

American University Kyiv

A Capstone Project

THE NATURE OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS IN ELECTRONICS RETAIL: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RETAIL NETWORKS AND INDEPENDENT STORES

ПРИРОДА КЛІЄНТСЬКИХ СКАРГ У РОЗДРІБНІЙ ТОРГІВЛІ ЕЛЕКТРОНІКОЮ:
ПОРІВНЯЛЬНИЙ АНАЛІЗ МЕРЕЖЕВИХ ТА ОКРЕМИХ МАГАЗИНІВ

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the nature of customer complaints in electronics retail in Ukraine. The aim of this research is to identify dominant complaint categories, compare complaint patterns across store types, and derive operational insights from these differences. It examines which complaint categories dominate, how complaint patterns differ between retail chains and independent stores, and what these differences suggest about service and operational practices.

This research uses a quantitative approach through the collection and analysis of negative customer reviews from Google Maps over a one-year period for selected stores. The sample included six retail chains and nine independent stores in Kyiv. Reviews were manually categorized into seven complaint categories and analyzed through descriptive comparison across stores and store types.

This research is based on the concept of customer loyalty, the concept of customer experience, and Social Exchange Theory. These approaches suggest that customer loyalty and behavior are shaped by the quality of interaction with the company, operational experience, and perceptions of mutual value in customer–company relationships.

The key findings identify Customer Service Behavior as the dominant complaint category in retail chains and show the absence of a single dominant complaint category among independent stores. This suggests a higher level of standardization in retail chains and a stronger influence of store-level factors in independent stores. These findings contribute to the existing academic literature and deepen understanding of complaint patterns in electronics retail.

Keywords: electronics retail, customer complaints, customer experience, online reviews.

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the Research

In the context of digital consumer behavior, online reviews play an important role in shaping customer perceptions of companies and their service performance. According to the BrightLocal Consumer Review Survey (2023), Google remains the most popular platform for leaving reviews, and 45% of consumers reported that they had written a Google review in the past year. This shows that a significant amount of reputational information is concentrated on this platform. Academic research confirms that online reviews have a statistically significant impact on consumer trust and purchase intentions (Rachmiani et al., 2024). Studies also show that consumers are more sensitive to negative information than to positive feedback. As a result, public complaints can create higher reputational risk for companies and may influence overall brand perception.

Market analysis of the Ukrainian electronics sector indicates that consumers have become more attentive to service conditions and brand reputation (Inweb, 2025). In this competitive environment, retail performance depends not only on pricing strategies but also on service quality and effective management of service and operational processes. Therefore, analyzing the structure of negative reviews and customer complaints can help identify critical operational problems and support retailers in improving service quality and overall competitiveness.

Problem Statement

Previous research shows that online reviews influence consumer trust and purchase decisions. However, most studies focus on the general effect of positive and negative reviews and do not analyze specific categories of customer complaints. There is limited empirical evidence on how different complaint categories are structured within a specific industry and how these patterns differ across types of retail stores. In the electronics retail sector, negative reviews often arise from specific operational problems such as product quality issues, aggressive sales practices and pressure to purchase additional services, delivery problems and operational failures, pricing and transparency issues, customer service behavior, and warranty or return problems. However, it is not clearly understood which complaint categories dominate negative feedback, whether complaint patterns differ between large retail networks and independent stores, and whether stores within the same network show similar complaint structures. Therefore, there is a need for a structured

analysis of complaint categories in electronics retail. Such analysis can provide evidence-based insights and support better managerial decisions aimed at improving service quality and operational processes.

Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to analyze the structure of customer complaint categories in electronics retail stores, as well as to compare complaint patterns between large retail networks and independent stores and assess variation within retail networks. By doing so, this research seeks to provide practical insights that can support evidence-based managerial decision-making in the electronics retail sector.

Research Questions

The main research questions outlined in this paper are:

RQ 1. Which categories of customer complaints dominate negative online reviews in electronics retail stores?

RQ 2. How do complaint patterns differ between retail networks and independent electronics stores, and what operational insights can be derived from these differences?

RQ 3. What do variations in complaint structures across stores within the same retail network suggest about differences in service and operational practices?

Theoretical and Practical Significance

The scientific significance of this research lies in conducting a structured quantitative analysis of customer complaint categories in the electronics retail sector. By comparing large retail networks and independent stores and examining variation within retail networks, the study provides industry-specific empirical evidence in the field of service quality management and retail operations management. The practical significance of the research is that its results can support more informed managerial decisions, help companies identify the most critical complaint categories, prioritize service improvements, optimize operational processes, and reduce risks.

Methodology Overview

This research uses a quantitative research design based on content analysis of online customer reviews. The data consist of publicly available negative Google Reviews (1–2 star ratings) collected from selected electronics retail stores in Ukraine over the most recent 12-month period. The sample includes both large retail networks and independent stores. The reviews will be coded into defined complaint categories. To answer the research questions, the research will identify and analyze the most common complaint categories across stores, compare their distribution between large retail networks and independent stores, and examine variation in complaint patterns within the same retail network.

Limitations

- Different geographical areas, as the sample is limited to stores located in one city and one operating environment.
- Internal store data or management records, as the study focuses only on external customer reviews and does not use internal company data.
- Detailed subcategories within complaint categories, such as narrower types of service or operational problems, due to time constraints and limited data.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

1.1 Introduction

With the development of digital interaction channels, customers actively shape the information environment through online reviews and social media.

At the same time, in business practice, negative reviews are often seen as separate incidents rather than as a reflection of systemic problems in company processes. This approach limits the ability to identify the real causes of customer dissatisfaction and reduces the effectiveness of customer experience management.

Existing academic literature mainly focuses on studying the relationships between customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty. However, this approach often ignores the actual content of customer experience and does not allow understanding what specific problems stand behind negative evaluations. This is especially relevant for offline retail, where customer experience is formed through specific operational processes and interaction with staff.

Therefore, the analysis of negative customer reviews can be considered as a tool for identifying systemic problems in company processes. This approach allows moving from the analysis of abstract variables to understanding the real causes of customer dissatisfaction and their impact on customer behavior.

The literature review in this study is structured around key research areas. First, the factors influencing customer loyalty in retail are analyzed. Then, customer satisfaction and customer experience are examined as the basis of customer behavior. Separate attention is given to negative customer experience and service failures as indicators of operational problems. The impact of digital factors and online reviews on customer behavior is also analyzed. In the final part, the results are summarized and key research gaps are identified to justify the need for this study.

1.2 Theoretical Foundations

Customer loyalty in retail is formed under the influence of operational factors and service quality. In particular, both negative events related to service failures and the effectiveness of service recovery have a direct impact on customer retention (Zhu et al., 2024). The quality of logistics processes and service innovations also act as important drivers of loyalty, influencing the

overall customer experience with the company (Zheng et al., 2022; Jaya et al., 2025). This shows that loyalty is formed as a result of multiple operational interactions with the customer.

Customer experience plays a central role in shaping customer behavior, as it determines how customers perceive their interaction with the company at different stages. It reflects the overall perception of interaction, combining functional and emotional aspects, and is related to the level of satisfaction and further customer loyalty (Zhang et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2026).

Social exchange theory explains the formation of long-term relationships between the customer and the company by viewing interaction as a process of evaluating benefits and costs. In this context, loyalty is related to the perception of interaction as fair and beneficial, while negative experience may lead to the termination of further interaction (Ahmad et al., 2023). At the same time, the factors that shape this perception may differ depending on the type of company and product (Goić et al., 2021), which limits the direct generalization of results across different retail sectors.

In the context of this study, these concepts help explain the nature of negative reviews in electronics retail. In particular, negative customer experience at different stages of interaction may lead to lower loyalty and the appearance of complaints. Therefore, the analysis of negative reviews as a reflection of such experience makes it possible to identify key problem areas in retail operations and compare them between retail chains and independent stores.

1.3 Drivers of customer loyalty in retail

Customer loyalty in retail is formed under the influence of operational factors related to service quality and service processes. In particular, both the severity of service failures and the effectiveness of service recovery play an important role in shaping loyalty, as negative experience reduces the likelihood of customer retention, while successful recovery can increase it (Zhu et al., 2024). Similarly, the quality of logistics processes and service innovations act as important drivers of customer behavior, determining the level of their loyalty to the company (Zheng et al., 2022; Jaya et al., 2025). This suggests that loyalty is largely formed through specific operational interactions with the customer. In this context, the analysis and classification of negative reviews makes it possible to identify problem areas that directly affect the perception of service in electronics retail.

