complaints about codes under the main themes of each digital content platform in more detail. It is an analytical approach that aims to reveal the memos, codes, and code segments for the selected case. In this

model, codes linked to a document are connected to each other by lines; the density of the lines indicates the weight and degree of importance of the relevant code within the document. An increase in line density indicates that the code represents a more dominant problem area within the document.

The Single Case Model, developed through a systematic analysis of user complaints about digital content platforms, reveals the key sub-themes prioritized by users and the relationship among these themes. As illustrated in Figure 3, the Single Case Model for BluTV offers a comprehensive visual framework that highlights the primary problem areas associated with BluTV. This model provides actionable insights to inform and enhance platform policies and practices, ultimately aiming to improve the overall customer experience.

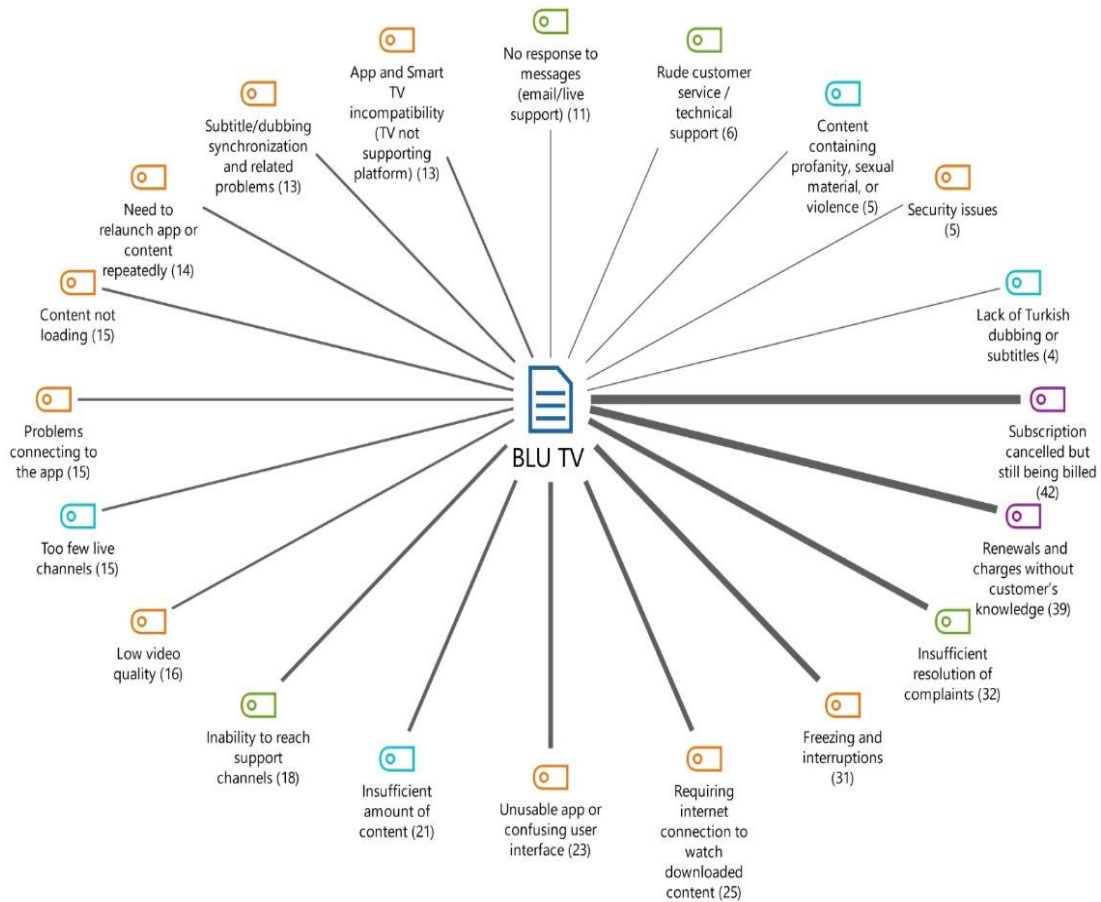


Figure 3: Single Case Model for BluTV.

Analysis of the Single Case Model for BluTV revealed that the most prevalent complaint sub-themes, ranked by frequency, were "Subscription cancelled but still being billed", "Renewals and charges without

customer's knowledge", "Insufficient resolution of complaints", and "Freezing and interruptions".

The single case model based on the analysis of complaints about Netflix is presented below

