

ISMC 2022
17th International Strategic Management Conference**PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY CUSTOMERS AFTER SALES
THROUGH DIGITAL SHOPPING PLATFORMS**Kasım Yılmaz (a)*
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Abstract

Digital technologies are dynamically changing the way of doing business. Digital shopping platforms are networks that bring many sellers and customers together, where all stakeholders are interdependent and continuous multilateral interaction experienced. Customers who use digital platforms for shopping in fact interact with several product and service suppliers. The sale and consecutive delivery, assembly, warranty or return services of a service/product over digital platforms are related with more than one business. The problems experienced in this process shape the customer's opinion of the company that produces and sells the product. Digital shopping platforms present new opportunities and threats for both sellers and buyers. In this research, it is aimed to reveal the problems about post-sale customer shopping experience using digital platforms. The customers' comments posted on digital shopping platforms were examined by the content analysis method. As a result of the research, it was revealed that problems intensified in some sub-themes of distribution, product quality, exchange/return procedures, service, and customer service themes. It can be suggested that the stakeholders of the digital shopping platform should strive to eliminate the problems especially in product quality and distribution areas, and also should improve the coordination among themselves.

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1. Introduction

According to the Digital 2022 Global Overview Report (Hootsuite, 2022), the number of mobile phone users worldwide reached 5.31 billion, the number of internet users is 4.95 billion, and the number of active social media users reached 4.62 billion. It was determined that the generation Z spends an average of 3 hours a day on social media, and they fulfill most of their needs from entertainment to shopping by making use of these channels. Worldwide, 63% of internet users own a computer and 96% own a smartphone. Internet users stay on the Internet for an average of about 7 hours per day. In 2021, global online retail sales exceeded US\$ 5 trillion in total. 20% of total retail sales were made online. (Statista, 2022)

Customer use of the internet has had a significant impact on traditional sales and marketing strategies and business operations. Companies have had the opportunity to develop sales and marketing strategies that rely solely on physical sales/display points by conducting product information, advertising, and sales transactions on their own websites. Mobile technology and digital advancements have revolutionized the way in which businesses operate. Response development times for businesses have decreased, and it is now extremely quick and simple for customers to obtain information on vendors and products.

Rapid technological advancements are altering and transforming seller-customer relationships. Thanks to these technologies, sellers and customers can interact regardless of time or location constraints. Smart shopping devices enable interaction on a vast network and make it possible to offer more personalized products and services to customers (Yılmaz & Temizkan, 2020). Especially as a result of social media, shopping is no longer merely a relationship between a seller and a customer; rather, it has become a multi-interaction of networks of sellers and customers. Thanks to digital advancements, the widespread use of the internet affords countless research and evaluation opportunities regarding customer satisfaction, interests, and tendencies in relation to cloud technology, internet of things, and big data applications (Kurter et al., 2021). This situation modifies the nature and intensity of business competition. With their disruptive innovations, digital technologies radically alter the structure of competition and lead to the emergence of new business models (Klein, 2020). Traditional marketing techniques are being replaced by social media marketing techniques that allow for multilateral interaction. Customer network behavior styles open up new channels for digital marketing.

Before and after sales, dynamic interactions between customers in the digital environment shape their relationships with businesses and shopping habits. Customers are no longer viewed as sales targets, but rather as target groups, brand or product supporters, or innovation partners who create dynamic customer networks (Rogers, 2016).

Despite advancements in digital technologies, marketing remains customer centric. Customer satisfaction, customization of service, consideration of customer requests, a positive conclusion to the shopping process, the reduction of potential problems and their prompt resolution continue to be of paramount importance. Customer satisfaction is a major factor in determining the success of online sales (Kütük, 2021).

When shopping online, consumers act with the intention of acquiring the product that best meets their needs, at the most affordable price, among numerous alternatives, whenever they desire, quickly.

İşler et al. (2014) found that a customer's personal characteristics and past experiences, both their own and those of others, influence their online shopping intentions and decisions.