Digital interaction also plays a key role in shaping customer loyalty, and its effect is both direct and indirect through relationships between different factors. In particular, web-store characteristics, such as image, as well as general e-retail factors, influence customer retention both directly and through other variables (Soni, 2020; Kumar & Ayodeji, 2021). In addition, the perception of the availability of consumer data is also an important factor in the formation of loyalty (Haji et al., 2025). This shows that in modern retail, loyalty is formed as a result of the quality of digital interaction with customers, not only traditional service characteristics. As shown in Table 1.1, key drivers of customer loyalty in retail include both operational and digital factors.

Table 1.1. *Key Drivers of Customer Loyalty in Retail*

Author(s)	Year	Research Context	Methodology	Key Findings	Relation to RQ
Zhu, Lu, Wu & Tian	2024	Online retail (service failure & recovery)	Empirical survey, quantitative analysis	Service failure reduces customer loyalty, while effective service recovery increases customer satisfaction and subsequently improves loyalty	RQ1
Zheng, Wang, Golmohammadi & Goli	2022	B2C online retailing (logistics & sustainability)	Quantitative analysis	Logistics service quality and sustainability-related services positively influence customer loyalty	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
Jaya, Theng & Al Zaim	2025	Retail pharmacy sector	Quantitative survey, regression analysis	Process innovation is the strongest predictor of customer loyalty; customer service and advertising also positively influence loyalty, but to a lesser extent	RQ1, RQ2
Soni	2020	Online retail (web-store image)	Quantitative research model	Web-store image dimensions influence customer loyalty, with mediating and moderating effects	RQ1, RQ2
Kumar & Ayodeji	2021	E-commerce (India)	Empirical study, survey-based	E-retail factors influence customer retention and activation, which in turn affect customer loyalty	RQ1, RQ2
Haji, Temprano-García & Peluso	2025	Retail channels (consumer data perception)	Quantitative, relational exchange framework	Perceived availability and use of consumer data influence customer loyalty in retail relationships	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3

Source: compiled by the author based on selected studies.

Based on the summary of research results in Table 1.1, it is possible to identify key groups of factors influencing customer loyalty, which are systematized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. *Key Factors Influencing Customer Loyalty in Retail*

Area	Factor	Description	Supporting Studies
Service & operations	Service performance and operational processes	Operational factors play a key role in shaping customer loyalty. In particular, the severity of service failures reduces loyalty, while effective service recovery increases it, and negative experience increases the likelihood of switching stores. At the same time, the quality of logistics processes and service attributes influences service perception, while process innovation is one of the strongest drivers of loyalty. Studies also highlight the importance of identifying key customer requirements to prioritize service improvements.	Zhu et al. (2024); Zhang et al. (2025); Lau et al. (2025); Zheng et al. (2022); Jaya et al. (2025)
Customer experience	Customer experience drivers	Customer experience in omnichannel retail is formed under the influence of factors such as perceived value, ease of use, satisfaction, and integrated services. It has a strong impact on satisfaction and customer behavior. Safety aspects also play an important role, increasing customer well-being and willingness to recommend. In addition, the perceived novelty of interaction channels increases loyalty.	Khalid (2024); Rahman et al. (2026); Frassetto et al. (2024); Zhang et al. (2024)
Customer relationships	Relationship and data-related factors	Activities focused on customer interaction and relational factors play an important role in building effective relationships. In particular, the perception of data availability and use influences customer loyalty.	Plouffe et al. (2026); Haji et al. (2025)
Digital environment	Digital interaction and platform-related factors	Digital factors influence customer loyalty through different mechanisms: online reviews affect purchase decisions and sales, while characteristics of the online environment influence satisfaction and indirectly affect loyalty. Web-store image, e-retail factors, and online strategies influence customer retention, while social media shapes loyalty through interaction with customers.	Floyd et al. (2014); Mofokeng (2025); Soni (2020); Souitaris & Balabanis (2007); Kumar & Ayodeji (2021); Ferm & Thaichon (2021)

Source: compiled by the author based on selected studies.

The results summarized in Table 1.2 show that customer loyalty is formed under the influence of different groups of factors related to service processes, customer experience, and the digital environment. At the same time, these factors appear at specific points of interaction with customers, where customer complaints arise.

1.4 Customer satisfaction and customer experience in retail

Customer satisfaction can be seen as a post-purchase evaluation of the experience with a product or service, which is formed by comparing customer expectations with the perceived quality (Guido, 2014). The level of satisfaction depends on the degree and direction of this difference: a positive experience increases satisfaction, while a mismatch with expectations leads to dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction is formed under the influence of a wide range of factors related both to functional service characteristics and to customer interaction. In particular, elements such as security, privacy, ease of use, and information quality play an important role in shaping satisfaction, which in turn influences customer loyalty (Mofokeng, 2025). At the same time, adaptive strategies in e-commerce can also increase satisfaction by improving the fit between the service and customer expectations (Datta et al., 2025).

Customer experience is a broader concept that integrates different aspects of interaction and determines how customers evaluate the service. Various factors, such as perceived value, ease of use, integrated services, and promotions, shape customer experience and influence satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2024; Khalid, 2024). In addition, studies show that positive customer experience can affect not only satisfaction but also behavioral outcomes, such as intention to recommend or increased spending (Rahman et al., 2026). At the same time, the novelty of interaction channels can stimulate emotional responses, which also influence customer loyalty (Frasquet et al., 2024).

It is important that the specific factors that shape satisfaction and customer experience differ depending on the context, which makes it difficult to generalize them across different retail sectors. This highlights the need to analyze empirical data that reflect real customer interactions.

In addition, satisfaction evaluations are more sensitive to negative aspects of experience than to positive ones, which makes negative reviews an especially valuable source of information about problems in customer interaction (Guido, 2014).

1.5 Service failures and negative customer experience

Negative customer experience can be seen as an indicator of systemic failures in company operations, rather than as single mistakes in customer interaction. This is because problems can occur at different stages of the customer journey, including search, purchase, delivery, and post-purchase interaction (Kemppainen and Frank, 2019). Therefore, negative touchpoints reflect not separate incidents, but weak points in processes and customer interaction.

At the same time, existing literature pays less attention to negative customer experience compared to positive experience, which limits the understanding of the real causes of customer dissatisfaction (Kemppainen and Frank, 2019). An increase in the severity of service failures directly reduces customer loyalty, while negative product experience increases the likelihood of switching stores (Zhu et al., 2024; Lau et al., 2025). This shows that even single operational problems can have a strong impact on customer behavior.

From a managerial point of view, this means that customer complaints should be seen not only as a result of problems, but also as a source of information about failures in processes that need to be identified and improved.

1.6 Digital factors and online reviews

Digital factors significantly change how customer behavior is formed, moving it to the stage before direct interaction with the company. Floyd et al. (2014) in their meta-analysis show that online reviews influence purchase decisions and retail sales outcomes, while Ferm & Thaichon (2021) show that social media factors before interaction influence the formation of customer loyalty. At the same time, studies show that properly adapted online strategies can also increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Souitaris & Balabanis, 2007).

This means that companies need to consider not only their own service quality, but also the information environment, including online reviews, social media, and digital strategies, where customer perception is formed.

1.7 Critical analysis and research gap

The analysis of recent literature shows that studies on customer behavior in retail develop in several directions that only partly overlap. The most common approach is based on quantitative analysis of relationships between satisfaction, customer experience, and loyalty (Mofokeng, 2025; Khalid, 2024; Jaya et al., 2025; Kumar and Ayodeji, 2021; Frassetto et al., 2024). Although these studies help to identify statistically significant relationships, they often ignore the real content of customer experience and do not explain what specific problems stand behind negative evaluations.

Studies focused on negative customer experience, such as service failure and service recovery (Zhu et al., 2024; Lau et al., 2025), shift attention from general indicators to specific situations of dissatisfaction. However, even in this case, studies mainly analyze the outcomes of negative experience, such as switching stores or lower loyalty, while the types of customer complaints remain poorly structured.

