



New shopper journey

In-depth with... Christiaan Rijkers

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They used to call it the first and second moment of truth. A customer is confronted by a product on a shelf and then has to make a decision about whether they are going to buy. Often the process would just take a matter of seconds. Afterwards, we had the process of engagement. What was the customer's experience going to be? Would they come back and buy again in the future?

In his recent book, 'New customer journey', Christiaan Rijkers highlights how this kind of traditional thinking is being confined to the past. The MD and CEO of Maarsse-based strategy agency JosDeVries refers to the Google concept of the 'zero moment of truth'. This is the whole period that precedes the purchase in the store.

The idea of the customer journey isn't a new one, Rijkers told RetailScene.

"Retailers have always communicated with you before you even enter the store. In the parking lot, just as much as the restaurant and checkout area," he says.

Clearly there were always particularly critical moments, such as when the customer was in front of the product

or comparing prices. "Then we had the arrival of the internet," says Rijkers.

"So before entering the market place, we orientate ourselves at home. And now, with mobile, this continues while we're on the road."

In the past, shopping seemed very straightforward. We'd pull out of our garage, drive to a store and then drive home again with our purchase. Now, it's become a much more complex process, with multiple channels and numerous touch points between the retailer and the consumer.

Communicating before, during and after a purchase

Rijkers argues that the future of retail will centre around a collection of different 'touch points'. Because these are situated before, during and after the purchase, retailers are faced with a number of challenges. But the process is made even more complex when you realize it's actually three dimensional, because you also have to consider the use of different devices (mobile, desktop and in-store) and the messages that are communicated.



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How should retailers respond?

“You can simplify,” says Rikkers. “By which I mean better navigation and more information. But the other part is to make everything more experiential. To create inspiration or create background. Simplification on the one hand, enrichment on the other.”

Shaking up retail

The world of apps and social media is certainly one that retailers have yet to exploit to the full. In his book, Rikkers talks about the possibility of ‘continuous customer stimulation’ via social platforms. In his view, these online networks are places of shared consumer experiences and insights, as well the perfect medium for loyalty and reward. Retailers, meanwhile, have the opportunity to gather fascinating data while respecting shoppers’ privacy.

With the recent expansion in new technology and mobile apps, it’s now possible to provide a service to customers and stay connected with them even when they’re not in a physical shop. A push notification on

your phone might tell you, for instance, that a sale is now on or a new collection has arrived in store. Rikkers gives the example of the Jumbo ‘Recipe Shaker’ app. You put in the ingredients you’ve purchased or are planning to purchase, you shake your smart phone and it comes up with a suggested meal.

The customer journey needs to be a seamless process though, across many platforms, channels and touch points. We discuss the analogy of an editorial team on a magazine, pulling together to create the overall experience.

“It’s about story lines,” Rikkers says. “You must have a really clear story line about your brand. But if you have an in-store department, a marketing department, an IT department and so on, it’s hard for the bigger retailers to bring everything together as one story. These departments have to sit together and create the total customer journey.”



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Three types of shopper

Simplification and enrichment are key themes of Rikkers’ advice to retailers, but he makes the point that it’s important to remember that each shopper is different. In his book ‘New customer journey’, he identifies three broad types of consumer.

“The customer’s profile determines the road they travel in the buying process,” argues Rikkers. “It is therefore important to make clear choices regarding target audiences and customer needs to properly support the customers in the buying process.”



1. Functional shopper

The functional shopper needs something immediately and has made a decision about the product and brand. They are not looking for extra information.

At French hypermarket Carrefour, a customer’s phone is connected to an indoor positioning system through the LED light network. This helps to guide them directly to the product on their shopping list more quickly and efficiently.



2. Confirmation shopper

The confirmation shopper, on the other hand, has a broad idea of what they want, but are still looking for suggestions and seeking confirmation.

Dutch supermarket chain Jumbo uses an app which suggests meals based on ingredients selected by the shopper. It can then point people to likely purchases and help them confirm their shopping decisions.



3. Fun shopper

The third category is the fun shopper. They are hoping for inspiration and ideas and see the expedition to the store as a recreational experience. Retailers need to press the button that sends them into ‘buying mode’.

British fashion retailer Ted Baker encourages customers to stay longer and spend time exploring the store by enticing them with a subtle use of light and music.

Transformation at Westside

JosDeVries has been working closely with the Westside center on the outskirts of Bern, which was the largest construction site in Switzerland when building work started a decade ago.

“We entered the project when it was five years old,” says Rikkers. “Westside became a creative meeting point – a place where you could go the swimming pool, the cinema, go shopping and experience the gastronomy. You go there for the day, not just three or four hours.”

Certainly, the brand experience and sense of journey is illustrated very clearly by the work undertaken in Bern. The mall’s color gradient – based around crystals of white light entering three atriums and dissolving into a number of different hues – enables people to navigate the building intuitively. In effect, each area has its own distinct color scheme, which is reflected through the materials of the interior and also mirrored on the center’s website and the mobile app that shoppers are encouraged to download. So although we may be increasingly buying online, we go to the store in order to have a unique experience. And the use of apps and data may well end up being the ‘fourth dimension’ of the customer journey. Guiding us around the store, providing new insights into products and delivering a seamless message from home to purchase and beyond.



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