

Multichannel Research

Charting Consumption in the 21st Century

What We Do
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Dr. Geke Van Dijk, Strategy Director STBY

Geke is co-founder and Strategy Director of STBY. An expert in the field of Consumer Behaviour Research and Human-Computer Interaction, Geke also specialises in more general marketing issues and business strategy. A key theme of her work is that the changing expectancies and demands of contemporary consumers put pressure on suppliers to offer their services seamlessly through multiple channels. Consumers appreciate being able to pick and mix from these multichannel service offerings as they like, thereby co-producing the actual service experience.

Geke's approach to multichannel research has been shaped by nearly two decades working on studies in the area of emerging technology. She has worked as a consultant and researcher in the internet industry since the early nineties, and in 2007 completed a PhD in Computer Sciences from the Open University, in close collaboration with the Business School. She currently splits her time between the offices of STBY in Amsterdam and London, and serves as project lead for both corporate and public sector clients.

Two of the key concepts in service design are customer journeys and touch points. The first indicates the overall customer experience one has in researching, negotiating, purchasing and using services. This process can evolve either fairly quickly (e.g. within an hour), or over a longer period - often entailing the use of multiple channels of service delivery (e.g. internet, face to face, telephone, printed media). The moments of interaction one has with a service provider through a specific channel are the touch points within a customer journey. In the current post-industrial service economy, many organisations are offering their services as integrated networks of tangible and intangible service elements that consumers can choose from, both across channels and across time. The investigation of service experiences therefore needs to be conducted in a multichannel context

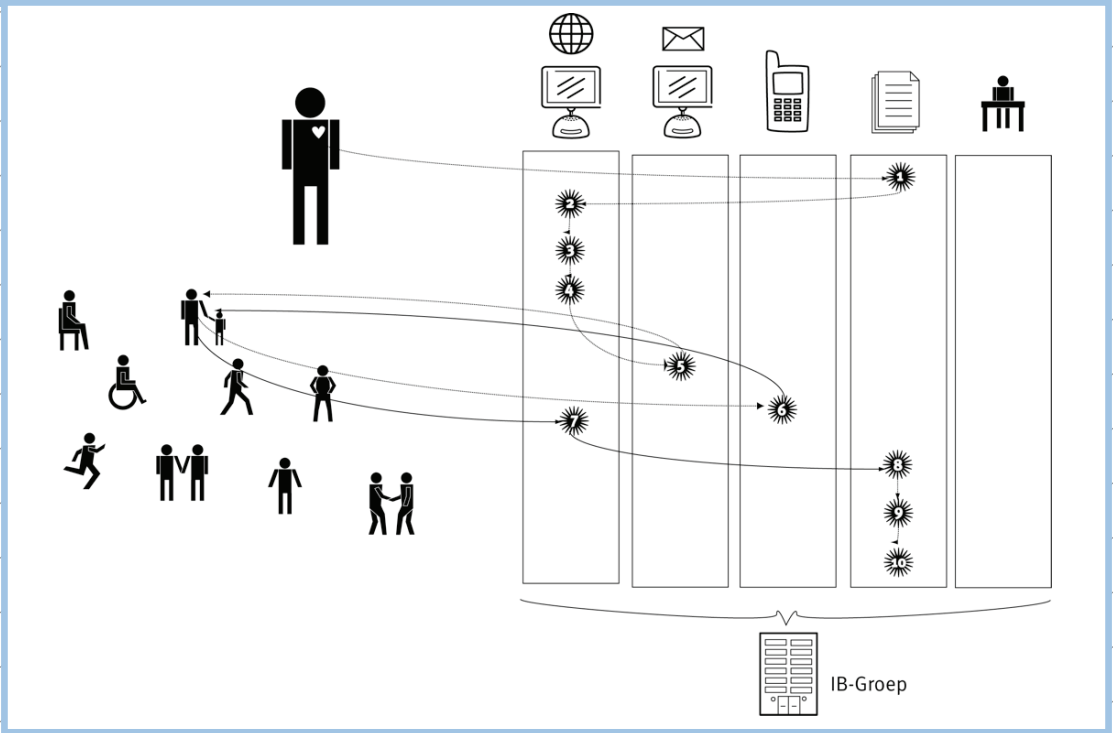
Visualising complex consumer behaviour

STBY was one of the first research companies to recognise the need for multichannel consumer research. As early as 2003 a long-term innovative study was initiated, in collaboration with the Open University in the UK, to develop a theoretical framework and a subsequent methodology to investigate consumer behaviour in a multichannel context. The case study for the project - eventually submitted by Geke van Dijk as her PhD thesis - was an in-depth analysis in the area of leisure travel. STBY examined the travel preparations of a sample of consumers from throughout the UK, charting the details of their arrangements via a series of interviews and diary studies, and relating the findings to literature from various academic fields (e.g. Services Marketing and Human-Computer Interaction). To represent and analyse the customer journeys and touch points identified in the data in a structured way, a visual diagram was developed that STBY subsequently used for several multichannel research projects commissioned by a variety of clients.

Deep insights on haphazard behaviour

One such example was a study conducted for the IB-Groep (the Dutch body responsible for student loans and university registrations). Here, in-depth research into the way students approach financial services through multiple channels revealed that what initially appeared haphazard, was in fact a result of students trying to educate themselves in the manner they thought should be most effective. This study facilitated a deep and insightful understanding of the student's difficulties, wishes and concerns, allowing the executives from IB-Groep responsible for multichannel service innovation to develop services that would put less strain on the organisation.

Consumers are co-producing their service experiences, picking and mixing multichannel service offerings



• Customer journeys (above) visualise the series of touch points that constitute a multichannel service experience. In-depth interviews (below) clarify the context of the interactions (in this case between students and IB-Groep).

