

MKT 512 - Customer Insights and Analytics

Customer Insights Report: Spotify & Grace

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Meet Grace! (Spotify Premium, Daily User)



“Spotify is a comfort friend...
always here for me.”

BIO

International graduate student from China who listens **multiple times per day** while studying, doing chores, and on short drives. She has used Spotify for **~2–3 years**; ads on the free tier **disrupted her vibe**, so she upgraded to **Premium**. She prefers to **stay with Spotify** because her library and playlists are already built in there

FRUSTRATIONS(where friction shows up)

- **Repetition fatigue** in recommendations
- **Cluttered Home screen**; not clear what the “real” recommendation is.
- **Lyrics gaps** on some tracks.

ATTRIBUTES

Loyal

Comforting

Peaceful

Dependable

GOALS & NEEDS(What “success” looks like for Grace)

- **Mood fit, low effort**: music that helps her energize or calm down without work
- **“Similar, not the same” discovery**: new songs adjacent to her taste, not repeats of what she already saved
- **Easy togetherness with** collaborative playlists

1. Relationship Context- Grace x Spotify

Background on the customer and Spotify

- **Who is Grace?**
International graduate student; listens to music **multiple times per day** while studying, commuting, doing chores, and at the gym. Streaming audio is a daily companion, not an occasional treat.
- **How she first met Spotify (2018, Germany)**
Discovered Spotify at a **volunteer camp in Germany** when friends from several countries (Mexico, Europe) wanted to share playlists. She downloaded the **free** app to participate and immediately used it for **social sharing and for her own use**.
- **Why Spotify wasn't part of her life back in China (2018–2023)**
Spotify is **not practically usable in China** (platform blocks & licensing). Grace used **NetEase Music** instead. Using foreign apps typically requires **VPN**, and many people default to Chinese platforms. When in the U.S., some tracks on Chinese apps are **unavailable** due to rights, reinforcing her switch away from NetEase while abroad.
- **Return to Spotify in the U.S. (2024–present)**
Moved to the U.S. for her master's and resumed Spotify, quickly upgrading to **Premium** (ads on the free tier **disrupted her vibe**) after 1 month of using the free tier. Now uses Spotify **~3×/day**, appreciates **CarPlay** and **collaborative playlists** for road trips, and values the **global catalog** for rare/unique tracks. Occasionally uses Spotify when she goes to foreign countries like Japan.
- **Community lock-in**
Friends and peers in the U.S. share **Spotify playlists**, which keeps the habit sticky; her **library and playlists** are built on Spotify, making switching unattractive.

Grace's timeline of using Spotify:

Grace's relationship with Spotify is "*socially sparked*" (2018), "*environmentally constrained*" (2019–2023), and "*utility-driven*" post-move (2024–), with Premium, collaborative playlists, habitual activities

2018 2019 2023 2024 2025

2018– When in Germany

DISCOVERY AND TRIAL
Volunteer camp with international friends → downloaded free Spotify to share playlists and songs

"They asked, 'Do you have Spotify?' ... I downloaded it so we could share songs."

2019–2023 (China)

BLOCKED/ALTERNATIVE
Spotify impractical (platform blocks & licensing). Uses **NetEase**; VPN needed for foreign apps.
Rare Spotify use only when **traveling (e.g., Japan)**

JAN 2024 – PRESENT(US)

PREMIUM MEMBER AND COMMUNITY
Used the free plan for a month and switched to Premium (Family); listens ~3x/day. Collaborative playlists (e.g., Yellowstone road trip) keep her locked-in

Nature of the relationship on Spotify

- **Emotional role (how it feels)**

Grace experiences Spotify as a dependable, low-effort companion that matches her mood.

"Friend... a comfort friend, always here for me."

- **Functional role (why it works for her)**

She relies on Spotify's broad catalog, CarPlay in the car, and the playlists she has already built.

"My playlist is all on Spotify... and sometimes only Spotify has the unique songs."

- **Social role (why she stays)**

Sharing is easy because her friends use Spotify; collaborative playlists make group moments simple and fun.

"We have a Yellowstone playlist went to Yellowstone National park... everyone adds songs; it's super useful for road trips." [Exhibit D]

- **Trust and commitment (how strong it is)**

Trust is steady rather than growing, but commitment is clear: she pays for Premium annually and uses it several times a day.

"My trust is Not increased or decreased... I regularly open it and listen." | "I'm so loyal to Spotify." | "It's between invisible and visible like sometimes I didn't notice but it's always there"

- **Current friction (what strains the bond)**

She wants *new-but-similar* discovery; Daily Mix often repeats saved songs, the Home page feels cluttered, and lyrics are sometimes missing. [Exhibit A,B,C]

"Recommend me something similar, not the same." | "Home page is too cluttered, I'm confused."