One of the most important factors determining the intention in online shopping is the comments made by other customers about their shopping experiences in the digital environment. These comments are applications that are easy to access, risk-free and make it possible to share many experiences. These evaluations are among the basic data that affect the shopping intention of undecided buyers positively or negatively. When considered in terms of sellers, it is an excellent tool that can be used to detect the problems experienced in the process that businesses create through their sales and marketing networks.

In this study, the problems encountered following the sale of two technically equivalent products via a digital shopping platform are compared using the content analysis method, with customer feedback considered. The purpose of this study is to determine whether the preference for using a shopping platform affects post-sale problems. Competition force companies to develop strategies to transform themselves into more digital, customer-centric and integrated omni businesses (Kruh & Freedman, 2017). Customer preferences and real time needs are still the basis for decision making process that shapes competitive strategies.

Digital disruptions force companies to adopt more customer-centric approach to maintain competitiveness. Retailers' downstream activities are mostly related with customer retention, value, product and service personalization, and customer loyalty (Gupta & Ramachandran, 2021). Digital platforms bring customers, sellers and many stakeholders in specific sectors together. More research is needed to find out what type of problems customers encounter while doing shopping through digital platforms. This study aims to contribute to strategic management literature by revealing customer dissatisfaction areas in digital platforms.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Digital Shopping Platforms

Digital shopping platforms are defined as an ecosystem of tools that bring together sellers and buyers on the internet, can be integrated with the tools that sellers will use, offer advertising and marketing advantages for businesses, and enable sectoral grouping. Shopping platforms offer the ability to research and compare products and services, as well as facilitate sales and payment transactions (PayTr, 2022).

The platform is the name given to the business model in multilateral markets (Rogers, 2016). In fact, it is not just product sellers who are brought together with customers on the shopping platform. In order for the real value of online shopping to be created for customers, the platform itself, suppliers, stock management, credit providers, businesses that make up payment systems, distribution companies and service networks must work in perfect solidarity and harmony with each other. If this cannot be realized, it will be inevitable to form negative opinions about the product, service, brand or platform. Negative experiences are one of the factors that have an immediate impact on customer satisfaction. Not only the product, but also the performance of the shopping process, including distribution, should meet customers' expectations (Alam & Yasin, 2010). According to research, online sales improve service quality and

reduce costs for businesses. Customers may be concerned about their personal and financial security when shopping online. Additionally, they are concerned with the prompt and secure delivery of the product they select (Al-Jahwari et al., 2018). In this regard, shopping platforms must demonstrate their dependability in every way. Digital shopping platforms that experience network disruptions result in dissatisfaction with the product, brand, service, or process, which is reflected to the sellers.

Internet technologies enable digital shopping platforms to transform trade and logistics operations, reducing delays and costs in the process and creating more economic benefits. Platforms ensure that customers not only shop from a wide range of options, but also interact with the parties in the process. At the conclusion of this procedure, customer satisfaction generates additional interactions with the business. Uncertainty about the product and concerns about the security of personal information are the primary risk factors in online shopping until the product is received (Tran, 2021). On the other hand, platforms can offer some price advantages on their own, in addition to the discounts offered by sellers. Typically, these opportunities are created to take advantage of economies of scale through high sales volumes. On these platforms, where there are numerous sales transactions, the customer can find more affordable prices and gain an economic advantage.

According to studies, trust and perceived risk are among the variables that influence the intention to shop on digital platforms (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Generally, risk factors include post-purchase elements. These elements include on-time, undamaged, and defect-free product delivery, achievement of the expected quality level, installation, technical service, return exchange procedures, and warranty terms and durations.

Numerous digital shopping platforms serve various industries, including tourism, food, durable consumer goods, and book sales. If the platforms can demonstrate their recognition and functionality, they will assume a pivotal role in the sector. In fact, e-commerce platforms make it possible for intermediaries to facilitate sales and generate revenue from these transactions. It creates such a valuable interface between customers and vendors that businesses cannot ignore the opportunity to reach customers via the platform. Because using the shopping platform makes a significant contribution to its competitiveness (Rogers, 2016). However, if there are problems arising from the platform in shopping, or if there are problems in network coordination, these become not only a problem of the platform but also of the entire network, and everyone, especially the sellers, suffers the negative consequences. Why do businesses have to work with shopping platforms when vendors collaborating with the platforms already have their own web pages? The answer to this question lies within the behavioral characteristics of customers who are accustomed to online shopping. Customers find it appealing to have access to digital information about all alternatives rather than just one, and they are interested in interactive data and collaboration. Customers' individual preferences can be detected by the digital world, which can then provide instantaneous feedback on products and services tailored to them. Interaction through social media and websites has become the preferred mode of communication (Rogers, 2016).