An important feature of modern literature is its strong focus on the digital context. Studies focus on online interaction, web-store characteristics, and the impact of reviews on sales (Soni, 2020; Zheng et al., 2022; Floyd et al., 2014). This shows the importance of the digital environment, but at the same time ignores the specifics of offline retail, where customer interaction has a different nature and different sources of problems.

Many studies are conducted within specific industries or narrow contexts, such as grocery retail, pharmacy, or banking (Goić et al., 2021; Jaya et al., 2025; Lau et al., 2025; Ferm and Thaichon, 2021). This limits the ability to generalize results, because different types of retail have different operational processes and customer expectations. At the same time, results may differ depending on the industry, so applying these results to other sectors requires caution and additional validation. In particular, findings from one context may not reflect the specifics of electronics retail, where customer expectations, sales processes, and interaction with staff can be different. This highlights the need to study customer experience and complaints within a specific sector, considering its operational characteristics.

Another important limitation is the use of mostly closed variables such as satisfaction, loyalty, trust, or service quality. As noted by Kranzbühler et al. (2017), customer experience is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that is formed at different stages of interaction. In such approaches, customer experience is reduced to predefined categories, which does not allow

identifying the full range of problems that customers face. In contrast, the analysis of unstructured data, such as customer reviews, remains underdeveloped.

Therefore, several key research gaps can be identified. First, there is a lack of studies that systematically analyze the structure of negative customer reviews as a separate object. Second, there is a lack of comparison of complaint types across different store formats. Third, offline electronics retail remains under-researched, even though complaints in this sector are often related to specific operational problems.

To summarize the literature review, Table 1.3 presents the key studies on customer loyalty and related factors used in this research.

Table 1.3. *Main Research Streams and Their Relevance to the Study*

Research stream	Main focus in the literature	Key insight	Limitation	Relevance to this study
Customer loyalty in retail	Studies examine how loyalty is influenced by service quality, logistics, innovation, and digital interaction	Loyalty is shaped by both operational and digital factors	Most studies focus on general loyalty outcomes rather than specific complaint content	Helps explain why complaint analysis is relevant for understanding service problems
Customer satisfaction and customer experience	Studies analyze how satisfaction and customer experience affect customer behavior	Satisfaction and experience strongly influence retention and recommendation	The actual causes of dissatisfaction are often not examined in depth	Supports the analysis of complaints as indicators of dissatisfaction
Service failures and negative customer experience	Research examines service failures, recovery, and switching behavior	Negative experiences reduce loyalty and increase switching	Complaint categories remain weakly structured	Provides the basis for analyzing complaint patterns as reflections of operational failures
Digital factors and online reviews	Studies explore the influence of reviews, social media, and online environments on customer perception	Online reviews significantly influence decisions and reputation	Strong focus on digital/online retail, less attention to offline store-specific issues	Justifies the use of Google Reviews as a data source
Sector-specific and methodological limitations	Studies are often conducted in other retail sectors and use predefined variables	Findings are useful but context-dependent	Electronics retail and unstructured complaint data remain underexplored	Confirms the research gap addressed in this study

Source: developed by the author based on the reviewed literature.

Existing studies explain the relationships between key variables of customer experience, but do not provide a systematic understanding of the nature of customer complaints. The proposed study addresses this gap by classifying negative reviews and comparing their structure between retail chains and independent stores.

1.8 Summary

In summary, modern studies show that customer loyalty, satisfaction, and customer experience in retail are shaped by service-related, operational, and digital factors. The reviewed findings also demonstrate that negative experience and service failures can lead to lower loyalty and changes in customer behavior. However, most studies focus on general relationships between variables and much less often analyze the actual structure of customer complaints, especially in a specific sector such as electronics retail.

In addition, many studies focus on online retail or omnichannel environments, while offline electronics retail remains less studied. The reviewed literature therefore shows that the structure of customer complaints is still insufficiently explored, particularly in the context of offline electronics retail. While prior studies explain the relationships between customer experience, satisfaction, and loyalty, they provide limited insight into the specific complaint categories that reflect operational and service-related problems in practice. Therefore, this literature review provides the theoretical foundation for the present research and justifies the need for a structured empirical analysis of complaint categories in electronics retail stores.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative research design based on a numerical analysis of customer complaint categories obtained from online reviews. A quantitative approach is appropriate for these purposes because it allows for the measurement of the distribution of complaint types and the comparison of patterns across store groups. The research identifies and summarizes the main categories of customer complaints. It also explores how complaint patterns differ between retail chains and independent stores, as well as how they vary across stores within the same chain. Overall, the study has both a descriptive and an exploratory purpose. The analysis is cross-sectional because the data are collected over a specific period (12 months). It focuses on identifying existing patterns over this period. Each stage of the analysis corresponds to a separate research question. First, the main complaint categories are identified (RQ1), then their distribution across different store types is compared (RQ2), and then the variation in complaints within a single chain is analyzed (RQ3).

The key elements of the research design are presented in Figure 2.1.

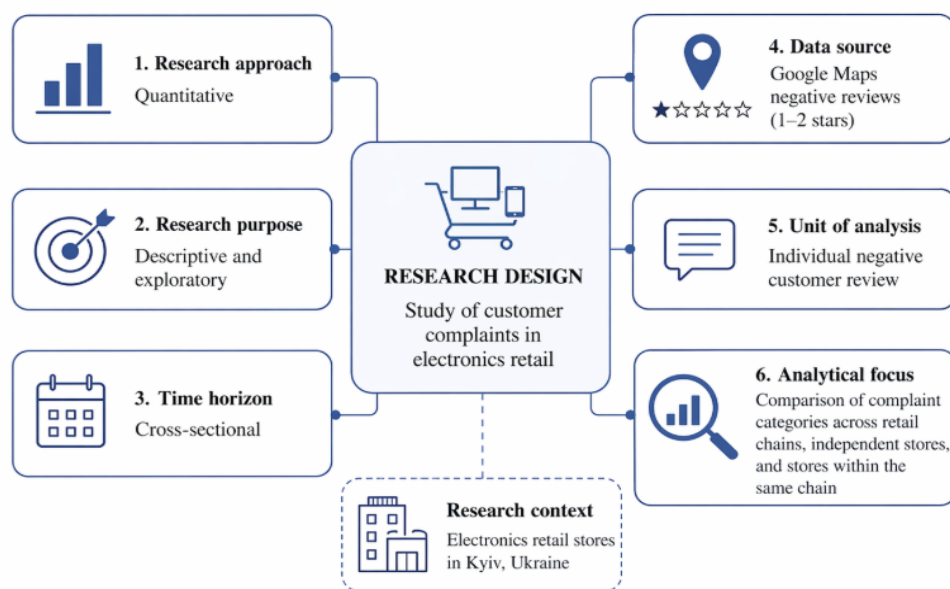


Figure 2.1. Key Elements of the Research Design

Source: developed by the author.

As shown in Figure 2.1, the study is based on a quantitative cross-sectional design and uses secondary data from Google Maps reviews. The unit of analysis is an individual negative customer review, while the analytical focus is placed on comparing complaint patterns across retail chains, independent stores, and stores within the same chain.

2.2 Sample and Research Context

The population of this study consists of electronics retail stores in Kyiv, Ukraine, represented on Google Maps and receiving publicly available customer reviews. A purposive sampling approach was used to select stores operating within the same retail sector in order to ensure comparability of complaint patterns across similar business contexts.

In this study, the sample consists of:

- 6 retail chains: Yabko (13 stores), Foxtrot (18 stores), Comfy (17 stores), Citrus (16 stores), ALLO (29 stores), MOYO (18 stores).
- Independent stores: STOREinUA (4 stores), TELEMART (3 stores), eStore and Bigmag.

The selection includes major retail chains and independent stores with sufficient review data for analysis within in the electronics retail segment so that the results are not affected by differences between sectors. The composition of the research sample is presented in Figure 2.2.