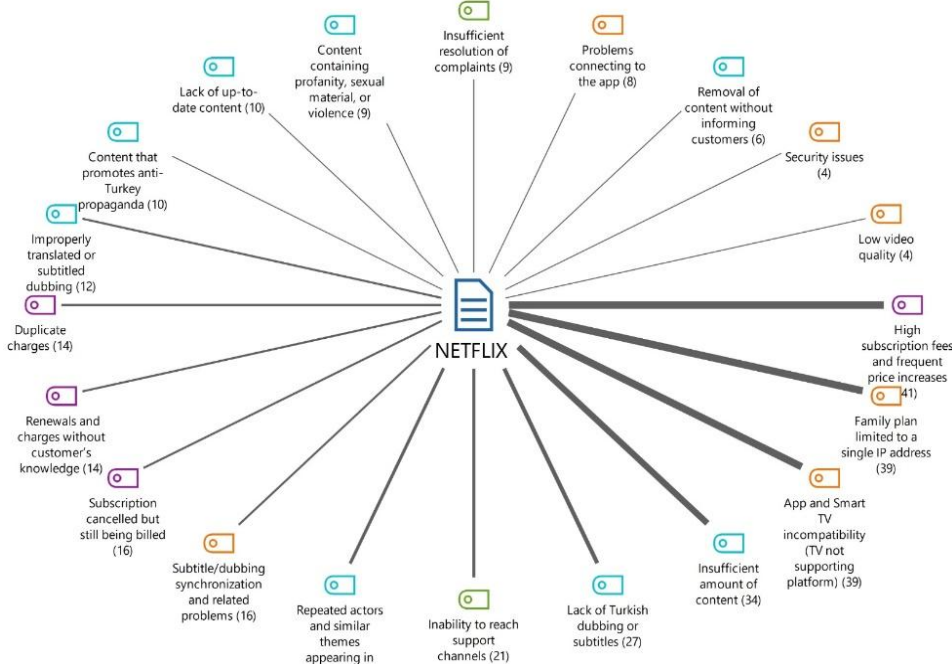


Figure 4: Single Case Model for Netflix.

Analysis of the single case model for the Netflix Digital Content Platform revealed that the predominant sources of user dissatisfaction were “High subscription fees and frequent price increases,” “Family plan limited to a single IP

address,” “App and Smart TV incompatibility,” and “Insufficient amount of content.”

The single case model based on the analysis of complaints about Prime Video Digital Content Platform is presented below.

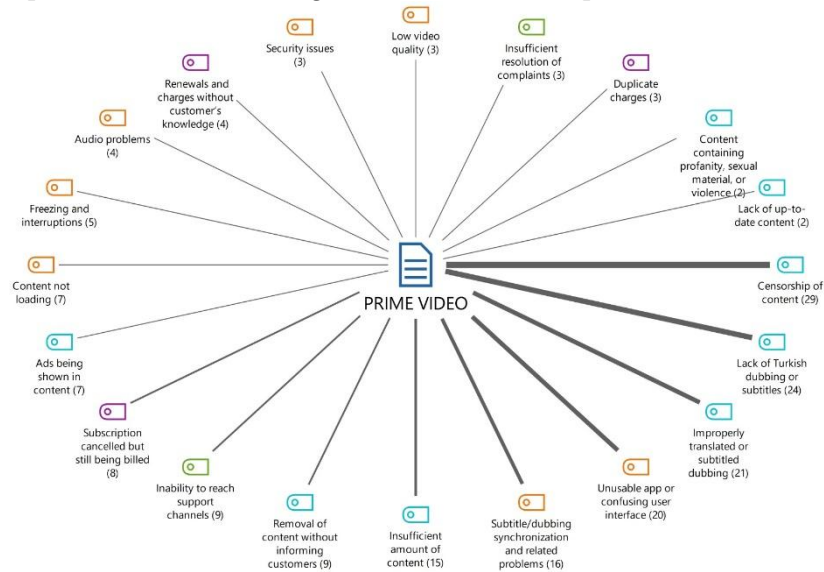


Figure 5: Single Case Model for Prime Video.

Based on the model for Prime Video, the sub-themes derived from the most complaints were “Censorship of content,” “Lack of Turkish dubbing or subtitles,” “Improperly translated or subtitled dubbing,” and “Unusable app or confusing user interface.”

5. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that consumer complaints about digital content platforms extend far beyond isolated incidents of dissatisfaction, revealing deeper structural tensions inherent in platform-based service models. The findings show that user dissatisfaction is multifaceted, shaped not only by content expectations but also critically influenced by technical reliability, transparency in contractual terms, and platform management practices. By integrating these dimensions, this research challenges prevailing paradigms in digital media and customer experience that tend to prioritize content as the primary determinant of user satisfaction. The findings also suggest a shift in the balance of influence within digital platform ecosystems, where audiences are no longer passive recipients of content but increasingly active agents shaping platform reputation, trust, and service expectations through public complaint practices and networked feedback mechanisms.

Furthermore, the results concerning the central role of content quality and usability in shaping user

satisfaction on digital content platforms remain largely consistent with previous research. Earlier studies have demonstrated that content richness and ease of use constitute key criteria in platform selection, and that unmet expectations in these areas frequently give rise to complaint behavior (Cevher and Çubuk, 2023). Similarly, research in the Turkish market indicates that user satisfaction is influenced not only by content offerings but also by the robustness of technical infrastructure, pricing strategies, and the effectiveness of customer support processes (Kayakuş and Sine, 2025). Complementing literature on the growing influence of online complaint forums and eWOM, this research positions consumer complaints as strategic public statements that significantly shape brand reputation and competitive positioning (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Johnen and Schnittka, 2019).