2.2. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is an emotional response that occurs at the conclusion of a process that determines whether or not customers' expectations for products and services are met (Eminler et al.,

2019). Customers who are pleased with the shopping experience develop brand and business loyalty and promote brands and businesses through word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth marketing has a significant impact on a company's competitiveness (Yıldız & Tehci, 2014). Social media and digital shopping platforms are the most crucial locations for word-of-mouth marketing in the present day. On these platforms, customers interact with one another by expressing their opinions and complaints regarding their experiences. The emergence of positive feelings in the customer at the conclusion of the shopping experience is an indication of customer satisfaction (Rust & Oliver, 1994, p. 113). As social beings, humans favor sharing both positive and negative emotions. In this regard, the digital realm offers customers countless opportunities. Extensive research was conducted on the relationship between customer satisfaction and product/service quality, corporate and brand images, and positive relationships were discovered between quality perception and customer satisfaction (Kırcova et al., 2020).

After using or consuming the product or service, customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction results from the consumer's reaction to the gap between the product's or service's expected and actual performance (Ercan, 2019). Customer satisfaction is the reaction of the consumer to the perceived difference between their pre-consumption expectations for a product and the product's actual performance after consumption.

Online shopping is distinct from conventional shopping in numerous ways. Customers can quickly and easily access information thanks to technology. As with shopping in a physical store, no one attempts to convince the customer face-to-face on the Internet, so they cannot be influenced. The client is quite free on the Internet. In traditional shopping, the consumer can easily access the experiences of hundreds of customers he has never met while gathering information, since he knows only a small number of people who have previously used the product he intends to purchase. Negative comments and complaints are actually indications that sellers have not resolved the issues that customers encountered with their products and services (Uzun, 2018). Responsive sellers should maintain the channels necessary for these complaints to reach them, and they should be able to effectively resolve issues.

Product/price comparison, selection and payment has become easier than ever before in shopping via digital platforms. Issues affecting customer satisfaction occur especially in the process after the sale. In addition to the quality elements, the delivery of the product, the tracking of the distribution, the quality and ease of interaction with customer services when needed affect customer satisfaction and future shopping intention (Cao et al., 2018). Returns, replacement, service, and warranty issues have a significant impact on customer satisfaction, especially for durable home appliances. Because the price of the product is quite high for a customer with a middle-income, the customer's dissatisfaction increases if the complaint is not resolved and they cannot receive compensation. When a customer feels helpless, they express their feelings most effectively on shopping and complaints-related platforms.

For sellers, customer comments on digital platforms and complaints and evaluations made on social media platforms can serve as an incredible resource in terms of being customer-oriented as long as businesses are sensitive to these evaluations and produce solutions to the specified problems with corrective actions. Reviews are interactions with customers. Being customer-oriented means that businesses direct their activities by taking into account the expectations of customers in all their processes (Açan & Erdil, 2007). Comments and customer complaints can be considered as important data banks that

can be used in decision-making processes for businesses. Kayabaşı (2010) identified return, order processing, packaging, product description, and customer service as the factors most responsible for dissatisfaction with online shopping. Customers who have not experienced any issues or whose issues have been resolved will have a high level of brand or business loyalty. According to studies, companies that retain 5 percent of their current customers can increase their profitability by as much as 125 percent (Alabay, 2012). In this context, digital shopping platforms, in which customer networks are formed in a unique way, serve as a large data repository from which vendor businesses can draw meaningful conclusions about customer behavior and trends.

