



Understanding User Experience in Music Streaming Platforms: A User-Generated Review Analysis of Spotify in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines user experience with Spotify in Indonesia through the analysis of user-generated reviews on the Google Play Store. The study aims to identify overall user evaluations, major themes of positive and negative experiences, and the dominant sources of user dissatisfaction. An exploratory mixed-method approach was employed by combining descriptive analysis of numerical ratings with qualitative thematic analysis of review content. A total of 5,658 unique Spotify reviews collected between 6 June and 5 July 2026 were analyzed. The findings indicate that overall user evaluations were predominantly positive, with 61.6% of reviews receiving five stars and 9.7% receiving four stars, resulting in an overall mean rating of 3.91 out of 5. Thematic analysis identified music and content, advertising, playback and listening experience, technical and application performance, premium and monetization, and user control as major aspects of Spotify user experience. Positive experiences were primarily associated with music and content availability, listening experience, and platform functionality. In contrast, negative experiences were strongly associated with advertising, technical problems, premium restrictions, and limitations in user control. Advertising was the most frequently identified source of dissatisfaction, followed by technical and application performance, music and content-related problems, premium and monetization issues, and user-control restrictions. These findings demonstrate that Spotify user experience extends beyond music availability and is also shaped by the conditions surrounding content access, control, and consumption. The study highlights the value of combining numerical ratings with textual review analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of users' actual experiences and sources of dissatisfaction with digital music streaming services

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has transformed music consumption from physical and individually owned formats toward streaming-based services. Music streaming platforms increasingly function not only as channels for accessing music but also as digital environments that shape user experiences through platform design, personalization, content curation, and service features (Hracsa & Webster, 2020). Spotify represents an important example of this transformation. Through its freemium model, Spotify provides music, podcasts, playlists, and personalized content while differentiating experiences between free and premium users. Previous research indicates that factors such as enjoyment, content discovery, advertising intrusiveness, functional value, and premium-service value influence users' evaluations of Spotify (Mäntymäki et al., 2020). Thus, user experience extends beyond music availability to include functionality, personalization, advertising, service restrictions, and overall platform performance.

Previous research on music streaming has largely examined purchase intention, continuance, satisfaction, subscription decisions, and recommendation intention, often using predefined constructs and survey-based approaches (Barata & Coelho, 2021; Mäntymäki et al., 2020). Comparatively less attention has been given to understanding Spotify user experience through naturally occurring user-generated reviews, particularly in the Indonesian context. Review analysis can therefore complement existing research by revealing the experiences and problems users spontaneously express. Accordingly, this study aims to understand user experience on Spotify in Indonesia through user-generated reviews. Specifically, it examines overall user evaluations, major themes of positive and negative experiences, and the dominant sources of user dissatisfaction. By combining numerical ratings with textual review content, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how users experience and evaluate Spotify in actual usage contexts

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding these experiences requires examining not only predetermined survey measures but also users' spontaneous expressions. User-generated reviews provide naturally occurring information about satisfaction, dissatisfaction, complaints, and specific service problems. Previous studies demonstrate that online reviews can provide rich textual and numerical information for understanding consumer evaluations (Zheng, 2021; Majumder et al., 2022), while user-generated content can support customer experience analysis through text-based approaches (Sykora et al., 2022; Pal et al., 2023). Negative reviews are particularly valuable for identifying service failures and sources of dissatisfaction that may not be apparent from aggregate ratings alone (Colmekcioglu et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed an exploratory research design using user-generated online reviews to understand user experience with Spotify in Indonesia. The study adopted a mixed analytical approach that combined quantitative descriptive analysis of review ratings with qualitative analysis of review content. This design was selected because user-generated reviews contain both structured information, such as star ratings, and unstructured textual information describing users' actual experiences.

Online consumer reviews provide naturally occurring consumer-generated data that can capture evaluations, experiences, complaints, and other forms of feedback without restricting users to predetermined survey questions or measurement indicators (Zheng, 2021). Previous research has also demonstrated the value of review mining and text-based analysis for identifying patterns in consumer evaluations and extracting information from large collections of online reviews (Majumder et al., 2022). Accordingly, this study uses the numerical rating as an indicator of users' overall evaluation while examining the textual content of reviews to identify the themes and issues underlying positive and negative experiences.