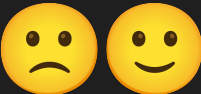

- **Potential breakpoints (what could make her switch)**

She would consider switching if her Chinese service offered full U.S. availability with better, simpler discovery at a lower price.

"If NetEase had all the songs here and was cheaper, I'd prefer it."

Grace's Touchpoints/Interactions (Customer Journey Map)

Note how VPN hassle in China created a barrier, this highlights opportunity for better international availability

Stages	Discovery & first use (2018, Germany)	Blocked/Alternative (2019–2023, China)	Habitual daily use & community (2024–present)
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downloaded free Spotify → join friends' playlist Switched to NetEase in China; rare Spotify use via VPN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Couldn't use Spotify easily → used NetEase daily, only opened Spotify when abroad occasionally (Japan) Stays in the Chinese app ecosystem with friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subscribed to Premium, listens ~3x/day, uses collab playlists for trips Checks Daily Mix / Made for..., browses others' playlists
Emotions	 <p>Excited discovery with friends</p>	 <p>Frustrated by restrictions in China but felt satisfied with NetEase</p>	 <p>Feels steady loyalty, though some small annoyances</p>
Pain points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None major at first; just new discovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotify blocked; VPN was a hassle; songs bought on NetEase wouldn't transfer abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeats in recommendations; cluttered home screen; missing lyrics
Touch points (where Grace interacted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> App install, playlist sharing with friends, basic search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NetEase daily playlist, local Chinese apps, occasional VPN login 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily Mix / Made for Grace, CarPlay, collaborative playlists, search, lyrics panel

Grace's lens: Spotify in Action

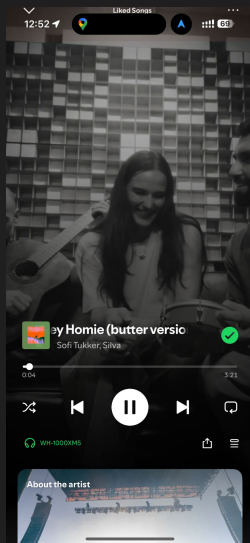


Exhibit (A)

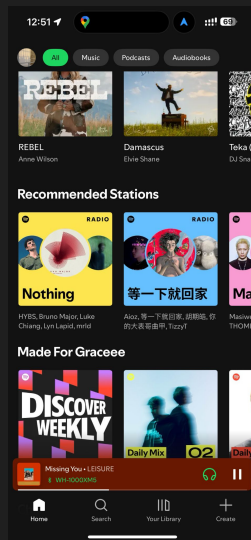


Exhibit (B)

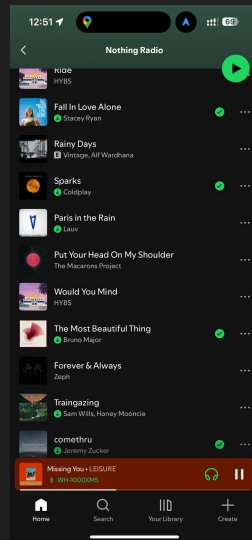


Exhibit (C)

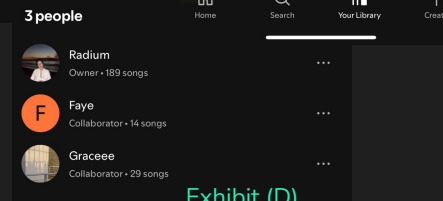
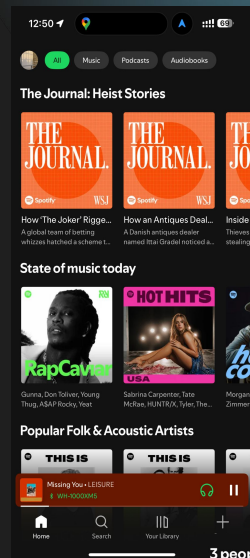
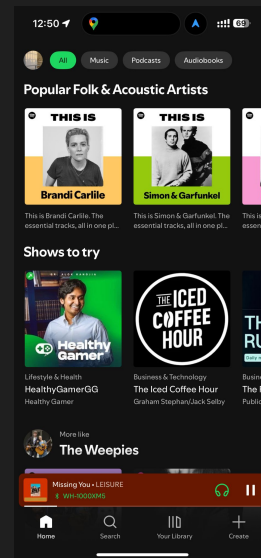


Exhibit (D)

- Exhibit A — Missing lyrics: Lyrics often absent, breaks flow “sometimes they don't have the lyrics.”
- Exhibit B — Repeats in recommendations: Surfaces saved tracks, not discovery “recommending my own songs.”
- Exhibit C — Cluttered home: Too many carousels/podcasts; wants one clean daily list “everything is cluttered... only one recommendation daily.”
- Exhibit D — Collaborative playlists (strength): Great for trips; easy group curation “Yellowstone playlist... super useful.”