After the online sale is made, timely distribution and delivery, order tracking, product expectations and customer support gain importance. Guaranteeing the expected features after physical contact with the product, which is preferred and purchased according to the information given over the platforms, directs the general satisfaction level and future behavior of the customers. According to studies, the quality of post-shopping experiences influences customer satisfaction more than pre-shopping experiences (Alzola & Robaina, 2010). Therefore, businesses must concentrate on identifying and resolving the issues that generate negative gaps between expectations and performance. Customer satisfaction after a shopping experience is largely determined by whether the product meets expectations, the distribution and delivery are problem-free, and the customer support processes are executed effectively, easily, and quickly (Jiang & Rosenbloom, 2005).

3. Research On Negative Customer Comments After Shopping on Digital Platforms

3.1. Purpose and Scope of the Research

By investigating the after-sales processes, the study aims to reveal the negative experiences of customers who shop on digital platforms. To this end, a content analysis was conducted on the comments and ratings that offer the opportunity to interact with customers who shop via digital platforms. The study includes the feedback of customers who purchased a particular durable electronic home appliance between specified dates. On the basis of these comments, the study determined the most common issues customers encounter when shopping on digital platforms.

3.2. Research Method

Customers who purchased a domestic (A product) and a foreign brand (B product) smart television with equivalent technical features through one of Turkey's leading digital shopping platforms comprise the study's universe. The selection of smart television as a product is due to the fact that it permits a more detailed examination of the customer's feelings regarding after-sales services. In the food industry, for instance, you cannot evaluate after-sales factors such as service or warranty.

The research sample consists of all negative remarks made about these products. Negative comments were made between 09.02.2020 and 15.06.2022 for product A, and between 22.11.2021 and 11.06.2022 for product B. Customer ratings consist of five stars. Three-star reviews indicate a moderate level of customer satisfaction, while four- and five-star reviews are disregarded because they indicate

customer satisfaction. Negative sentiments (one and two-star evaluations) expressed in the comments were categorized and analyzed under the headings of distribution and delivery, product quality perception, return/exchange procedure, service, and customer service according to the contents and the pertinent literature. These dissatisfaction statements are then subjected to a content analysis (Alzola & Robaina, 2010; Jiang & Rosenbloom, 2005; Kayabaşı, 2010).

In the social sciences, content analysis is a method for analyzing data that includes the meanings that a group or culture attributes to particular phenomena in a given context. Its purpose is to draw valid and reproducible conclusions from content data. Analysis of media content, open source intelligence gathering, political studies, social sciences, literature, and education are the primary applications of content analysis (Krippendorff, 1989). The combination of big data and digitalization has enabled the use of content analysis on textual, visual, and auditory sources. Content analysis is a technique that can be used to both prove the theory and create a data-driven theory (Stemler, 2015).

Content analysis is a technique that provides a conceptual model for describing a phenomenon. Analysis of content can be inductive or deductive. If no prior research has been conducted on the researched phenomenon, inductive content analysis (Lauri & Kyngäs, 2005) is preferred, and deductive content analysis is preferred when testing a previously studied phenomenon and theory in a different situation or time period (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

On the basis of this information, deductive content analysis was chosen, and the content of negative comments was categorized as main and subthemes, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Themes of Factors That Have a Negative Effect on After-Sales Customer Satisfaction

Main Theme Code	Main Themes	Subtheme Codes	Subthemes
1	Distribution and Delivery	1.1.	Sloppy Packaging/Shipping
		1.2.	Damaged/Missing Item
		1.3.	Wrong product
		1.4.	Broken product
		1.5.	Late delivery
2	Product Quality Perception	2.1.	Dissatisfaction with expected quality
		2.2.	Inadequate Information About Product Features
		2.3.	Price/Performance Ratio Weakness
		2.4.	Failure in a Short Time
3	Exchange/Return Procedures	3.1.	Exchange/Return Refusal
		3.2.	Exchange/Return Period Length
		3.3.	Exchange/Return Difficulty
4	Service	4.1.	Inability to Solve Problems
		4.2.	Paid Installation
		4.3.	Service Poor Quality
		4.4.	Indifference of the Service
		4.5.	Delay in Service
5	Customer Services	5.1.	Indifference
		5.2.	Inability to Solve Problems

Source: (Alzola & Robaina, 2010; Jiang & Rosenbloom, 2005; Kayabaşı, 2010).