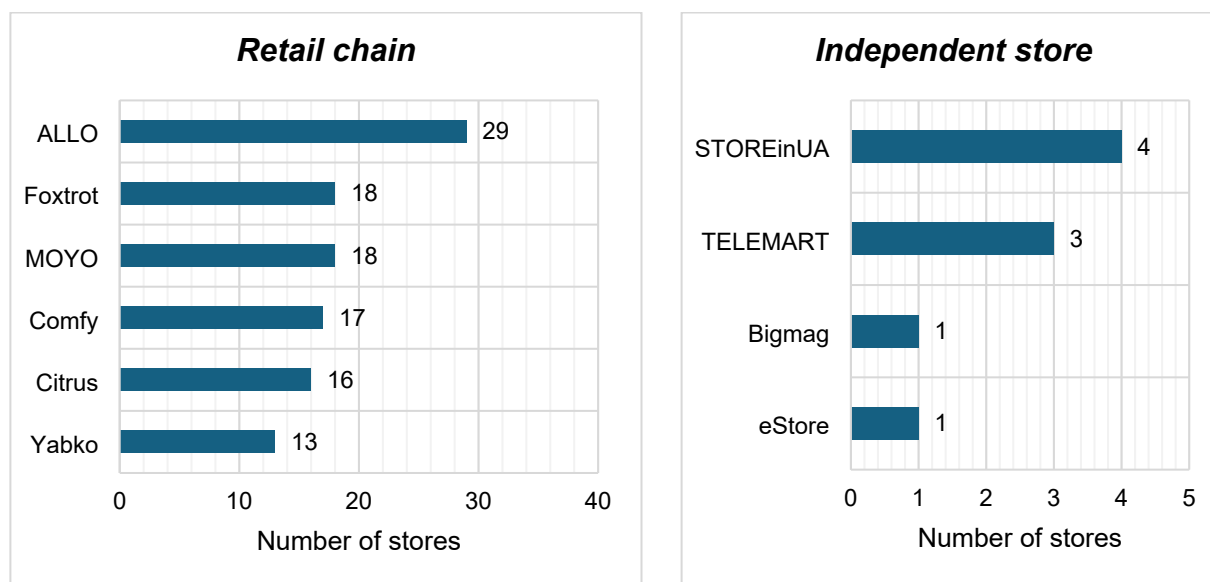


Figure 2.2. Composition of the Research Sample

Source: developed by the author based on the selected sample

All selected stores are located in Kyiv, Ukraine, in order to ensure a consistent geographic and market context. Reviews were collected from all stores within each selected retail chain and from the selected independent stores. The data cover a 12-month period from March 2025 to March 2026, allowing the study to focus on recent customer experiences. All eligible negative reviews published during this period were included in the sample. This sampling design supports comparison between chain-based and independent retail formats and enables the identification of variation in complaint patterns within retail chains.

2.3 Data Collection Instruments

This study used secondary data obtained from the Google Maps platform, which served as the main source of customer reviews for analysis. Only publicly available reviews with ratings of 1 or 2 out of 5 were included, as these reflect negative customer experience and complaint-related feedback. The selected reviews were manually compiled into a Microsoft Excel dataset for further organization and coding. For each review, the dataset recorded the store name, store type, review date, rating, and review text. A detailed overview of the dataset structure, variables, and Excel workbook organization is provided in *Appendix A*. The main analytical instrument of the study was a category-based coding framework developed to classify customer complaints in electronics retail. This framework enabled the systematic assignment of each review to one main complaint category and supported consistency in the subsequent analysis.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure was carried out in March 2026 and involved several consecutive stages of review selection and preparation for analysis:

- identification of eligible electronics retail stores located in Kyiv on the Google Maps platform;
- selection of only negative customer reviews with ratings of 1–2 stars;
- inclusion of reviews published within the 12-month period from March 2025 to March 2026;
- manual transfer of the selected reviews into a Microsoft Excel dataset;
- preparation of the dataset for further coding and categorization according to the complaint classification framework.

This procedure made it possible to ensure consistency in data selection and to focus the analysis on recent negative customer experiences in the electronics retail sector.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The data used in this study are publicly available and were obtained from an open online platform. No direct interaction with participants was involved, as the research is based exclusively on secondary data. User names and other potentially identifiable personal information were not included in the analysis in order to ensure anonymity. The collected data do not contain confidential or commercially sensitive information and were used solely for academic purposes.

2.6 Data Analysis Methods

To analyze the data, the study combined qualitative coding and quantitative descriptive analysis. At the first stage, qualitative thematic coding was used to classify customer reviews according to their main complaint, while at the second stage, quantitative descriptive analysis was applied to examine the distribution of complaint categories across stores and retail networks.

A category system was developed to classify negative reviews in the electronics retail sector. In total, seven categories were identified, reflecting the main types of complaints. The categories were developed based on a preliminary analysis of reviews and a generalization of the typical problems customers encounter in electronics retail stores. Each review was assigned to only one category according to the main reason for dissatisfaction (core complaint). The categories and their definitions are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. *Classification of Customer Complaint Categories in Electronics Retail*

Category	Definitions
Product Quality Issues	Complaints about defective, damaged, used but sold as new products, products that do not function properly, inadequate product quality, and their physical condition.
Delivery and Operational Problems	Issues related to order processing, processes, and logistics. This category may include delivery support and product damage during delivery, long wait times, and availability issues.
Transparency Issues	Situations where customers are not properly informed about product details or purchase/warranty terms. The focus of this category is on the customer's perception that they have been misled or deceived.
Customer Service Behavior	Complaints about poor service and employee behavior. This category includes rude communication, ignoring, incompetence, inability to help, and related issues.

Pricing issues	Complaints related to the cost of products.
Aggressive Sales and Additional Services Pressure	Situations in which customers feel pressured to buy additional products or services (promotions that push extra services without a clear customer need).
Warranty and Return Problems	Warranty-related issues that arise when customers attempt to return, exchange, or repair an item. This category includes denied returns, delays in refunds, long repair times, or failure to fulfill warranty obligations.

Source: developed by the author based on the preliminary analysis of customer reviews.

This classification framework served as the basis for the subsequent coding and comparative analysis of complaint patterns across stores and retail networks.

At the second stage, data coding was performed, manually assigning each review to the appropriate category. Only stores with at least 20 negative reviews were included in the store-level analysis in order to ensure sufficient data for meaningful comparison and greater reliability of the results. At the same time, for the network-level analysis, all negative reviews from all stores within each chain were included to ensure full coverage of the customer experience and provide a comprehensive view of the complaint structure across the network.

After the coding was completed, a quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics. In particular, the shares (in percentages) of each category of complaints were calculated both at the level of individual stores and at the network level. This allowed for the identification of dominant types of problems and the comparison of complaint structures across different types of stores. Microsoft Excel was used to process and analyze the data, in particular using Pivot Tables and charts to build comparative structures.

2.7 Methodological Limitations

1. *Platform limitation.* The analysis is based only on publicly available Google Maps reviews, which may not fully represent customer feedback from other online platforms.

2. *Geographic limitation.* The study includes only electronics retail stores located in Kyiv, which limits the broader generalizability of the findings to other regions.

3. *Rating limitation.* Only negative reviews with ratings of 1–2 stars were included in the sample, which means that the analysis focuses specifically on problematic customer experiences rather than on the full spectrum of customer perceptions.

4. *Coding limitation.* The manual assignment of reviews to complaint categories involves an element of researcher interpretation, which may affect the consistency of classification.

5. *Comparability limitation.* The number of negative reviews differs across stores, which may influence the comparability of complaint structures at the store level.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the empirical analysis of more than 2,100 negative customer reviews collected from Google Maps. The findings are organized according to the three research questions and focus on the distribution of complaint categories, differences between retail networks and independent stores, and variation within retail chains.

3.1 Results for RQ1

To address the first research question, the distribution of complaint categories across retail networks and independent stores was examined. The results presented in Table 3.1 show that Customer Service Behavior (22.61%) and Delivery and Operational Problems (20.55%) are the most dominant categories of customer dissatisfaction, while Pricing Issues represent the least frequent category.