2. Relationship Dynamics of Grace x Spotify

- **Type of Relationship :**
 - Friend / comfort companion — dependable, mood-matching, low effort.
 - Utility partner — broad catalog, CarPlay, built playlists
 - Community connector — collaborative playlists keep her in the group.

- **Critical incidents (moments that moved the needle) :**

- **Ad shock** → Premium: free-tier ads “disrupted my vibe” → upgraded.
“Suddenly an ad... I need to buy the membership.”
- **Collaborative playlist joy**: shared road-trip playlist cemented social value.
“Everyone adds songs... super useful.”
- **Algorithm let-down**: repeats her saved songs → frustration.
“They’re recommending my own songs.”
- **Home-page overload**: clutter and irrelevant tiles create confusion.
“Home page is too cluttered—I’m confused.”
- **Lyrics gaps**: breaks the listening flow on some tracks.
“Sometimes they don’t have the lyrics.”

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“My playlist
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“Yellowstone
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3. Strategic Implications

Opportunities to Strengthen the Relationship

- **Simplify interface** → One clear “Daily Discovery” list to cut clutter and help heavy users start faster.
- **Improve discovery freshness** → Focus on “similar, not the same” recs to keep listening engaging.
- **Expand lyrics coverage** → Increases immersion for mood-matching use cases.
- **Leverage collaborative playlists** → Strong retention driver; expand positioning as a social feature.

Why: Helps Spotify know where to focus product fixes that improve retention

Risks to Relationship Continuation

- **Algorithm fatigue** → Heavy users disengage if recs feel repetitive.
- **UX overload** → Cluttered Home may push users to simpler competitors.
- **Competitive threat** → Cheaper, rights-rich alternatives (e.g., NetEase) could win if cross-border access improves. Grace also said *“If there were an app like NetEase here — and at a cheaper price — I would switch.”*

Acquisition & Retention Insights (Beyond Grace)

- Many international students/young professionals treat Spotify as a **comfort companion** — this bond is replicable in other **segments** (*International Students & Expats/Young Professionals with busy schedules/socially connected users*)
- **“Fresh but familiar”** discovery is a common unmet need, not just unique to one user.
- **Community use** (e.g., road trip playlists, study group sharing) can be scaled in marketing and product positioning.

4. Research Applications

- **How Qualitative Insights could inform quantitative research:**
 - The qualitative insights we have gathered point to patterns that may apply beyond one user. To validate and scale them, we can translate each into measurable research questions and experiments.
 - a. *Insight:* Grace feels Spotify repeats her own saved songs.
Research Action: Add survey question: “How often do Spotify’s recommendations feel repetitive?”
Why: Helps measure how widespread this issue is across users.
 - b. *Insight:* She prefers one clear daily playlist (like NetEase) instead of many tiles.
Research Action: Run A/B test (one curated list vs. multiple mixes).
Why: Tests whether simplification increases satisfaction and engagement.
 - c. *Insight:* Collaborative playlists are “super useful” for trips.
Research Action: Track adoption and usage frequency of co-created playlists.
Why: Identifies if this feature drives retention and community use
- **Suggestions for Relationship Development:**
 - Measure **loyalty** via continued Premium subscription despite frustrations.
 - Track **engagement** through daily listening frequency, cross-device use, and playlist sharing
 - Assess **emotional connection** with scale items like “Spotify feels like a companion in my daily life.”
- **Areas of further Investigation:**
 - **Ethnographic mini-studies:** shadow heavy listeners across gym, commuting, study to capture unspoken frustrations.
 - **Community effect:** map how friend networks drive platform lock-in vs. risk of switching.
 - **Price sensitivity:** study whether students or travelers would downgrade or churn if cheaper options existed.
 - **Cross-border UX:** understand expectations of Chinese users using Spotify abroad.

APPENDIX

1. Discussion Guide :
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QCnTtdZg0G3AJTtXRbp2QZeKxs-Ozfflv7EKXqmwGag/edit?tab=t.0>
2. Speaker Notes:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-k5uVPfMyHEzciubwWBC6E-KwLNsroHNNH2z9JX86MXo/edit?usp=sharing>