

Complaint: Information: no/insufficient

start: 10 / end: 10

10

CASE STUDY

Customer Journey Friction and Complaint Escalation

Complaint: ikf non/late processing

start: 6 / end: 6

6

Identifying where digital self-service breaks down, where customers escalate and where AI can reduce avoidable service demand

This case study analyses a real-world customer service dataset spanning digital journeys, assisted interactions and complaint records. Process reconstruction shows that the biggest issue is not complaint intake itself, but upstream friction in the customer journey: customers stall in key self-service steps, switch channels when journeys become unclear, and complaints surface at the highest-friction edge of the experience. The result is fragmented service demand, inconsistent resolution performance, and avoidable operational load.

Complaint: payment over a certain period is missing

start: 12 / end: 12

12

26,342+

Customer interaction records analysed

9,796

Digital journey records reconstructed

78%

Of records show reverse flow

67%

Stale records and 42 silent drop-off steps detected

Complaint: ikf digital non/late processing

start: 5 / end: 5

5

Why it matters

For retail and customer service teams, poor self-service design does not just reduce digital completion - it pushes demand into higher-cost assisted channels, increases repeat contacts, and raises the risk of formal complaints. When customers loop between information pages, forms, messages and support interactions before resolution, service costs rise while customer trust falls.

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What the process reveals

Customers move through a digital service journey that resembles a typical retail support flow: browsing for information, completing key tasks, contacting support when blocked, and escalating into formal complaints when the experience fails.

The biggest delays sit inside the self-service journey, not just in complaint handling

Delay accumulates long before a formal complaint is raised. Key journey milestones show average completion gaps of 40.0 days, 51.6 days, and 63.2 days – indicating that customers are stalling inside the self-service flow, not just at the point of escalation.

Complaints reflect the highest-friction edge of the experience

226 complaint records were identified, with a 37% completion rate, a mean resolution time of 16.2 days, and a p90 of 54.5 days. Complaint cases are low volume relative to total interactions but highly variable and concentrated around insufficient information, unclear rules, and unresolved service experiences.

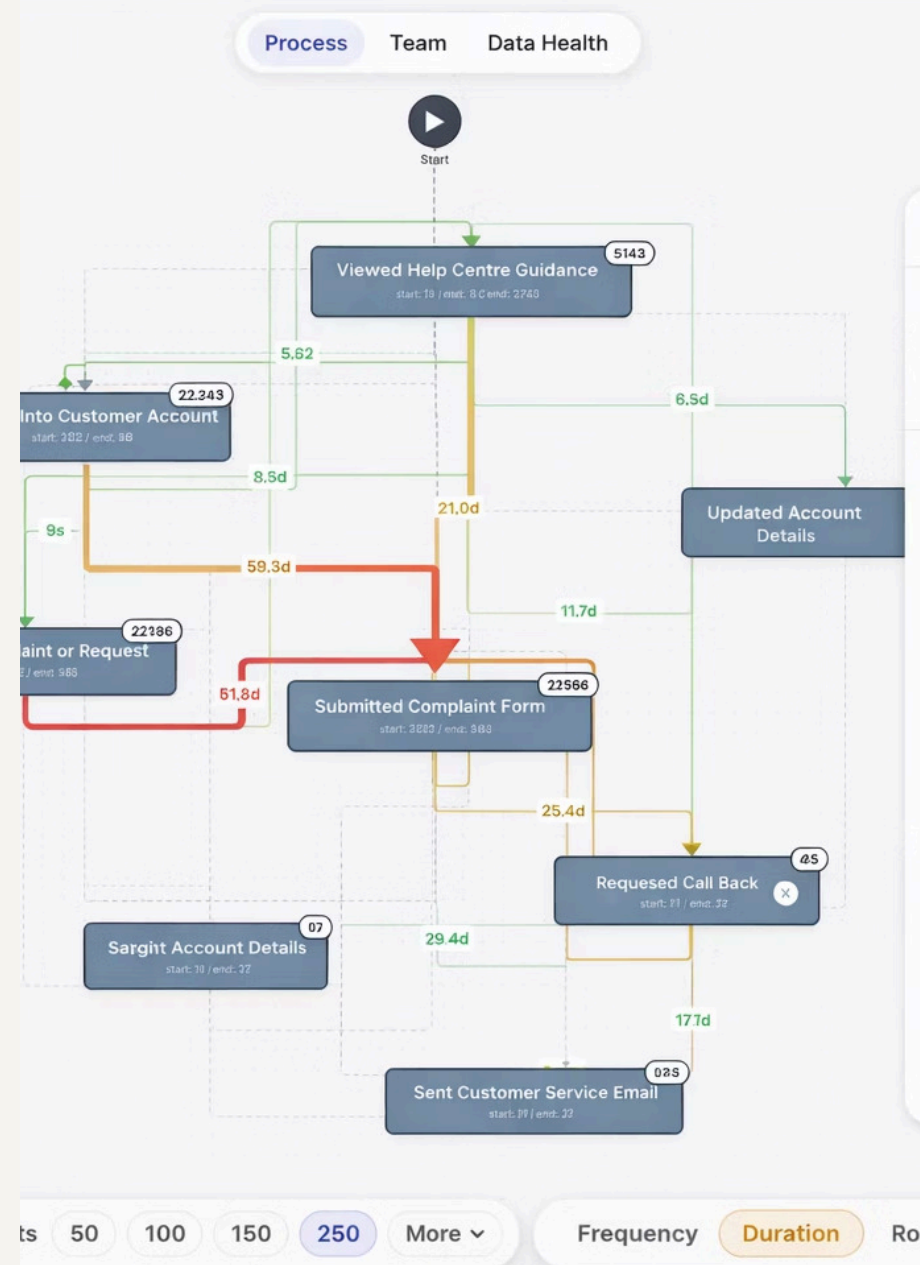
Core implication: The highest-value intervention is not simply speeding up complaint resolution. It is reducing upstream journey friction, identifying likely escalation points earlier, and keeping customers moving through the right channel with the right guidance.