Table 3.1. *Distribution of Complaint Categories Across Retail Networks and Independent Stores*

	Aggressive Sales	Customer Service	Delivery & Operations	Pricing Issues	Product Quality Issues	Transparency	Warranty & Returns
Yabko	9,09%	17,17%	16,16%	1,68%	21,21%	21,55%	13,13%
Foxtrot	5,42%	24,55%	22,38%	0%	13,00%	16,97%	17,69%
Comfy	4,31%	32,96%	26,22%	0,56%	12,55%	15,54%	7,87%
Citrus	8,05%	30,08%	13,98%	0,42%	15,25%	19,92%	12,29%
ALLO	4,18%	32,40%	24,74%	0,35%	14,98%	6,62%	16,72%
MOYO	1,71%	17,14%	32,00%	0%	14,29%	18,86%	16,00%
STOREinUA	2,34%	17,54%	28,07%	1,17%	11,11%	19,30%	20,47%
TELEMART	1,64%	22,95%	18,03%	0%	22,95%	9,84%	24,59%
eStore	0%	16,33%	12,24%	2,04%	20,41%	32,65%	16,33%
Bigmag	0%	15,00%	11,67%	16,67%	21,67%	21,67%	13,33%
Average row	3,67%	22,61%	20,55%	2,29%	16,74%	18,29%	15,84%
Average Networks	5,46%	25,72%	22,58%	0,50%	15,21%	16,58%	13,95%
Average independent stores	0,99%	17,96%	17,50%	4,97%	19,03%	20,86%	18,68%

Source: developed by the author based on the analysis of customer reviews collected from Google Maps.

In four retail networks — Foxtrot, Comfy, Citrus, and ALLO — Customer Service Behavior is the dominant complaint category. In contrast, in the Yabko network the leading categories are Transparency Issues (21.55%) and Product Quality Issues (21.21%), while in MOYO Delivery and Operational Problems dominate (32.00%).

At the same time, in independent stores the dominant complaint categories differ across locations, indicating the absence of a consistent complaint pattern.

3.2 Results for RQ2

To address the second research question, the complaint distributions presented in Table 3.1 were compared between retail networks and independent electronics stores. A comparative summary of the main differences in complaint consistency, standardization, dominant issues, and managerial implications is presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. *Comparison of Complaint Patterns in Retail Networks and Independent Stores*

Dimension	Retail Networks	Independent Stores
Consistency of complaint patterns	Higher consistency in complaint structures across stores	Higher variation in complaint structures across stores
Level of standardization	Higher level of standardization in service and operational processes	Lower level of standardization; stronger dependence on local practices
Dominant issues	Customer Service Behavior often dominates; some networks show system-wide operational issues	Dominant complaint categories differ across stores; no single common pattern
Managerial implications	Focus on improving network-wide standards and addressing repeated system-level problems	Focus on store-level improvements tailored to dominant issues in each store

Source: developed by the author based on the research findings.

In contrast, independent stores demonstrate more variation in complaint structures, with different categories dominating in different stores. This suggests that their operations are less standardized and more dependent on store-level factors, such as management practices, staff

quality, and local process execution. As a result, retail networks tend to be driven more by system-wide practices, while independent stores are more strongly shaped by local operational differences.

Retail networks tend to show more consistent complaint patterns across stores, indicating a higher level of standardization in service and operational processes. However, this also means that similar problems are repeated across the network.

3.3 Results for RQ3

To address the third research question, an analysis of stores within each retail network was conducted to examine how variations in complaint structures reflect differences in service and operational practices.

This suggests that stores within the same network demonstrate different levels of variability in complaint structures (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. *Types of Retail Chains by Structure and Variability of Complaints*

Network	Dominant Category	Dominance Pattern	Variability Level	What it suggests
Citrus	Customer Service	Single dominant	Low	High standardization of processes; problems are systemic and repeated across all stores
Yabko	Product Quality / Transparency	Two dominant (core pattern) + exceptions	Low–Moderate	Presence of systemic problems with partial influence of local factors; overall standardization is high, but not complete
Comfy	Customer Service	One dominant + stable secondary (Delivery)	Moderate	Two systemic issues (service and operations); processes are consistent across stores, local impact limited
ALLO	Customer Service	One dominant + strong competing secondary	Moderate	Combination of system issues (service) and variability in operational processes between stores
Foxtrot	No single dominant	Multiple competing categories	High	Strong influence of store-level factors; low standardization of processes; different operational practices in different stores

Source: developed by the author based on the research findings.

As shown in Figure 3.1, Customer Service Behavior is the dominant complaint category across all Citrus stores, ranging from 27% to 45% of negative reviews.

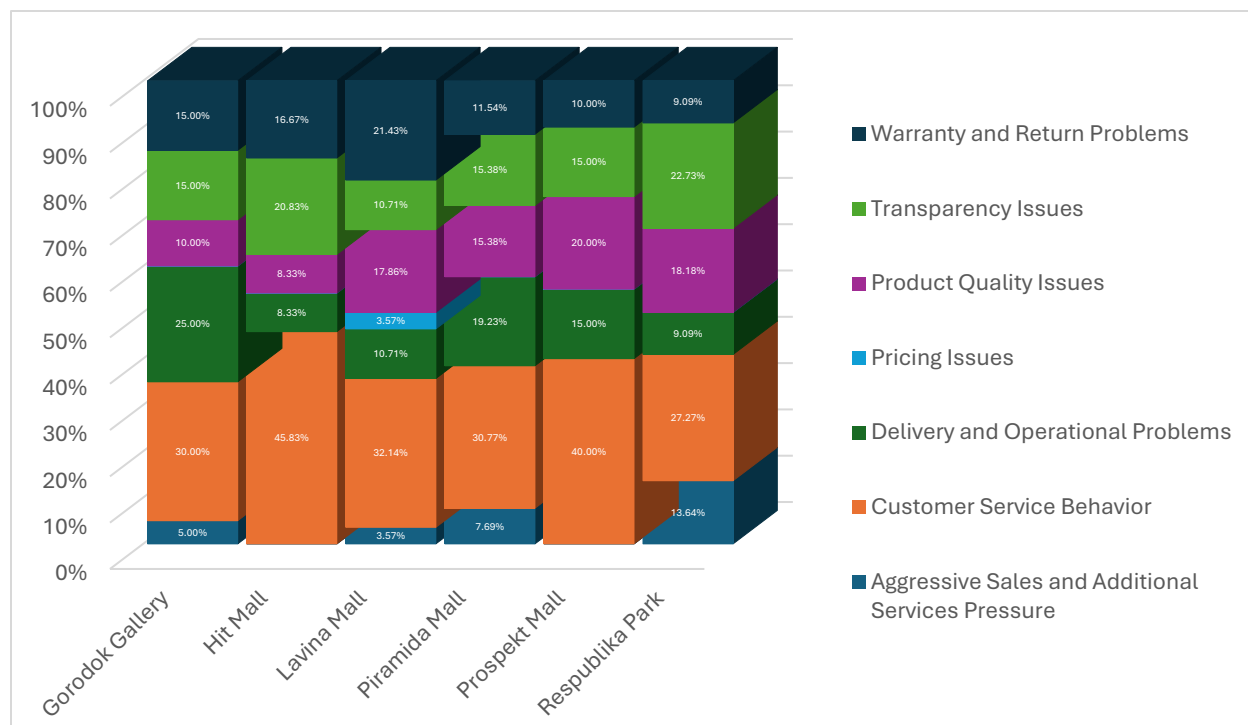


Figure 3.1. Distribution of Customer Complaint Categories Across Citrus Stores (%)

Source: developed by the author based on the analysis of customer reviews collected from Google Maps.

The complaint structure is relatively stable across stores, with low variation in dominant categories and similar complaint patterns throughout the network.

This suggests a high level of standardization in service and operational practices, while also indicating that the main problems are systemic and likely originate at the network level, particularly in customer service approaches, staff training, and operational process organization.

As shown in Figure 3.2, Product Quality Issues (ranging from 15% to 25%) and Transparency Issues (also around 15% to 25%) are the dominant complaint categories across most Yabko stores. However, some stores differ from this pattern, especially 9 Baseina St., where Customer Service Behavior reaches 30%, and Gorodok Gallery, where Customer Service Behavior is also one of the dominant categories (25%).

The complaint structure is generally stable, but shows low-to-moderate variation because of these store-level differences. While most stores follow a similar pattern, some locations show noticeable deviations.

