



Oamk Journal

Oulun ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisuja

Tämä on alkuperäisen julkaisun rinnakkaistallenne. Rinnakkaistallenne saattaa erota alkuperäisestä sivutukseltaan ja painoasultaan.

This is an electronic reprint of the original publication. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Käytä viittauksessa alkuperäistä lähdettä/Please cite the original version:

Aro, P. & Alapeteri, A. 2022. Co-creating a customer journey with non-marketing experts. Oamk Journal 178/2022. <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi-fe2022102162713>

Co-creating a customer journey with non-marketing experts

18.11.2022 - Aro Päivi, Alapeteri Anna

Creating a customer journey can help organisations embrace a more customer-oriented mindset to business. In the Empowering Underground Laboratories Network -project Oamk participated in creating a customer journey with non-marketing experts from underground laboratories by using principles and tools of service design. Service design as a co-creational approach offered user-friendly, practical, and visual tools for collaboration in challenging circumstances due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Beneath European ground, there are several old mines and other underground sites that are no longer used for their original purpose. These underground laboratories (ULs) were one of the main target groups in two international projects in which Oamk experts participated: Baltic Sea Underground Innovation Network (BSUIN) and its extension project Empowering Underground Laboratories Network (EUL).



Growing edible insects in Callio Lab in Pyhäsalmi Mine (photo: EUL- and BSUIN-projects).

In the earlier project, Oamk took part in developing value propositions and business models as well as in co-creating new services and service offerings for the underutilised ULs [1] [2] [3]. Together these projects helped the labs reach their full business potential, find new uses for the facilities and boost marketing activities among other objectives [4].



Äspö Hard Rock Laboratory, where much of the research about the final repository for spent nuclear fuel is taking place (photo: EUL- and BSUIN-projects).

In the more recent project EUL, one of main focuses was to boost customer acquisition and increase understanding of customer segments. Oamk managed a work package focusing on Customer Relationship Management (CRM). An essential part of the package was to create a generic customer journey for the labs in order to help the laboratories embrace a more holistic view on customer relationships and, above all, increase customer understanding.

Developing the customer journey involved researchers from very different fields, thus the customer journey development was a cross-disciplinary effort. In the project, Oamk business experts' team worked with lab experts from various fields of natural sciences, for example, with physicists, geophysicists, geologists, and underground and material science experts. Interestingly, the lab experts had a limited amount of marketing expertise or

experience, whereas the Oamk business experts' team had very little knowledge of the fields in natural sciences. This was the starting point for developing the customer journey.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the process of creating a customer journey for the underground labs involved in the EUL project. The research question of the paper is the following:

How to create a customer journey with non-marketing experts in an online setting?

In this paper, we shall first briefly introduce the theoretical background for creating the customer journey, second, shed light on service design as a development approach in the project, and third, present how the customer journey was co-created in practice. We will finish the paper by discussing some lessons learned from the project.

Customer journey

One of the cornerstones of the theoretical background was the concept of customer journey, which helps understand the different stages of customer relationships and their critical points. Customer journey means the sequence of events that customers go through to learn about, purchase and interact with company offerings [5]. The customer journey is described visually, for example, by using a customer journey map, a customer journey canvas, or a service blueprint. The visualization of the customer journey can be used to describe the existing service and to sketch service improvements and innovations. [6]

Mapping customer journey requires scrutinising services, a series of interactions between customers and the service system through many different touchpoints during the customer journey. The touchpoints where customers interact with the service are often used to construct a "journey". To describe the customer journey, good customer insight is required, not only from the service provider's perspective. It provides a high-level overview of the factors influencing user experience constructed from the user's perspective. [6]

Service design as a development approach

The implementation of the customer journey was based on the principles of service design and its tools. In this paper, a case study strategy was adopted.