The research was guided by three research questions:

- **RQ1.** What are the overall patterns of user evaluations of Spotify in Indonesia?
- **RQ2.** What themes characterize positive and negative user experiences with Spotify?
- **RQ3.** What are the dominant sources of user dissatisfaction with Spotify?

The unit of analysis was an individual user-generated review. Each review was treated as an independent observation containing a numerical evaluation and textual expression of the user's experience. The analytical framework therefore connects three levels of analysis: (1) overall numerical evaluation, (2) themes emerging from review content, and (3) specific sources of dissatisfaction identified from negative user experiences.

Data Source and Collection

The data consisted of user-generated reviews of the Spotify application obtained from the Google Play Store. The dataset was collected for the Spotify application identified by the application ID `com.spotify.music`. The dataset contains 5,658 unique reviews collected over approximately one month, from 6 June 2026 to 5 July 2026.

Each observation contains several attributes, including review ID, user name, rating score, review date, review text, number of thumbs-up votes, application version, review-created version, developer reply content, and reply date. Among these variables, score and content constituted the primary analytical variables because they directly represent users' evaluations and descriptions of their experiences.

The use of user-generated reviews is consistent with previous research identifying online reviews as a rich source of consumer-generated information and a suitable source for examining consumer evaluations through review

mining (Zheng, 2021; Majumder et al., 2022). In the context of Spotify, previous research has also shown that the freemium model, advertising, content discovery, enjoyment, and perceived value can influence users' experiences and subscription-related decisions (Mäntymäki et al., 2020).

For the geographical context, the study refers to the dataset as Spotify reviews in Indonesia based on the Indonesian-market data collection context. However, because the dataset does not contain an individual country or location field for each reviewer, the study does not infer the geographical location of individual users from their names or language alone.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overall User Evaluation

A total of 5,658 user-generated reviews of Spotify were analyzed. The reviews were collected between 6 June and 5 July 2026, representing approximately one month of user feedback. Each review contained a numerical rating ranging from one to five stars and textual content describing the user's experience.

Overall, the distribution of ratings indicates that Spotify received predominantly positive evaluations. A total of 3,487 reviews (61.6%) received five stars, while 551 reviews (9.7%) received four stars. Combined, positive evaluations consisting of four- and five-star ratings accounted for 4,038 reviews (71.4%) of the dataset. Meanwhile, 312 reviews (5.5%) received three stars, indicating moderate or mixed evaluations.

Negative evaluations were represented by 1,308 reviews (23.1%), consisting of 1,052 one-star reviews (18.6%) and 256 two-star reviews (4.5%). The overall mean rating was 3.91 out of 5, while the median rating was five stars. The difference between the mean and median reflects the concentration of observations at the highest rating category, accompanied by a substantial group of highly negative reviews.