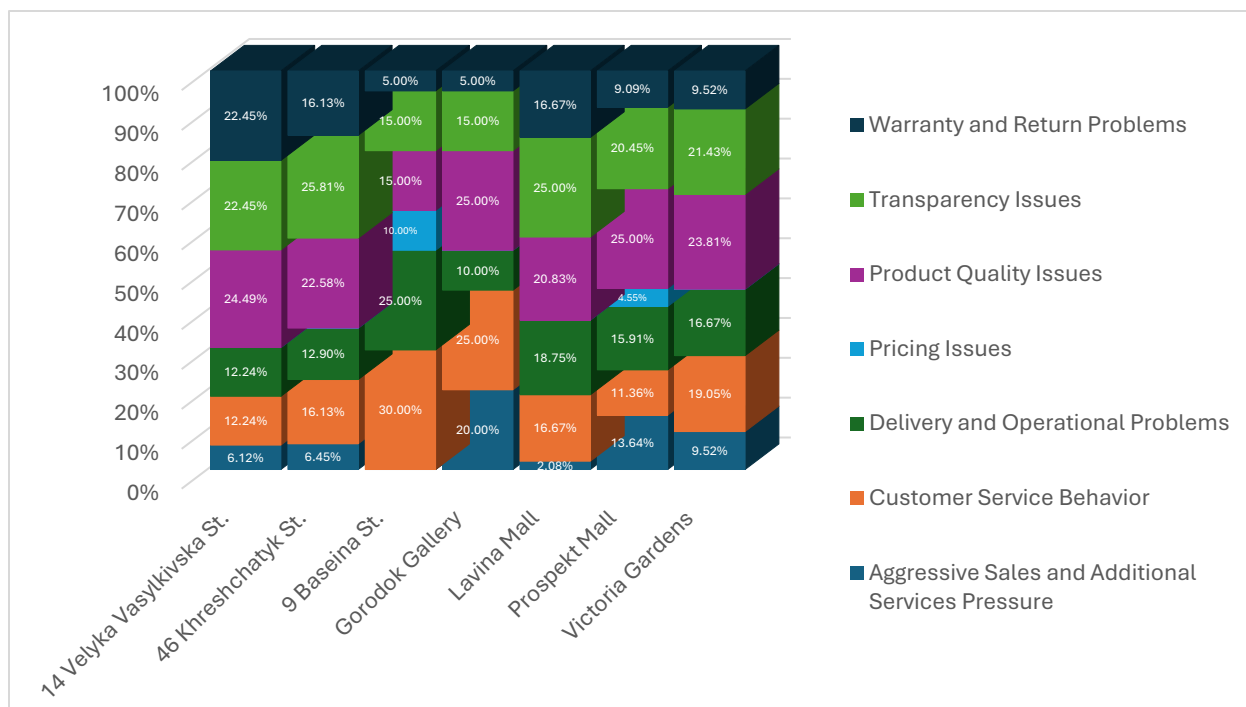


Figure 3.2. Distribution of Customer Complaint Categories Across Yabko Stores (%)

Source: developed by the author based on the analysis of customer reviews collected from Google Maps.

This suggests that Yabko is mainly shaped by system-wide issues related to product quality and transparency, while local factors, such as staff quality, management practices, and operational execution, also influence complaint patterns in some stores.

As shown in Figure 3.3, Customer Service Behavior (ranging from 23% to 47%) and Delivery and Operational Problems (ranging from 15% to 39%) are the dominant complaint categories across Comfy stores.

The complaint structure is relatively stable, with moderate variation, as these two categories appear consistently across stores. Small differences in category shares suggest only a limited influence of local factors.

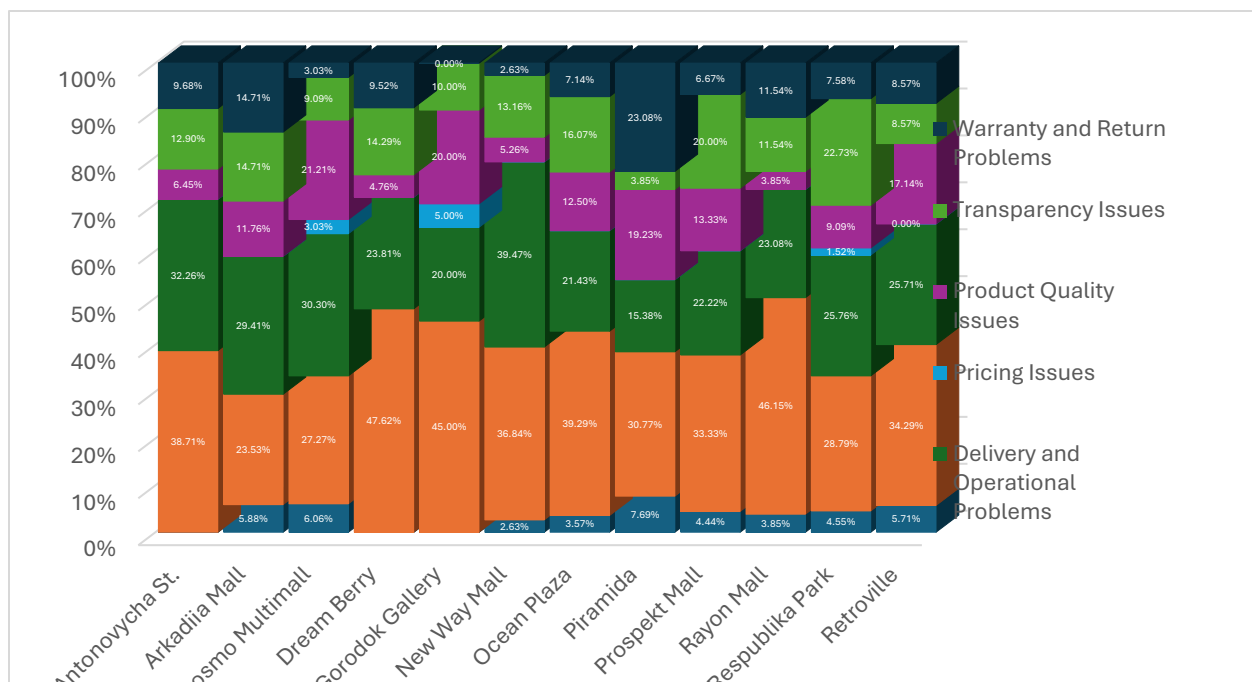


Figure 3.3. Distribution of Customer Complaint Categories Across Comfy Stores (%)

Source: developed by the author based on the analysis of customer reviews collected from Google Maps.

This suggests a relatively high level of standardization in service and operational practices in the network, while also showing system-wide problems related to customer service and operational processes. Compared to Yabko, Comfy shows a more consistent complaint pattern across stores, suggesting stronger standardization of processes.

As shown in Figure 3.4, Customer Service Behavior (ranging from 31% to 50%) is the dominant complaint category across all ALLO stores. In some stores, however, another category also becomes significant, particularly in Respublika Park, where Warranty and Return Problems are comparable to Customer Service Behavior.

The complaint structure is relatively stable, with moderate variability, as customer service consistently dominates while some secondary categories vary across stores.

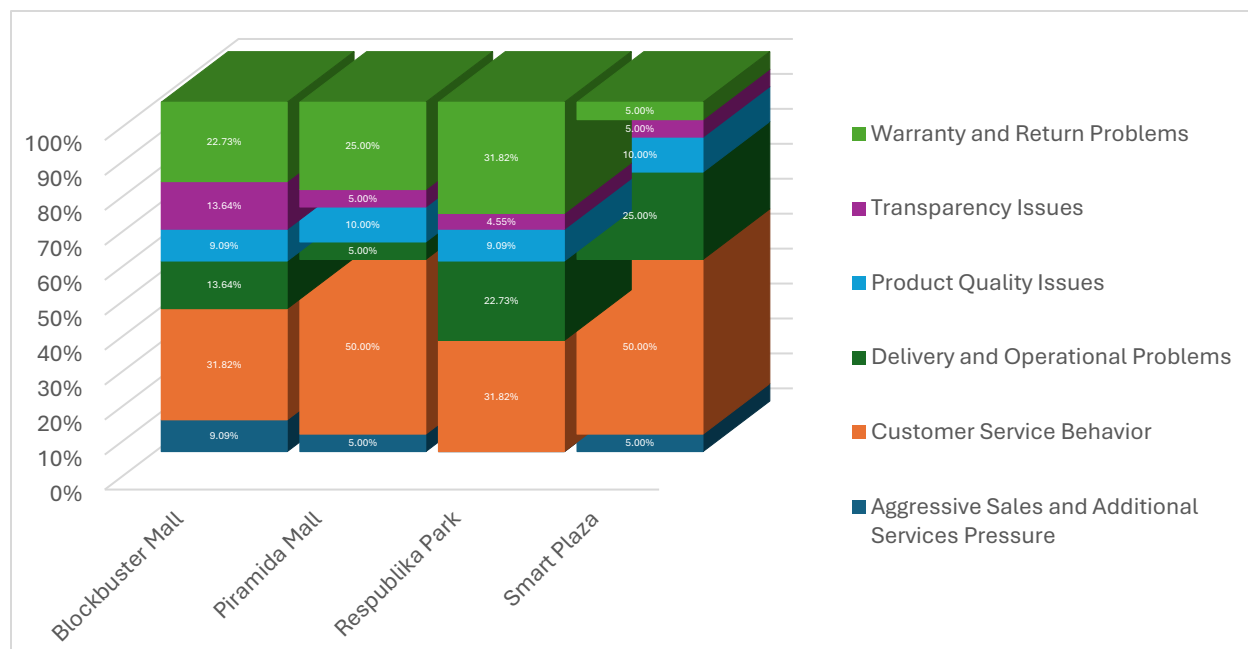


Figure 3.4. Distribution of Customer Complaint Categories Across Allo Stores (%)

Source: developed by the author based on the analysis of customer reviews collected from Google Maps.