Customer journeys are highly fragmented and non-linear

78% of records show reverse flow and 84% involve repeated steps. Customers frequently revisit prior stages, loop through the same tasks, and fail to progress cleanly – generating repeat contacts and unnecessary service demand across channels.

Silent drop-off and stale records indicate hidden demand leakage

67% of records are stale and 42 silent drop-off steps were detected above threshold. Many journeys do not end in a clear success or resolution signal – suggesting abandoned journeys, unresolved needs, or movement to off-system channels.

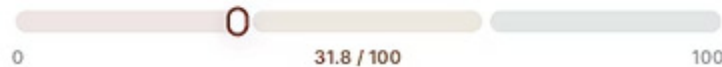


DATA QUALITY ?

31.8%

31.8 / 100

Structural integrity of the recorded trace.



PROCESS HEALTH ?

46.2%

46.2 / 100

Completion status and duration discipline.



OVERALL ?

37.7%

37.7 / 100

Combined view across structure and execution counts.



AI-LED INTERVENTION ROADMAP

Where AI can intervene

Process mining converts customer journey friction into a practical intervention roadmap. The opportunity is to reduce avoidable service demand, improve completion of self-service journeys, and intervene before customers escalate into repeat contact or formal complaint.

1. AI-powered journey guidance and next-best action

Detect when customers are looping through information pages, forms or questionnaires and proactively guide them to the most relevant next step - reducing stall time and preventing unnecessary channel switching.

Why it first: 84% of records show repeated steps, indicating widespread journey looping before escalation.

2. Early escalation risk detection

Use journey patterns – repeated revisits, stalled milestones, and message activity – to identify customers at high risk of assisted contact or formal complaint before they reach that point.

Why it matters: with a p90 complaint resolution time of 54.5 days, early detection dramatically reduces tail-end cost.

3. Intelligent routing across digital and assisted channels

When self-service is unlikely to succeed, route customers directly to the most appropriate support path rather than allowing repeated failed attempts that generate avoidable service demand.

Why it matters: 78% reverse flow indicates customers are frequently sent back through journeys they cannot complete.

4. Complaint theme detection and root-cause surfacing

Use complaint text and journey context to identify recurring issues – insufficient information, unclear rules, poor tone – and link these back to upstream journey failures so root causes can be addressed systematically.

Why it matters: top complaint delays of 120-122 days are concentrated around information insufficiency and unclear application rules.

5. SLA-aware backlog and exception management

Monitor long-tail complaints and stale customer journeys, automatically prioritising cases with high delay risk or unresolved progression to prevent backlog accumulation and SLA breach.

Why it matters: 67% stale records and a mean complaint duration of 16.2 days indicate significant unmanaged backlog.

Indicative value levers

Higher self-service completion

Reducing journey friction and looping increases the share of customers who complete key tasks without assisted contact.

Lower assisted contact volume

Better guidance and earlier intervention reduces the volume of contacts that escalate into calls, messages, or formal complaints.

Fewer repeat contacts and complaints

Addressing root causes of friction upstream reduces the likelihood of customers returning with the same unresolved issue.

Faster and more consistent resolution performance

SLA-aware prioritisation and intelligent routing compress resolution timelines and reduce tail-end variability.

Prescient Labs combines process reconstruction, service-journey intelligence and AI-led intervention design to show where customer operations lose flow, where complaints emerge, and where targeted action can reduce both customer effort and cost-to-serve.