4. Findings

On a well-known online shopping platform, the negative shopping experiences of customers who purchased smart televisions from the category of durable electronic household goods were analyzed. A domestic brand (A) and an international brand (B) were selected as products. The technical specifications of these two products are roughly equivalent; however, product A is priced approximately 3000 TL less than product B.

Information about all the evaluations made for product A is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Evaluations for Product A

Evaluation Quality	Number of Evaluations (f)	Ratio by Total Evaluation (%)
5 Stars	3691	79,2
4 Stars	569	12,2
3 Stars	170	3,6
2 Stars	48	1
1 Star	187	4
Total	4665	100

According to Table 2, there are 235 negative customer comments about after-sales processes, which represents 5% of the total number of comments. The average rating of product A's general evaluation is 4.6 out of a possible 5.

The evaluations of product B are detailed in the following table.

Table 3. Evaluations for Product B

Evaluation Quality	Number of Evaluations (f)	Ratio by Total Evaluation (%)
5 Stars	378	84,4
4 Stars	42	9,4
3 Stars	9	2
2 Stars	4	0,9
1 Star	15	3,3
Total	448	100

As shown in Table 3, there are 19 negative customer comments regarding the after-sales processes for product B, which represents 4.2 percent of the total comments. The average score for product B's general rating is 4.7 out of 5. According to the data presented in the tables, the average rating of both products and the ratio of negative to general comments are remarkably similar. The opposite is true of the general evaluation numbers. The total number of evaluations for product A (4665) is roughly 10 times that of product B (448). This situation can be evaluated as follows: product A is a previously introduced product that is more popular and sold than product B.

The tables below compare the data on the main and subthemes for both products.

Table 4. Data Related to ‘Distribution and Delivery’ Main and Subthemes

1. DISTRIBUTION AND DELIVERY				
Subtheme Codes/Names	Product A		Product B	
	Number (f)	Ratio (%)	Number (f)	Ratio (%)
1.1. Sloppy Packaging/Shipping	9	11,9	1	50
1.2. Damaged/Missing Item	44	57,9	1	50
1.3. Wrong product	1	1,3	0	0
1.4. Broken product	16	21	0	0
1.5. Late delivery	6	7,9	0	0
Total	76	100	2	100

According to Table 4 data, it is seen that negative customer comments about product A are mostly concentrated in the subthemes of damaged/missing product (57.9%), defective product (21%) and sloppy packaging/shipping (11.9%). On the other hand, the low number of negative comments regarding the distribution and delivery theme in product B (2) draws attention.

Table 5. Data Related to the ‘Product Quality Perception’ Main and Subthemes

2. PRODUCT QUALITY PERCEPTION				
Subtheme Codes/Names	Product A		Product B	
	Number (f)	Ratio (%)	Number (f)	Ratio (%)
2.1. Dissatisfaction with expected quality	69	57,1	9	82
2.2. Inadequate Information About Product Features	4	3,4	0	0
2.3. Price/Performance Ratio Weakness	15	12,4	0	0
2.4. Failure in a Short Time	23	19,1	2	18
Total	121	100	11	100

According to Table 5, products A and B had the highest rate of customer dissatisfaction with expected quality (57 percent and 82 percent, respectively). Experiencing a product malfunction in a short period of time is regarded as the second most dissatisfying factor.

Table 6. Data Related to the ‘Exchange/Return Procedures’ Main and Subthemes

3. EXCHANGE/RETURN PROCEDURES				
Subtheme Codes/Names	Product A		Product B	
	Number (f)	Ratio (%)	Number (f)	Ratio (%)
3.1. Exchange/Return Refusal	5	17,2	0	-
3.2. Exchange/Return Period Length	7	24,1	0	-
3.3. Exchange/Return Difficulty	17	58,7	0	-
Total	29	100	0	-

According to Table 6. data, it was determined that there was no negative evaluation regarding the replacement and return procedures in product B, while the highest rate was experienced in the subtheme of difficulty in exchange and return (58.7%) in product A.