This suggests system-wide problems related to customer service quality, while variation in other complaint categories indicates some influence of local factors, such as operational execution and store-level management.

As shown in Figure 3.5, Customer Service Behavior (ranging from 9% to 34%) and Delivery and Operational Problems (ranging from 15% to 33%) account for the largest share of negative reviews across Foxtrot stores. However, no single complaint category dominates consistently, and some stores show multiple competing categories. For example, in Piramida Mall, Warranty and Return Problems have the same share as Delivery and Operational Problems (25.93%), while in Respublika Park three categories have equal shares (23.81% each).

The complaint structure point to high variability across stores, with noticeable differences in dominant complaint patterns between locations.

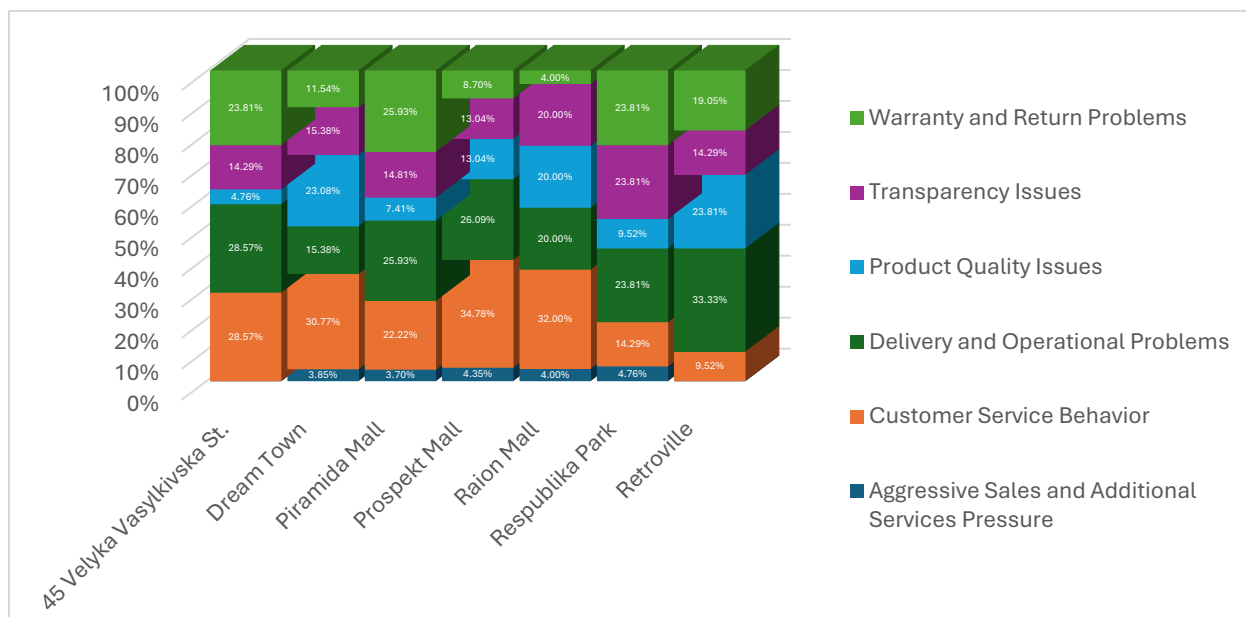


Figure 3.5. Distribution of Customer Complaint Categories Across Foxtrot Stores (%)

Source: developed by the author based on the analysis of customer reviews collected from Google Maps.

This suggests a strong influence of store-level factors, such as staff quality, management practices, and operational execution, and may indicate a lower level of standardization in service and operational processes across the network.

3.4 Summary of Findings

Taken together, Customer Service Behavior appears to be the dominant complaint category across most retail networks, accounting on average for 25.72% of all negative reviews. In independent stores, however, no clearly dominant complaint category is observed, indicating a more balanced distribution of complaints. Retail networks generally have a certain level of standardization, which leads to repeated system-wide problems across stores, while independent stores are more influenced by store-level factors and local variability. The findings point to stronger system-wide problems in highly standardized networks such as Citrus and Comfy, where similar complaint patterns are repeated across stores. A mixed pattern can be observed in Yabko and ALLO, where system-wide issues coexist with some local deviations. In contrast, Foxtrot and independent stores show stronger local variability, which may indicate a greater influence of store-level practices on complaint patterns and service outcomes.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Answers to Research Questions

Based on the findings, several conclusions can be made.

RQ1. *Which categories of customer complaints dominate negative online reviews in electronics retail stores?*

Based on average values across both retail networks and independent stores, Customer Service Behavior is the dominant complaint category overall. It is consistently the leading category in most retail networks.

In contrast, independent stores do not show a clearly dominant category. The difference between the main complaint categories is relatively small (less than 3%), which indicates a more balanced distribution of complaints across different types.

RQ2. *How do complaint patterns differ between retail networks and independent electronics stores, and what operational insights can be derived from these differences?*

In most retail networks, complaint patterns show a strong system-wide influence, with similar problems observed across multiple stores, although some local variations still exist.

In contrast, independent stores demonstrate a much higher level of variation, where the main problems differ significantly from one store to another. This suggests that retail networks are more influenced by centralized management and standardized processes, while independent stores operate more independently.

As a result, if system-level processes in retail networks are not effectively managed, the same problems may affect the entire network. Although store-level factors are also present in retail networks, their influence is generally lower compared to independent stores.

At the same time, while customer service complaints represent a large share in retail networks, independent stores tend to show relatively fewer service-related complaints. However, they demonstrate a higher share of Product Quality Issues compared to retail networks.

RQ3. *What do variations in complaint structures across stores within the same retail network suggest about differences in service and operational practices?*

Taken together, the findings indicate that retail networks differ in the consistency of their complaint structures. High variation in complaints across stores reflects a strong influence of local

factors, whereas a consistent complaint structure across stores suggests the presence of system-wide problems.

In some networks, such as Citrus and Comfy, complaint patterns are highly consistent, indicating a high level of standardization and systemic issues that are repeated across all stores. In contrast, networks such as Foxtrot demonstrate high variability, suggesting a strong dependence on store-level practices. Other networks, such as ALLO and Yabko, show a mixed pattern, where general trends exist but are combined with local deviations.

Therefore, differences in complaint structures across stores within the same network reflect the degree of standardization of service and operational practices: higher variation indicates a stronger influence of local factors, whereas lower variation suggests a higher level of consistency across the network.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

The results refine the concept of customer experience, as different categories of customer reviews reflect different stages of interaction between the customer and the company. These stages include price perception, in-store interaction with employees, delivery, product quality after purchase, and warranty-related cases. All these elements represent different parts of the customer experience. By analyzing these experiences, it is possible to identify specific points of interaction where problems occur. This helps to better understand how negative experiences are formed in practice.

This also provides a more concrete understanding of factors that are related to customer loyalty, as identified in prior research.

In line with social exchange theory, interactions between the customer and the company shape the relationship between them. These interactions may influence customer perception and satisfaction. This research extends the understanding of specific areas of store operations where negative customer experiences occur, both for the selected companies and for the electronics retail sector in general.