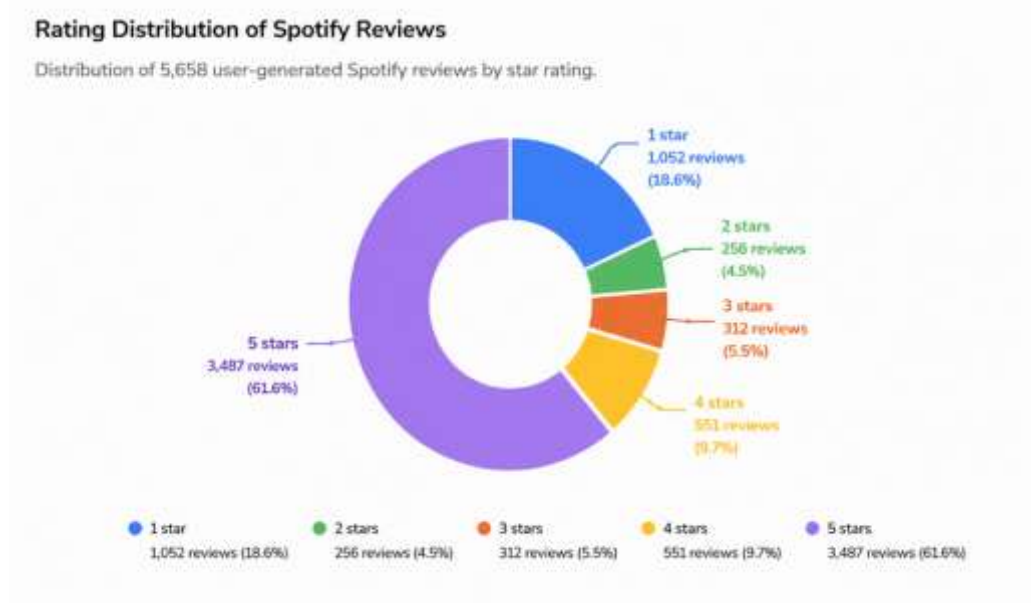


Figure 1 Rating Distribution of Spotify Reviews

These findings indicate that the overall evaluation of Spotify in the dataset is favorable, but the rating distribution also reveals a substantial negative segment. Therefore, relying solely on the overall mean rating would not fully capture the complexity of users' experiences. The textual content of the reviews was subsequently examined to identify the specific experiences underlying these evaluations.

Major Themes of User Experience

The analysis of review content identified several recurring aspects of users' experiences with Spotify. The most prominent theme was music and content, which appeared in approximately 1,698 reviews (30.0%). This theme included references to songs, music, playlists, artists, podcasts, and the availability or enjoyment of content.

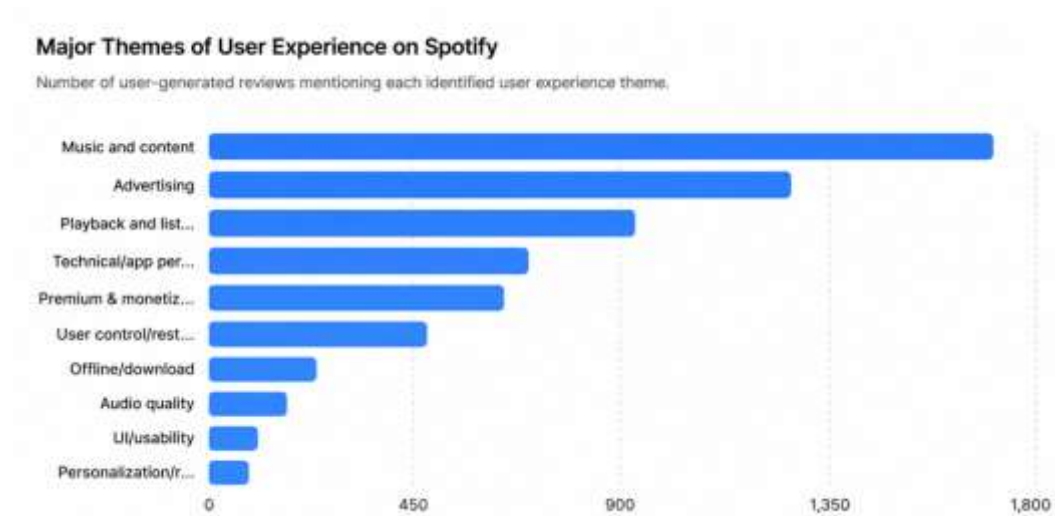


Figure 2 Major Themes of User Experience on Spotify

The second prominent theme was advertising, identified in 1,265 reviews (22.4%). Although advertising was mentioned in both positive and negative reviews, it was particularly prominent among users expressing dissatisfaction. Users frequently discussed the amount, frequency, or perceived intrusiveness of advertisements. The third major theme concerned playback and listening experience, appearing in approximately 942 reviews (16.6%). Reviews within this theme referred to listening to music, playing or pausing songs, skipping tracks, shuffle functions, volume, and audio-related experiences.

Technical and application performance was identified in approximately 716 reviews (12.7%). These reviews included references to application errors, loading problems, inability to open the application, lagging, bugs, crashes, and other technical difficulties. Another recurring theme was premium services and monetization, appearing in approximately 654 reviews (11.6%). Users discussed premium access, payment, subscriptions, free versus premium features, and restrictions associated with the free version.

The review content also contained references to user control and feature restrictions (8.4%), offline/download functionality (3.8%), audio quality (2.7%), personalization and recommendations (1.5%), and interface/usability (1.7%).

Because a single review can mention more than one issue, the percentages do not sum to 100%. This multi-theme pattern indicates that user experience on Spotify is multidimensional. Users do not evaluate the platform exclusively according to the quality or availability of music but also according to the conditions under which music is accessed and consumed.

The findings further indicate that functional content experience and service conditions are closely intertwined. For example, reviews mentioning music and playback frequently also referred to advertising, premium restrictions, or technical problems. This suggests that users' evaluation of Spotify is shaped by the interaction between the core music experience and the broader platform environment.

