Reimagine your customer journeys to drive growth
The world is different to how it was in 2019. Customer expectations and pain points have changed. There has been disruption and innovation in the supply chain. And customer interactions with touchpoints are evolving with this new reality.

This is not a time for business as usual. The changes in the business ecosystem and customer behaviour have created an environment where urgent action is needed for survival - whether it is building digital capabilities or innovating supply chain and retail models. It has also opened up new possibilities for growth.

Never before has it been so important to integrate technological advancements with a human-centred experience.

To win market share in this environment, you need to fully understand your customers’ needs and behaviours, and construct an optimal journey around them.

People want to feel empowered. To put it simply: they want to do things their own way. They expect a smooth and seamless process in which they can combine digital touchpoints with human contact whenever they want it. And they no longer accept apologies when they can’t use the newest technology available. They have a perfect understanding of what should be possible.

“I could not collect the product I had bought online [click&collect] because they did not have it, when I checked online it was in-stock.”

Retail customer, Kantar Insights, CX+ 2020 Mexico
Organisational silos create gaps between customer experience and brand promise

Organisational silos are one of the biggest obstacles for smooth and seamless customer journeys. Too often different business units are accountable for isolated parts of the customer journey. This does not reflect how people interact with companies. Your customers don’t call in to get a great hotline experience - they reach out to clarify the issues with their latest payment - and picking up the phone is necessary to get this done. The hotline is only one piece of the puzzle: a customer may have recognised a mistake in their online balance, then read the FAQ on your website before calling in. Every part of the organisation is involved in the overall customer experience. Each of these touchpoint (online billing, website FAQ, hotline) should be understood in the context of your customers’ wider journey.

Many organisations still tend to underestimate the importance of overcoming silo-thinking, and fail to create a holistic ecosystem of customer experience that focusses on what their customers need. In early 2020 the vast majority of customers (60%) claimed it is not easy to combine different service channels (Kantar’s CX+2020, Global, n=120,000).

Implementing customer journey thinking in an organisation will always pay off. The returns from understanding your customers’ journey are high.

“...performance on journeys is 30 to 40 percent more strongly correlated with customer satisfaction than performance on touchpoints is – and 20 to 30 percent more strongly correlated with business outcomes”

Harvard Business Review – September 2013

Only 40% of customers across all industries think companies make it easy to combine online and offline shopping

Kantar’s CX+2020, Global, n=120,000
Understanding customer journeys

A thorough understanding of customer journeys is key to pivot from a siloed touchpoint management approach to an integrated view of customer experiences.

A customer journey is the ecosystem of interactions a person has with your company. Whether this journey represents the complete customer lifecycle – from research about different providers, to purchase, and finally a renewal – or a drilled-down view into a specific aspects like the sign-up process: it always needs to reflect the full picture of a process, not just an isolated view of touchpoint performance.

Understanding customer journeys is much more than documenting the interactions with your business. Firstly, it involves a complete understanding of your customer. See what they see. Feel what they feel. Explore their motivations – from the actions they take, to their underlying needs, expectations, questions, emotions and the barriers occurring on the way. It will help you to establish the who, what, where, when and how of the customer’s critical needs and interactions with your company. Secondly, it sheds light on all internal processes that are happening behind the scenes in your organisation. How are relevant people, processes and technologies interacting? This integrated overview of the entire customer journey will help you to understand how the pieces of the puzzle fit together.
2.1
Your customers are on a mission

Every time customers reach out, every interaction they have with your business is to achieve a specific goal. You need to understand this greater purpose behind the interaction – and the underlying motivation.

The purpose can be as obvious as buying a new car. There are functional needs related to this - getting from one place to another. But behind every functional need there is an individual context, a deeper purpose and an emotional need. This emotional need can differ significantly. Having a car means being able to go wherever a person wants to go - a symbol of freedom. For someone else, a fancy car is essential to show everyone they are successful in their job - a status symbol.

The purpose and emotional need behind a mission reveals a lot about the emotional connection to your company during this journey. Unlocking your customer’s greater purpose prepares the ground for understanding the corresponding journey, and for creating an experience that truly reflects the needs of your customers. It is a strong differentiator from competitors, and thus key to drive business success.

2.2
Eliminate pain points in your customer experience

A thorough understanding of the key customer journeys is the basis of becoming truly customer centric. Customers may have multiple journeys in achieving their goals. While one person prefers to call the hotline first, someone else is searching through online forums, and a third person likes to use the website chat to solve issues. Constructing the optimal journey and touchpoint interactions will help you create the most efficient and profitable experience overall. But to do that, you need to understand why people go on these different journeys and what their expectations are. Customer journey mapping will enable you to identify the gap between what is desired, and what you are delivering.

Furthermore, you will gain insights on the mechanics in the background:

- Which internal processes are linked to each part of the journey?
- How are the different parts of your organisation connected to these touchpoints?
- How does the business perform operationally across the different parts of the customer journey?
- What role does technology play across these steps?
- Why do certain issues occur?