4.3 Practical Recommendations

Practical recommendations should differ depending on the complaint structure in each network and are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Practical Recommendations Derived from Complaint Pattern Analysis

Network / Store Type	Main Problem	Practical Recommendations
Citrus	System-wide service problems, Transparency Issues	Review service standards, provide staff training, improve transparency in communication with customers
Comfy	Service and Delivery and Operational Problems	Improve service standards, review order and delivery processes, monitor operational failures
ALLO	Service and warranty-related problems	Improve service standards, review warranty and return procedures
Yabko	Product Quality Issues and Transparency Issues	Improve product quality control and improve transparency of customer information
Foxtrot	High variation between stores	Improve service and operational processes across stores, monitor differences in complaint patterns
MOYO	Delivery and Operational Problems	Improve order fulfillment and delivery processes
Independent stores	Strong influence of local factors	Analyze complaints at the store level and introduce basic service and process standards

Source: developed by the author based on the research findings.

For networks where Customer Service Behavior is the dominant complaint category (Citrus, ALLO, Comfy), the following is recommended:

1. Analyze complaints in the Customer Service Behavior category by dividing them into subtypes, such as rude staff behavior, ignoring customers, insufficient consultation, or slow service. This can help identify which aspects of service most often create negative customer experiences.

2. Review standardized approaches to customer interaction across the whole network, including consultation rules, explanation of purchase terms, returns, and warranty conditions. Since the problem appears across all stores, local corrections alone may not be sufficient.

3. Introduce short regular training sessions for staff focused on problem situations most often mentioned in reviews, for example customer communication or complaint handling.

4. Strengthen control over compliance with service standards, for example through mystery shopping, analysis of new negative reviews, or staff evaluation based on common criteria.

Further recommendations are provided depending on the secondary dominant complaint category or the level of process standardization.

1. For Citrus, the second important complaint category in some stores is Transparency Issues. This suggests that recommendations for this network should focus not only on improving

service, but also on improving standardized approaches to customer communication across the whole network. In particular, it is recommended to improve transparency of information provided to customers regarding product characteristics, promotional terms, warranty, and returns, as these issues account for a significant share of complaints in the network.

2. For Comfy, and as the main category for MOYO, Delivery and Operational Problems require additional recommendations:

- a) Analyze complaints related to delivery and operational problems to identify the most common causes of customer dissatisfaction, such as delivery delays, product unavailability, or order errors.
- b) Review order processing and fulfillment procedures, including inventory management, reservation processes, and coordination between online orders and physical stores.
- c) Regularly monitor operational failures, such as delivery delays or canceled orders, to identify recurring problems at an early stage.
- d) Improve communication with customers regarding order status, especially in cases of delays or changes.
- e) Evaluate store performance using operational indicators as well, for example the number of delivery-related complaints or compliance with fulfillment timelines.

3. For Yabko, as the main problem categories are Transparency Issues and Product Quality Issues, recommendations focus on improving transparency in customer communication and strengthening product quality control.

a) Review communication with customers regarding product characteristics, purchase terms, warranty conditions, and availability in order to reduce complaints related to unclear or incomplete information.

b) Strengthen product quality control before sale, particularly regarding product condition, completeness, and consistency with the product description.

c) Analyze negative reviews related to Transparency Issues and Product Quality Issues separately to identify the most frequent problem situations.

d) Provide additional guidance or training for staff on accurate customer information, especially regarding sales conditions, warranty, and product characteristics.

e) For stores that deviate from the general pattern (for example, 9 Baseina St.), additionally analyze local service and operational problems.

4. As the Foxtrot network shows higher variation in complaints across stores, recommendations should focus on reducing these differences between store locations. The following is recommended:

- a. Standardize approaches to customer service and operational processes across stores, especially regarding delivery, returns, and communication with customers.
- b. Regularly analyze complaints for each store separately to identify where certain problems occur more often than in other stores in the network.
- c. Strengthen control over compliance with service standards, for example through internal checks or store performance evaluation.
- d. Share practices from stores with better results across other stores in the network.

5. For ALLO, as the category Warranty and Return Problems also represents a significant share of negative reviews, it is recommended to:

- a) Review warranty service and return processes, including procedures for handling requests, timelines for warranty cases, and communication with customers during these stages.
- b) Analyze differences between stores where warranty-related complaints are higher, in order to determine whether they are linked to local process execution practices.

6. For independent stores, where complaint structures differ across stores and no single dominant pattern exists, the following is recommended:

- a) Regularly analyze negative reviews at the individual store level to identify the most problematic complaint categories and respond to them directly.
- b) Focus improvements on the categories that dominate in a specific store, such as product quality, transparency of communication, warranty processes, or operational problems.
- c) Introduce basic service and operational standards even at the independent store level, in order to reduce dependence on individual staff members or local practices.
- d) Use customer reviews as a tool for ongoing quality control, rather than only reacting to isolated problem cases.

4.4 Research limitations

1. The study is based only on negative reviews collected over a one-year period, which limits the findings to problem-related aspects of customer experience and does not capture possible longer-term changes in complaint patterns.
2. The analysis does not consider the time dimension of reviews, and therefore cannot assess whether complaint structures changed in response to operational or managerial changes.
3. The study is descriptive and exploratory in nature, which means it identifies complaint patterns but does not establish causal relationships between complaint categories and customer loyalty or service performance.

4.5 Future Research

1. Further detail of complaint categories through subcategories.

Future research may deepen complaint classification by introducing subcategories within each category. This would allow more precise identification of sources of customer dissatisfaction and narrower operational problems. For example:

Customer Service Behavior may include: rude staff behavior; ignoring customers; insufficient consultation; and slow service.

Delivery and Operational Problems may include: order placement problems; product pickup issues; product availability problems; logistics delivery issues; online order issues; and reservation problems.

Product Quality Issues may include: damaged products; damaged packaging; sale of used products; and product quality not matching expectations after purchase.

Transparency Issues may include: incorrect or incomplete information from staff or on the website; hidden conditions; and unclear communication.

Warranty and Return Problems may include: warranty and non-warranty cases; repair timing issues; warranty acceptance procedures; and product returns.

Aggressive Sales and Additional Services Pressure may include: pushing additional services; pressure to buy related products; and unwanted upselling offers.

2. Inclusion of new variables in the analysis

Future research may include additional variables, such as store rating, which could help examine the relationship between complaint structure and overall *store ratings*, and identify which

complaint categories are most related to lower ratings. Another relevant variable is *review timing*, which may help analyze in which periods certain complaint categories increased or decreased, and whether these changes may be related to management or operational changes in stores.

3. Expansion of the geographical context

Future research may include other cities in Ukraine or cross-country comparisons to test whether the identified patterns remain similar in other market conditions. For example, *Kharkiv* may help examine how external disruptions influence complaint structures. *Rivne* may allow comparison with a smaller and less competitive retail environment. *Lviv* or *Odesa* may help assess whether complaint patterns differ depending on regional context and consumer behavior.

APPENDIX

Appendix A. Research Instruments and Review Dataset Structure

Research Instruments

Instrument	Purpose
Google Maps	Source of customer reviews, including review text, ratings, store information, and review dates
Microsoft Excel	Manual coding of reviews, data structuring, Pivot Table analysis, and comparative visualization

Excel Workbook Structure

The Excel workbook contains separate worksheets for Citrus, Yabko, ALLO, Foxtrot, Comfy, MOYO, TELEMART, STOREinUA, eStore, and Bigmag.

Each worksheet includes review data tables with the following variables:

Variable	Description
Store	Store name or address
Review	Customer review text
Rating	Review rating (1 or 2 stars)
Time	Review date
Type of Complaint	Complaint category assigned after coding

Reviews are organized into three review sets:

Review Set	Description
20 or more negative reviews	Stores included in store-level categorization analysis
Fewer than 20 negative reviews	Stores excluded from store-level categorization analysis
All store/network reviews	All reviews included in network- or store-level analysis

Each worksheet also contains analytical outputs generated from coded review data:

Analytical Output	Description
Distribution of Customer Complaint Categories Across Stores	Distribution of complaint categories across stores
Distribution of Complaint Categories	Overall percentage distribution of complaint categories for the network or store
Distribution of Customer Complaint Categories Across Stores (Figure)	Visualization of complaint distributions across stores

These materials support the complaint categorization and comparative analysis used in this research.

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