Positive User Experience

Positive experiences were primarily represented by the 4- and 5-star reviews, which comprised 4,038 reviews (71.4%) of the dataset. The average rating among these reviews was 4.86, indicating that this group expressed strongly favorable evaluations. The most frequently occurring theme within positive reviews was music and content. Users commonly expressed appreciation for the availability and variety of songs, the ability to listen to preferred music, and the general quality of the music catalogue. Expressions such as "*bagus*," "*suka*," "*lagu*," and "*musik*" were among the most frequently occurring terms in positive reviews.

The playback and listening experience was another important source of positive evaluation. Users described Spotify as useful or enjoyable for listening to music during different activities. The presence of terms related to listening, music, and playback indicates that the fundamental value proposition of the platform remains an important contributor to positive user experience. Positive reviews also contained references to application functionality and premium services. Some users appreciated the features available through Spotify and described the application as useful, enjoyable, or convenient. References to premium services were not exclusively negative; some users associated premium access with a better listening experience or access to additional functionality.

Interestingly, advertising was also mentioned in a considerable number of positive reviews, appearing in approximately 627 positive reviews based on the content coding. This suggests that the mere presence of advertising does not necessarily produce a negative evaluation. Rather, the effect of advertising on user experience appears to depend on its perceived frequency, intrusiveness, and interaction with other aspects of service use. Overall, the positive reviews suggest that users primarily value Spotify for its music and content availability, listening experience, application functionality, and convenience. These aspects represent the core experiential benefits that support favorable evaluations of the platform.

Negative User Experience

Negative experiences were identified primarily from the 1- and 2-star reviews, which accounted for 1,308 reviews (23.1%). The average rating within this group was only 1.20, indicating a strongly negative evaluation. The content of negative reviews reveals that dissatisfaction was not driven by a single issue. Instead, negative experiences emerged from several interconnected aspects of the Spotify service.

Advertising was one of the most prominent negative themes. Approximately 490 negative reviews referred to advertising-related issues. Users frequently expressed dissatisfaction with the quantity or frequency of advertisements. The repeated occurrence of terms such as "*iklan*," "*iklannya*," "*banyak*," and "*terlalu*" indicates that advertising can become a major source of frustration when users perceive it as excessive or disruptive to the listening experience.

Technical and application performance represented another important source of negative experience. Approximately 441 negative reviews contained references to technical or application-related problems. These included difficulties opening the application, bugs, loading problems, lagging, and other forms of technical disruption. Such problems directly interfere with users' ability to access the core service and therefore have a strong potential to generate dissatisfaction.

Music and content remained highly visible even among negative reviews, appearing in approximately 409 negative reviews. However, the context differs from positive reviews. Rather than simply expressing appreciation for music availability, negative reviews frequently referred to difficulties related to accessing, selecting, playing, or controlling songs. Premium and monetization issues were also prominent, appearing in approximately 293 negative reviews. Users discussed premium requirements, payment, restrictions on free users, and perceptions that certain features were overly restricted. This suggests that Spotify's freemium model constitutes an important part of the user experience rather than merely a business-model characteristic.

Approximately 236 negative reviews also contained references to user control or feature restrictions. Users expressed dissatisfaction when they could not freely select, skip, arrange, or control music playback in the manner they expected. The findings therefore indicate that negative user experiences arise from both technical failures and service-policy-related constraints. The former concerns whether Spotify works properly, while the latter concerns whether users are able to use the service in the way they expect.

Main Sources of User Dissatisfaction

To identify the dominant sources of dissatisfaction, particular attention was given to the 1- and 2-star reviews. The analysis indicates that dissatisfaction with Spotify is concentrated around several major issues: advertising, technical/application performance, premium and monetization, music and content access, and user control or restrictions. Among the coded themes, advertising was mentioned in approximately 490 negative reviews, making it one of the most prominent dissatisfaction-related themes. Users frequently described advertisements as excessive or disruptive, indicating that monetization mechanisms can directly affect the perceived quality of the listening experience. Technical and application performance was identified in approximately 441 negative reviews. Problems involving application access, bugs, loading, lagging, and other technical disruptions represent a fundamental source of dissatisfaction because they interfere directly with service functionality. Music and content-related issues appeared in approximately 409 negative reviews. Although music

and content are also the most prominent positive theme, their appearance in negative reviews demonstrates that the same core service attribute can generate either satisfaction or dissatisfaction depending on the user's experience. This is particularly important because it indicates that the presence of a large music catalogue alone does not guarantee a positive experience.