Service design can be considered as a mindset, a process, a toolset, a cross-disciplinary language and a management approach. Service design has established itself as a practice that enables industries to design and deliver their services with a human-centred approach. Through its tools, service designers obtain contextual and cultural understanding which creates a backdrop for new service solutions, with improved user experience and customer satisfaction. [6] [7]

Service design was chosen as an approach because it offered a clear process and a useful tool set for the service development. As it is co-creative and practical with visual tools, it allowed underground experts from different disciplines, for example, physics and geology, to collaborate. Service design was also an obvious choice because the project partners were familiar with service design and its tools since they participated in such workshops in the earlier BSUIN project. Due to COVID19, the workshops were implemented online in the EUL project.

Data for the customer journey was collected in service design workshops during the period of April-June 2021, and the data was analysed by using qualitative methods, mainly content analysis.

As a research approach of this paper, case study strategy was adopted. A case study method explores subjects and issues where relationships may be ambiguous or uncertain, but also attempts to attribute causal relationships; hence, a case study is not merely describing a situation [8].

Co-creating the Customer journey

In order to create the customer journey, two online workshops were organised according to the principles of service design. The main target group was the ULs within the project, and they were encouraged to invite their customers to the workshop. Also, all other project partners were invited, since they also use the underground labs and thus can be considered customers.

To create a generic customer journey, service design customer journey map was used as a tool. It provides a structured, linear visualization of a service user's experience. The touchpoints where users interact with the service are used to construct an end-to-end "journey". The journey may include recognizing a need, searching for a specific service, booking and paying it, and using it as well as possibly complaining. [7]

It is important to identify the touchpoints where the users interact with the service. They can take different forms, for example, personal face-to-face contact, virtual interaction with the website, a space or physical trips to a building. Once the touchpoints have been identified, they can be connected in a visual representation of the overall service. Photos, personal quotes and commentaries supplement the representation. The overview enables identifying the problems, whilst focusing on specific touchpoints allows the service experience to be broken down into individual stages for further analysis. [6] [7]

Customer journey maps can have various scales and scopes. What a customer journey map represents, its quality, its focus, and its level of detail, depends on many factors. In any case, they make the intangible service visible and facilitate a common understanding between co-creators. [7]

In the workshops, virtual bulletin boards Padlets were used for co-creation. A set of questions was devised on the Padlets to direct the discussion. In the first workshop, the questions were based on the different stages of the customer journey: awareness, consideration, acquisition/purchase, service, and loyalty. In the first workshop, the focus was on creating essential content for the customer journey. A summary of the first workshop is illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Summary of workshop 1.

Name and Date	Number of participants	Focus of the workshop	Tools of the workshop	Results
Describing and elaborating the customer journey 14.4.2021 via Zoom	10 project partners	Essential steps of the customer journey, using before, during and after stages, and some cross-stage issues	Orientation material (the topics) in advance, Padlets, Interactive discussion	Content for the generic customer journey Critical points Joint understanding of the customer journey

In order to generate ideas for the customer journey, four Padlets were used: 1. “before the service”, 2. “during the service”, 3. “after the service”, and 4. “all stages of the service”. In the first Padlet, the following questions were posed:

- How can the ULs reach new customers?
- How does the potential customer become aware of the UL?
- When the customer is considering the acquisition (definitely needs the service), what kind of information does the customer need?
- How can the UL help the customer make the purchase decisions?

In the second padlet, “during the service”, the following questions were asked:

- Customers expect the service to be reliable, secure and certified. They appreciate: physical accessibility, ready-made infrastructure and spaces, stability, predictability, good data connections, sustainability, price. How do we ensure that these features are put into practice during the service?
- What is important for the customer during the service (can sometime be a long process)?
- How do we ensure that the communication between the customer and the UL works?

The third padlet included the following questions:

- How do we ensure that the customer is satisfied after service?
- How do we maintain the relationship?

In the final padlet, the participants were asked to consider the whole customer journey and discuss the following questions:

- What is critical in different stages of the customer journey? (before, during and after)
- How can we surprise the customer in a positive way (what wows the customer)

An example of the padlet discussion can be seen in Figure 1.