Table 7. Data Related to the ‘Service’ Main and Subthemes

4. SERVICE				
Subtheme Codes/Names	Product A		Product B	
	Number (f)	Ratio (%)	Number (f)	Ratio (%)
4.1. Inability to Solve Problems	8	29,7	0	-
4.2. Paid Installation	3	11	0	-
4.3. Service Poor Quality	8	29,7	0	-
4.4. Indifference of the Service	5	18,6	0	-
4.5. Delay in Service	3	11	0	-
Total	27	100	0	-

Examining Table 7 reveals that there is no negative evaluation of the service contact for product B, and that product A had the highest rate of notifications under the subthemes of inadequate problem resolution and poor service quality with equal values (29.7 percent).

Table 8. Data Related to the ‘Customer Services’ Main and Subthemes

5. CUSTOMER SERVICES				
Subtheme Codes/Names	Product A		Product B	
	Number (f)	Ratio (%)	Number (f)	Ratio (%)
5.1. Indifference	5	35,8	0	-
5.2. Inability to Solve Problems	9	64,2	0	-
Total	14	100	0	100

Table 8 reveals that there was no negative feedback regarding the customer service contact for product B, whereas the subtheme of product A's inability to solve problems received the highest rate of negative feedback (64,2 percent).

5. Discussion, Conclusion And Recommendations

The general evaluation scores of products A and B with equivalent technical characteristics differed significantly. The subtheme values automatically reflect this distinction. Dissatisfaction with the expected quality and the rapid reporting of problems in the subthemes of malfunctions are characteristics shared by both products. This indicates that, despite the brand change, there are problems in some common areas of sales made through the digital sales platform. These concerns appear to be especially related to quality.

It can be seen from the customer reviews for both products that approximately 95% of the evaluations were positive. Numerous complaints concern the occurrence of damaged/missing product during distribution and delivery. The customer does not care whether this issue was caused by the seller, the platform, or the cargo company. As an impression, the client focuses on the brand. Therefore, it can be stated that sellers should also be mindful of the business partners of the e-commerce platform with which they collaborate. Regardless of the origin, every damaged or missing product will be detrimental to the seller's company or brand image. Defective product issues that are not the result of shipping errors are a significant issue that must be addressed directly by the seller. Because the subject identifies flaws in the enterprise's production functions.

In actuality, every business attempts to conduct its sales and marketing transactions through every possible channel, including its own website, wholesalers or retailers in the industry, and its own chain of stores. Digital sales platforms are one of these channels, and possibly the most crucial one for sellers. The seller must be able to offer the product to its customers in all channels at the same price, quality, guarantee, service, and return conditions. This requires coordinated effort. Negative reports indicate, even at extremely low rates, that product installation is a paid service, that warranty periods are shorter, and that returns and exchanges are more difficult for sales made through platforms as opposed to purchases made directly from the seller company. These complaints are issues that undermine the seller's and the platform's credibility.

The subheadings of the replacement/return procedure theme also express the complexity of these procedures. The complexity of exchange and return procedures in the category of high-priced electronic household goods greatly frustrates customers. Because if the return periods are lengthy or the procedures are complicated, the paid product amount is held and cannot be used until a determination is made. The customer is left with the unresolved issue of being unable to place a new order until they are notified of the return/exchange decision. For this reason, the platform or sellers must be able to make prompt decisions regarding return/replacement requests, and they must communicate effectively with customers. The customer must be persuaded that those involved are sincerely attempting to resolve their problem and make amends for their errors. This experience will shape the intention to shop using the same channels again at the conclusion of the process. Complaints about the service center primarily on the subthemes of indifference and incapacity to resolve issues. Services are typically supplied by businesses that work directly with vendors, as opposed to platforms. Consequently, disruptions in service services may have negative effects on the company and its brand image.

The majority of customer service contact comments concern inadequacy in problem-solving. However, customer service functions as the businesses' eyes and ears. Customer service interactions with customers shape a focus on the customer. When customers experience a disruption as a result of negative reviews, they contact the customer service departments of both the vendors and the digital platforms they employ, and they find multiple interlocutors. These multiple applications can be interpreted as a sign that customers feel powerless to solve their problems. Despite the fact that digital platforms are a mechanism that creates value through the flawless operation of a network comprised of many parties, they should find a single interlocutor with the customer and be able to solve their problems through this channel.

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