Premium and monetization issues were mentioned in approximately 293 negative reviews. These reviews suggest that users' perceptions of the freemium model can become negative when restrictions, premium requirements, or payment-related conditions are perceived as excessive. Finally, user control and feature restrictions appeared in approximately 236 negative reviews. This category reflects users' concerns about limitations in controlling music playback and accessing particular functions.

Tabel 1. Distribution of Source of Dissatisfaction

Source of Dissatisfaction	Approx. Reviews Theme	Negative Mentioning Interpretation
Advertising	490	Excessive or disruptive advertisements
Technical/app performance	441	Bugs, lag, loading, access and application problems
Music/content	409	Problems related to accessing, selecting, or playing content
Premium & monetization	293	Premium restrictions, payment, and free-version limitations
User control/restrictions	236	Limited control over playback and features
Offline/download	118	Problems or restrictions related to downloading/offline use
Playback/listening	243	Problems affecting the listening process
Audio quality	66	Complaints about sound/audio quality

The results demonstrate that dissatisfaction is not solely associated with the core music content. Instead, users' negative evaluations are frequently related to the conditions surrounding access to that content. Advertising, technical reliability, premium restrictions, and user-control limitations can transform the basic activity of listening to music into a negative platform experience. An important finding is therefore the coexistence of the same themes across positive and negative reviews. For example, music/content appears in both positive and negative evaluations. This suggests that the relevant question is not simply whether Spotify provides music, but how effectively the platform enables users to access, control, and enjoy that music.

Overall, the findings answer the three research questions by showing that Spotify receives predominantly favorable overall evaluations, while user-generated reviews reveal a more nuanced experience involving both functional benefits and sources of frustration. Positive experiences are largely associated with music availability, listening, and application usefulness, whereas negative experiences are strongly associated with advertising, technical problems, premium restrictions, and limitations in user control. The findings also demonstrate the value of analyzing textual review content alongside numerical ratings because the rating distribution alone would not reveal the specific mechanisms underlying users' satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis is based on 5,658 user-generated Spotify reviews collected over a relatively short period (June–July 2026). Therefore, the findings may not fully capture changes in user experience over time, particularly following application updates, pricing changes, or changes in Spotify's service policies. Second, the study focuses exclusively on Spotify, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other music streaming platforms. Future research could compare Spotify with platforms such as Apple Music or YouTube Music to identify whether the observed user experience themes are platform-specific or common across music streaming services.

Third, user-generated reviews are subject to self-selection bias, as users who actively post reviews may have particularly positive or negative experiences. The dataset also does not provide comprehensive demographic or subscription information, limiting comparisons between different user groups, such as free and premium users. Finally, future research could combine review analysis with surveys or interviews and employ more advanced NLP techniques, such as aspect-based sentiment analysis or topic modeling. Longitudinal and cross-platform studies could further examine how specific user experience factors influence outcomes such as satisfaction, continued usage, subscription decisions, and switching intention.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined user experience on Spotify in Indonesia through an analysis of 5,658 user-generated reviews. The findings show that overall user evaluations were predominantly positive, with 61.6% of reviews receiving five stars and an overall mean rating of 3.91 out of 5. However, the substantial proportion of negative reviews indicates that favorable overall ratings do not fully capture the complexity of users' experiences.

The thematic analysis identified several major aspects of Spotify user experience, particularly music and content, advertising, playback and listening, technical performance, premium and monetization, and user control. Positive experiences were mainly associated with music availability, listening experience, and platform functionality. In contrast, negative experiences were strongly related to advertising, technical problems, premium restrictions, and limitations in user control.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that user experience on Spotify extends beyond the quality and availability of music. The conditions surrounding how users access, control, and consume content also play an important role in shaping their evaluations. By analyzing naturally occurring user-generated reviews, this study provides a more detailed understanding of the aspects of Spotify that users value and the problems that contribute to dissatisfaction. These findings offer practical insights for improving platform functionality, service policies, and the overall user experience.

FURTHER STUDY

This study has limitations; therefore, further research is needed on the topic "Understanding User Experience in Music Streaming Platforms: A User-Generated Review Analysis of Spotify" to refine this study and broaden the insights of both the author and other researchers.

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