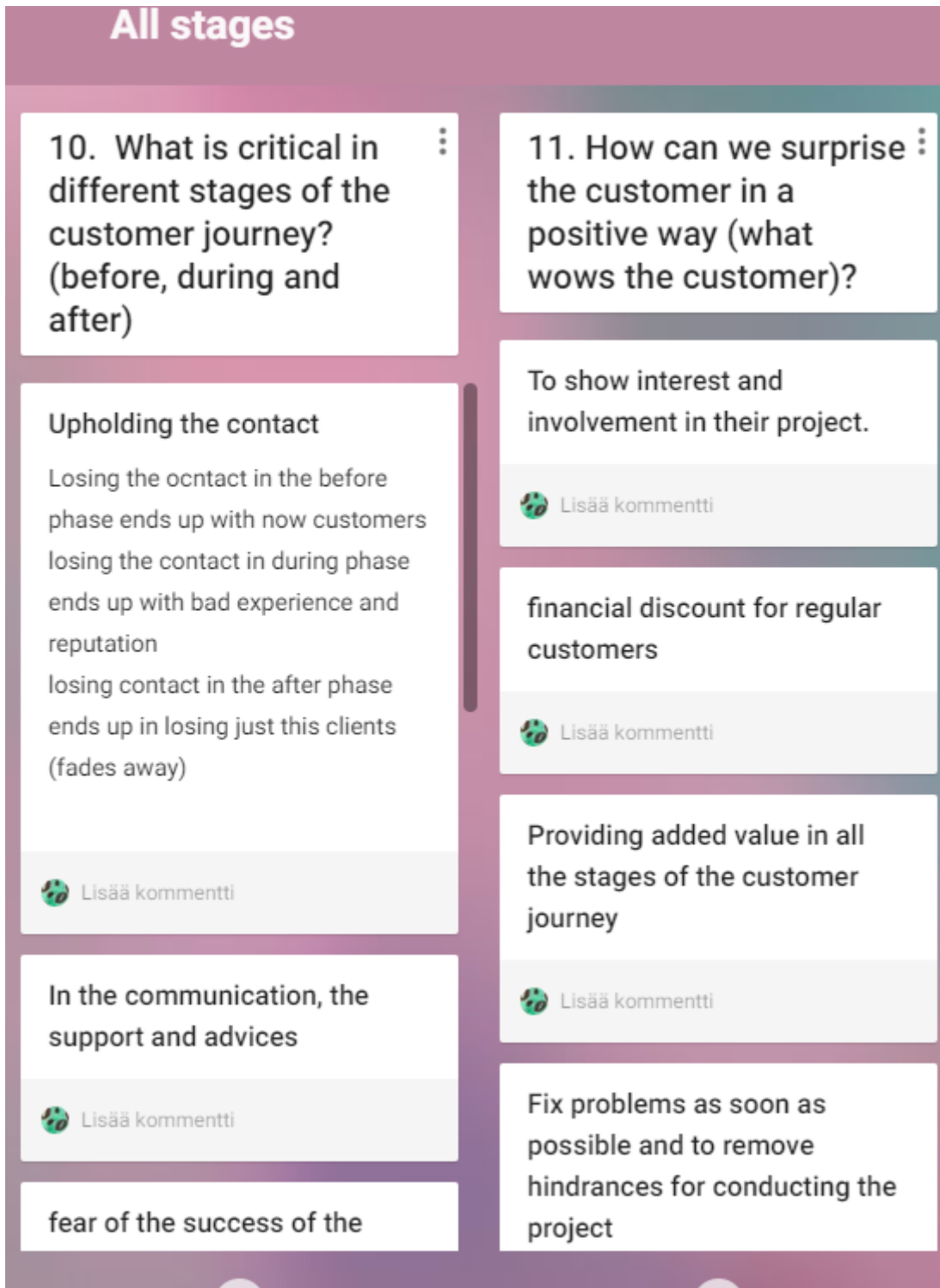


FIGURE 1. An example of an authentic padlet.