You will not only know what to improve, but also how to improve. This process is more than an opportunity to optimise the current processes. It can be a first step to implementing continuous learning processes for ideation, or to developing new service designs – ideally in co-creation with customers.

87% of people prefer to buy in retail stores that empathise with their needs.

Kantar’s CX+ 2020, General Retail, n=16,500
2.3 Focus your investments on the moments that matter the most

There are infinite possibilities for you to optimise your customer experience. It is easier to target your budget and future investments with a focus on the key moments of a customer’s journey. The moments that have the most impact on their relationship with your business.

The peak – end rule

People do not recall every moment of an experience. Instead, they remember their experience at the peak, that is at the most emotionally intense point of their experience, and they remember their experience at the end. One famous example of this selective memory is IKEA’s food court with hot dogs, meatballs and cinnamon rolls at a very low price. Many customers will not remember how annoyed they were with finding a parking slot or standing in line forever. Their overall impression of the journey will be biased towards the positive emotion at the end of their journey.

A distinct customer journey understanding explores the intensity of emotions attached to each journey step. It discloses positive, memorable experiences. Positive emotions can significantly drive up brand preference, and naturally, the opposite is true for negative emotions.

Customers are 5.7 times more likely to recommend a brand after a positive emotional experience, 4.5 times more likely to buy additional products or services from the brand and more than 9 out of 10 say they will continue to use the brand in the future (Source: Kantar’s CX+ 2020, Global, Grocery Retail). As it is not effective to optimise every single aspect of a journey, the key to business success is understanding customer needs and emotions across the entire journey, and then delighting customers in the moments that matter most.
2.4
Take your employees and partners on the road to customer centricity

“The main actors in the journey understanding process are the people involved. This can be your employees in the different business units affected and your partners, like retailers, or your warehouse supplier. Their contribution is far higher than guidance on the customer journey and the processes behind. They are the ones to unlock customer needs, motivations and feelings. By empathising with your customers, they develop a full appreciation of the customers’ journey - what customers are doing and how they are feeling. And afterwards they carry this empathy into their business units. They will become advocates of customer centricity within the organisation.

Bringing people from different business units together will naturally foster collaboration across departments. Understanding customer journeys will make it clear how every part of the organisation is involved in delivering an outstanding customer experience. Participants that understand this will re-orient internal thinking and behaviour away from narrow and isolated points of view. Taking your employees on the journey will embrace new thinking and activate it – the only way to embed change in your company culture.”

- Benjamin Franklin
Unlock the power of your customer journeys

Looking into customer journeys helps you to identify the differences between what a customer expects, and what they experience.

It will show how effective your business is in supporting customers and in meeting their needs on a holistic basis. And it will set the ground for creating a customer-centric business blueprint: a prioritised plan of customer-focused actions that will drive improvements, and ultimately positively impact your business performance.

Depending on your CX maturity and business case, there are different approaches to understand your customer journeys. We have identified four main steps to support you:

1. Consolidate insights
2. Build empathy
3. Create a journey model
4. Empower your organisation with the insights

3.1 Consolidate insights

Firstly, we will consolidate all relevant data available in your organisation. This includes operational data as well as former journey maps, brand tracking, customer and employee insights, data from online platforms and feedback on social media and your website, as well as external data in your industry.

Based on this we develop a common understanding of the current situation and identify areas where more updated input and information is needed. Potential knowledge gaps are closed with deep-dive interviews with customers and employees.

Interviewing your customers reveals how they experience different touchpoints and how they interact with you and your competitors. Cognitive interviewing techniques are highly effective in uncovering specific moments that engage customers on a rational and emotional level. They enable a detailed understanding of customers’ decisions and behaviours as a result of their experiences.

Never forget to listen to your employees carefully as well. In-depth interviews with relevant internal stakeholders deliver much more than the insights needed for the journey and process understanding. They are indispensable to get the buy in to the journey mapping process and to help move the organisation into a journey mind-set to overcome silo-thinking.

Our experts understand how different sources build an ecosystem of data and will synthesise them to provide initial insights on the experience as a basis for a full understanding of the current situation.
3.2 Build empathy

Once the business snapshot is completed, your employees need to switch to a customer perspective:

- What is this customer’s mission?
- What are the underlying motives and emotional needs?
- Which actions does this customer need to take to complete their mission?
- Which touchpoints are used on the journey?
- How is the customer feeling across this journey?
- What is delighting, what is disappointing?

Understanding customer journeys is based on the participants’ ability to see the world with your customers’ eyes. They need to represent true behavior and emotions of customers. Our team of experienced workshop facilitators will apply different techniques to foster this empathy like creating personas who represent a specific customer with their motivations, characteristics and social context. Deep diving into this persona’s feelings and point of view will make it easy for your employees to connect with your customers.