While existing studies primarily emphasize content-related factors as the primary determinants of user satisfaction on digital content platforms, the findings of this study point to a different dissatisfaction model. While content-related complaints remain prevalent, a substantial proportion of user dissatisfaction predominantly stems from challenges associated with application performance, inefficiencies in customer support, and problematic post-cancellation billing practices. This pattern shows that operational reliability and transparency in contractual terms exert a more

profound influence on user experience than has been acknowledged. These findings suggest a shift from a predominantly content-focused perspective to a more comprehensive understanding that emphasizes the critical role of platform management and service delivery in shaping consumer dissatisfaction.

This study examined 729 complaints posted between January 1 and August 31, 2024, targeting the three dominant digital content providers in Turkey, BluTV, Netflix, and Prime Video. The analysis shows that customer satisfaction in digital publishing is influenced by a complex interplay of factors extending beyond content diversity to include financial transparency, technical reliability, and the quality of localization. Notably, the data indicate that App / Platform-Related complaints constitute the largest category, with 355 coded instances. This finding highlights persistent technical deficiencies that not only disrupt the user experience but also fundamentally undermine the core digital content delivery promise of "content anytime, anywhere." Prevalent on BluTV related issues including "Subscription cancelled but still being billed" (66 complaints) and "Renewals and charges without customer's knowledge" (57 complaints) emerge as significant drivers eroding consumer trust. These observations align with the existing consumer behavior literature, in which flexible, non-commitment subscription models are likely to catalyze "exit behavior" as the predominant consumer response to service failures.

The predominant complaints directed at Netflix, including "high subscription fees" (41 complaints) and restrictions such as the "family plan limited to a single IP address" (39 complaints), highlight a fundamental tension between global corporate policies and the specific economic realities of the local market. In contrast, the most significant user complaints about Prime Video center on "censorship of content" (29 complaints) and "lack of Turkish dubbing or subtitles". Consumers who migrated from the coercive nature of traditional publishing to digital platforms find censorship practices contrary to the freedom-oriented nature of the platform. Consistent with Lemon and Verhoef (2016), our findings show that the customer experience construct is holistic in nature. Technical issues such as application freezing, interruptions, or improperly translated subtitles and dubbing (45 complaints) can significantly diminish the perceived quality of the platform's content and adversely affect overall brand perception. Equally consequential is the difficulty of reaching customer support (48 complaints). When issues remain unresolved, users increasingly express

their dissatisfaction through publicly visible negative discourse on platforms such as Ekşi Sözlük, a phenomenon identified as "brand hatred."

In conclusion, the systematic examination of complaints about digital content platforms is of critical importance for enhancing user satisfaction and ensuring the long-term sustainability of these platforms. This study analyzed structurally distinct platforms, Şikayetvar and Ekşi Sözlük, to illuminate how users articulate their complaints, the substantive characteristics of these complaints, and users' perceptions of problem resolution. The findings indicate that users predominantly expect rapid responses and that complaints are frequently linked to personalized user experiences and the customer service policies of the platforms.

In light of the analysis in this study, the following strategies are proposed for platform managers.

- **Subscription Transparency:** Local platforms such as BluTV should simplify subscription cancellation procedures to minimize complaints related to the "cancellation process" and provide users with a digital confirmation upon completion of the transaction.
- **Device Optimization:** To address issues of application and Smart TV incompatibility (53 complaints), platforms should pursue closer integration and collaboration with hardware manufacturers.
- **Service Quality:** Rather than relying on standardized responses to user complaints, platforms should establish a personalized and solution-oriented technical support structure capable of mitigating perceptions of "insufficient resolution of complaints" (44 complaints).
- **Content Localization:** To maintain their competitive position in the Turkish market, Prime Video and Netflix should subject subtitle synchronization and translation quality (33 complaints) to a standardized and continuous quality-control mechanism.

Although "insufficient amount of content" (70 complaints) appears to be the most visible risk factor for digital content platforms in Turkey, the primary driver of churn is in fact technical and operational failures. The long-term sustainability of these platforms depends on viewing user complaints not merely as error reports, but as strategic data sources for improving service quality. The implementation of the strategies proposed in this study is expected to contribute substantially both to the development of digital content platforms and to enhanced user satisfaction. Adopting a more holistic approach, one that captures user needs not only through complaints

but also via feedback mechanisms, surveys, and direct communication channels, can enable platforms to anticipate and mitigate potential problems before they emerge, thereby helping to maintain consistently high levels of user satisfaction.

The Turkish context further complicates standardized platform policies that are typically designed for high-income, personal subscription markets. Applications such as IP-based household restrictions, framed as global standards by platforms like Netflix, are perceived differently in contexts characterized by shared household structures, price sensitivity, and collective consumption practices. In Turkey, where subscription fees constitute a relatively higher proportion of household income,

such policies are often perceived as unfair or exclusionary, thereby exacerbating distrust rather than promoting user compliance.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that platform management strategies developed at the global level may generate unintended tensions when implemented in emerging markets. Standardized policies related to pricing, access, and account management do not operate as neutral technical arrangements; instead, they become sites of negotiation shaped by local economic conditions and cultural norms. On this basis, consumer complaints function as critical indicators of how the global platform logic is reinterpreted, contested, and renegotiated at the local level.

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