In the second workshop, the focus was on fine-tuning and finalising the tentative customer journey created after the first workshop. The emphasis was on elaborating on the first stages of the customer journey.

In order to generate ideas for the customer journey, a Padlet with two questions was used. The participants were randomly divided into two parallel groups. The questions were:

- How can the UL make an excellent impression on the potential customer in the awareness, consideration and acquisition stages?
- What does transparency in customer journey mean in practice? How do you make it visible?

The summary of workshop 2 can be seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Summary of workshop 2.

Name and Date	Number of participants	Focus of the workshop	Tools of the workshop	Results
Reflecting and elaborating the customer journey 2.6.2021 via Zoom	10 representatives of the ULs	Fine tune & finalize the generic customer journey	First version of the generic customer journey (orientation material) in advance, Padlets, Interactive discussion	Improved content for the generic customer journey
	2 representatives of project partners			
	1 associated partner	Focus on the beginning of the customer journey and transparency		Issues to be high lighted
	3 outside participants, companies			

For the second workshop, a preliminary visual customer journey was created by the facilitators based on the results of the first workshop and the previous BSUIN project. This helped the workshops participants focusing on the essential issues in the customer journey. The “before” stage, how to attract new customers, seemed difficult as expected, whereas the during stage was the easiest for the participants, since they are very much involved in the service itself and that is the base of their expertise. For the “after service” stage, they produced very relevant ways/means.

The detailed results of the workshops are described in the activity report of the project, which can be found on the project website [9].

Lessons learned

The purpose of this paper was to describe the process of creating a customer journey for the underground labs involved in the EUL project. The research question was “How to create a customer journey with non-marketing experts in an online setting?”.

Creating the generic customer journey for the undergrounds labs was implemented with the principles of service design due to its co-creational nature. Service design as a development approach was also chosen because it offered a clear process and a toolset for developing the service. As a practical and visual tool, it allowed the underground experts from different disciplines to collaborate. The participants were already familiar with Padlets as co-creation tools as well as being familiar with each other. Thus, service design offered a good foundation for collaboration, a common mindset and useful tools for co-creating the customer journey.

Co-creating the customer journey was implemented in two workshops that were very carefully planned, timed, and managed by the facilitators. Because of the Corona virus, online workshops were held via Zoom. Both workshops took 90 minutes, which seems to be a maximum duration for an online workshop; it was important not to include too much content in one session. Each workshop had a clear aim and purpose, helping the participants to focus and not get side-tracked. The participants were very active, keen, and motivated, producing a great deal of content partly because the topic was seen as important and useful. It is possible that the different circumstances also helped; the online setting might have been more comfortable for some participants. Therefore, it was essential to co-create the customer journey in goal-oriented, well-planned and focused online workshops with motivated participants.

Facilitating service design workshops calls for a certain kind of mindset from the collaborators – both from the facilitators as well as the participants. For the facilitators, an important aspect is to keep an open mind, listen and be curious. Respecting the participants as experts in their own field and valuing their contribution to the workshops are essential. During the workshops, the participants were encouraged to write as much as possible, and all answers were told to be right and anonymous. The facilitators were only observing and guiding the work – enabling a voice to each collaborator. We also observed that our business expertise was appreciated, and our facilitation skills were respected.

This kind of approach helped building an open and pleasant atmosphere for discussion, which enabled the co-creation.

Another important aspect in cross-disciplinary development work was ensuring that all collaborators, facilitators included, were “speaking the same language”. This was achieved by avoiding field-specific terminology in discussions, and for example, in the workshops the padlets had clear questions in English devoid of business jargon. Considering the language was also important because none of the workshop participants were native speakers of English. Thus, co-creating a customer journey with non-experts also required ensuring a common language for co-creation.