To ensure these personas reflect the reality, we will observe how actual customers behave on the journey and understand how they are influenced by internal aspects like their psychological and cultural attitudes as well as situational factors along the journey. An ethnographic approach will enable your employees to fully understand what’s happening in the customer’s mind, and how it results in specific behaviours.

3.3 Create a journey model

Our workshop facilitators will guide your stakeholders to visualise all touchpoints and activities customers need to undertake on their journey. An effective journey map shows the entire ecosystem of these interactions - including internal processes that are normally invisible to the customers. Therefore, participants also switch to their own perspective again:

- What is happening behind the scenes at each of the journey steps?
- How are relevant people, processes and technologies interacting at each step of the customer journey?

The insights collected before the workshop and their very own expertise will help your employees take everything into account.

Building a clear representation of customer journeys reveals the gap between the actual and the intended customer experience. Taking your customers’ perspective gives a straight picture of where you let your customers down and which additional developments can provide the greatest positive impact. Our experts will ensure that all relevant perspectives are fully explored and documented during the journey workshop. Furthermore, we will help you to further validate the crafted journey steps with customers or other stakeholders if necessary.
3.4

Empower your organisation with the insights

Kantar’s global network of experts will help you prioritise investments using validated methods to identify the moments that matter most along the journey. For most customer missions there are several different journey designs possible. Our data analysts will evaluate these different designs, using proven methods, to determine the return of investments on the different scenarios. This will help you choose the journey design that will bring most success for your organisation.

Knowing which parts of the journey need to be optimised and how best to do that will not automatically translate into business success. The key to becoming a customer-centric organisation is to spread the insights within your business and embed it in the company culture.

Our consultants will support you by creating awareness within your organisation. Communication is key; all initiatives and actions based on the workshop need to be clearly articulated to all necessary people. Digital journey mapping tools help to visualise the customer journey afterwards and make it assessible for your employees – setting the ground for a tangible customer journey governance.

Ideally this is supported by a customer feedback programme to track the success of all improvement initiatives. Having clear measurement systems for all relevant touchpoints with well-defined targets ensures employees understand the impact they have. An effective customer journey understanding does not only define what to improve - but also what success looks like.
What sometimes seems to be a very straightforward and crystal-clear task can turn out to be a real eye-opener if you really look at the world with the customer’s lens. As customer’s needs continue to pivot, stay close to the demands of the day, anticipate those of tomorrow. Adapting to changing needs is the best chance organisations have to build a true competitive advantage and move into the emerging world of the experience economy that is fast approaching.

Are you ready to drive change?

With a potential new drug for a rare disease in the pipeline and commercialisation planning starting, our healthcare client needed a comprehensive market understanding. This included a complete patient journey, from very first symptoms to diagnosis, treatment initiation and management.

We designed a multi-phase approach to ensure insights were grounded in real life and captured the perspectives of the relevant stakeholders. In the first phase, we conducted qualitative interviews with patients in ten countries to get the true voice of our client’s customers. Phase two was a quantitative design, including the collection of patient record forms from treating physicians. Thus, we were no longer dependent on the perception of the respondents alone, but had real life evidence.

With all the data points, we co-created the final patient journey with our clients in a two-day workshop session. We then created a digital journey that included patient video interviews.

We saw the value of combining different methodologies and target groups to dig deeper and go below the surface. A gap analysis showed where the patient opinions and interpretations were not aligned with treating physicians. This allowed our client to shape their strategy towards a successful launch. In addition, having an interactive patient journey allowed for graphs and insights behind key milestones of the journey. In combination with the videos, this served as a perfect icebreaker to start meaningful conversations to engage all key players within and outside our client’s organisation.

How Kantar can help

Journey transformations are not delivered overnight. It can take years for an organisation to put in place the required structure and support mechanisms to reach maturity and deliver real change. Our behaviour change experts and consultants provide support to drive cultural change, embed new behaviours and practices and develop new ways of working. The returns organisations gain from these efforts are undisputed. Industry leaders like Amazon, Apple or Porsche have never stood still in their quest to redefine customer experience.

Get in touch to find out more.
The authors

Belinda Ochynski
Senior Manager
Customer Experience
Kantar in London

Helga Nützel
Global Associate Director
Customer Experience
Kantar in Munich

Tara Prabhakar
Global Director
Qualitative
Kantar in London

About Kantar
Kantar is the world’s leading evidence-based insights and consulting company. We have a complete, unique and rounded understanding of how people think, feel and act, globally and locally in over 90 markets. By combining the deep expertise of our people, our data resources and benchmarks, our innovative analytics and technology, we help our clients understand people and inspire growth.

About CX+
Customer experience is everything these days. But are you exceeding or falling short of your customers’ expectations? Our CX+ programme shows you how to close the gap between your brand promise and customer experience. Discover what makes your experience unique, and how it helps deliver your brand promise. Find out more about CX+. 