To summarise, the keystones for co-creating the customer journey with non-marketing experts were choosing a collaborative development approach with activating tools, organising goal-oriented and focused workshops that were carefully planned, creating an open and respectful atmosphere with skilful facilitation, and ensuring a common language for co-creation.

Now that the project has come to an end, our understanding that a co-creational approach requires a willingness to learn from others has again been strengthened. We have been able to deepen our understanding of our field, business, by getting more experience from, for example, service design and facilitation, but we have also learned a great deal about new disciplines – we even learned about the disposal of nuclear waste! Throughout the years, the highly complicated underground context of the project has become familiar for us, Oamk team members, and the underground experts’ business and especially customer understanding has increased. Without the contribution of both parties, it would have been impossible to reach our project objective. For the project, it was about creating a customer journey for the underground laboratories, but for us it has also been a journey for professional growth.

Päivi Aro

Principal Lecturer

Oulu University of Applied Sciences, School of Business

Anna Alapeteri

Senior Lecturer

Oulu University of Applied Sciences, School of Business

References

- [1] Aro, P., Ahola, H. & Vuorela, T. 2019. Creating New Innovation Services for Underground Labs in the Baltic Sea Region via Service Design: Part 1: Exploration. ePooki. Oulun ammattikorkeakoulun tutkimus- ja kehitystyön julkaisut 53. Referred 21.12.2021. <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi-fe2019061921339>
- [2] Aro, P., Ahola, H. & Posa, B. 2020. A poster of business models in a scientific conference turned into an online display – a new normal? ePooki asiantuntijablogi 22.6. Oulun ammattikorkeakoulu. Referred 21.12.2021. <https://blogi.oamk.fi/2020/06/22/a-poster-of-business-models-in-a-scientific-conference-turned-into-an-online-display-a-new-normal>
- [3] Aro, P. & Ahola, H. 2020. Creating value propositions and service offering for the underground labs and their network: Part 2: Creation and reflection. ePooki. Oulun ammattikorkeakoulun tutkimus- ja kehitystyön julkaisut 62. Referred 4.1.2022. <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi-fe2020082763350>
- [4] Baltic Sea Underground Innovation Network. Referred 21.12.2021. <http://bsuin.eu>
- [5] Norton, D.W. & Pine II, B. J. 2013. Using the customer journey to road test and refine the business model. Strategy & Leadership 41 (2), 12–17. Referred 4.1.2022. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10878571311318196>
- [6] Stickdorn, M. & Schneider, J. 2011. This is service design thinking. Basics – Tools – Cases. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers.
- [7] Stickdorn, M., Hormess, M., Lawrence, A. & Schneider, J. 2018. This is service design doing. Applying Service Design Thinking in the Real World. A Practitioner's Handbook. Sebastopol, USA: O'Reilly.
- [8] Gray, D. E. 2017. Doing research in the business world. Los Angeles: Sage.
- [9] Customer Journey and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System Requirements. Activity report of WP3.1. Referred 21.2.2022. <https://bsuin.eu/eul-project/eul-results-outcomes/>

METATIEDOT

Tyyppi: Artikkel

Julkaisija: Oulu University of Applied Sciences

Julkaisunumero: 178/2022

Julkaisuvuosi: 2022

Tekijätiedot: Aro Päivi, Alapeteri Anna

Oikeudet: CC BY-SA 4.0

Kieli: englanti

Pysyvä osoite: <http://urn.fi/urn:nbn:fi-fe2022102162713>

Tiivistelmä: The purpose of this article is to describe the process of creating a customer journey for the underground labs involved in EUL project. The research question was: How to create a customer journey with non-marketing experts in an online setting? The approach was service design, which offered an appropriate mindset, a process, a toolset and a cross-disciplinary language for this purpose. The keystones for co-creating the customer journey with non-marketing experts were careful planning of the workshops, a clear focus and aims of the workshops, the use of activating tools, an open atmosphere and goal-oriented facilitation.