
INTRODUCTION

Consumption is a deeply political issue. The series of recent scandals has shown how consumers are increasingly becoming aware of both the complexity of globalised supply chains, and the way consumers are affected by and can affect them.

Designers can and should take part in shaping the consumption landscape and making mindful shopping more accessible and possible at scale within mainstream retail environments.

Disclosed is a service concept that helps shoppers make more mindful decisions more easily. It allows them to find products that better reflect what they believe matters for their health and the planet. It was developed and designed through different project iterations and phases with different industry partners, stakeholders and fellow designers while I was completing a Service Design MA at the Royal College of Art.

USING THIS RESOURCE FOR YOUR PERSONAL LEARNING

Service Design thinking tends to promote the 'double diamond' project model that identifies 4 main stages: Discover, Define, Develop, Deliver. In practice, as Marion's case demonstrates, it is a bit more complicated. Her 'Disclosed' project is shown through its iterations as three sub-projects. Each builds on the previous one, but involved a different team, different project stakeholders and a different user context.

As a design student, or perhaps a recent graduate, consider how your process compares to the methods, techniques and working habits described in this resource. There are some prompts on page 12 to support your reflection. For more background to Marion's work, and to service design in general, you might find it helpful to look at these accompanying resources before or alongside this resource:

- Design Museum's InThe Studio video featuring Marion Ferrec:
<https://vimeo.com/112821086>

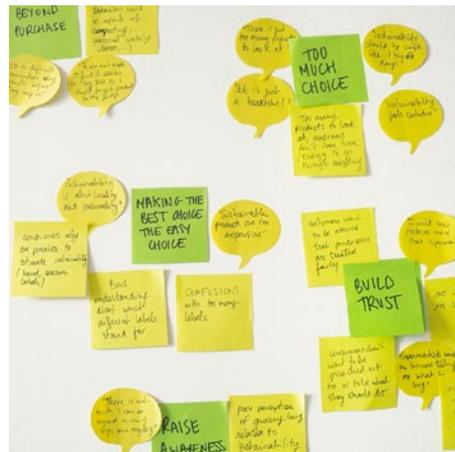
IN THEORY

Our client invested a lot of efforts with different sustainable initiatives and towards reducing their environmental impact and wanted us to identify how to multiply this impact by engaging their colleagues and customers with sustainability.

Guerrilla research during a discovery phase consists in stopping people in relevant places to ask them a few quick questions. It tends to be criticised because it is not as accurate as more conventional research methods, but they offer a very fast and low cost way of gaining insights.

User interviews are the core of understanding the people you're designing for. They enable to build empathy and unlock insights through conversations about a person's lifestyle, mindset, experiences, behaviours and needs.

www.designkit.org/methods/2



(L) Early affinity mapping grouping interviewees quotes and insights into buckets
(R) Creation session exploring with users the different perceived sustainability dimensions within a trip to the supermarket.

PHASE 1 – DESIGN RESEARCH PROJECT

This first part of the project was a freelance research mission over summer with fellow RCA Service Design students for a UK major retailer. Our client commissioned us to explore how sustainability was perceived and reflected in their colleagues and customers' actions. Our team was composed of Service Designers with background in Engineering, Computer Sciences and Design, all very enthusiastic about conducting user research to understand how to influence perceptions and actions around sustainability.

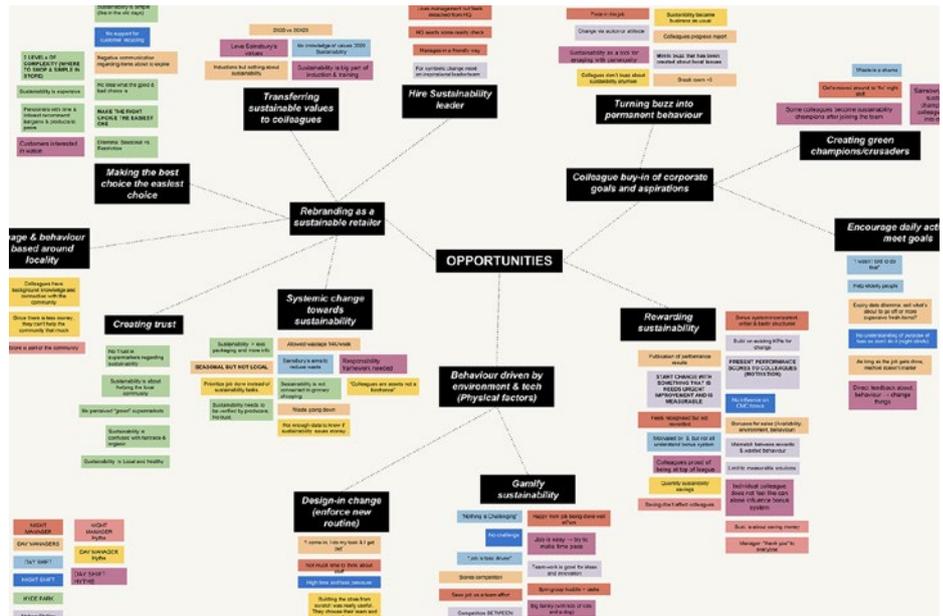
DISCOVER

We had to very quickly gain the required knowledge and understanding of supply chains, the retailer's operations and their impact on the environment. To achieve this, we conducted expert interviews, field visits and extensive desk research by exploring diverse literature including Government, academic, non-governmental and corporate responsibility reports, research papers and books.

After having gained a theoretical understanding, we were able to then set out on a more human-driven research approach, both with colleagues in stores and consumers. We conducted shadowing and interviews with store staff. This allowed us to better understand colleagues' roles and their awareness of how their actions participate in reducing energy consumption and waste.

For consumer research, we started by conducting a series of guerrilla sessions in supermarkets and public spaces. It allowed us to broadly explore how sustainability is perceived and understood, how that relates to food consumption and interviewees' actions and initiatives. We then conducted consumer interviews, which allowed us to consolidate our findings and get more in-depth insights. We uncovered that most interviewees seemed repelled by the complexity of sustainability. They found it difficult to understand what are good or bad choices and were confused about all the different labels currently available. Supply chains seem opaque to them and they lack trust in the retail industry. They do not want to be preached to and told what they should do. We also ran a co-creation session with different participants to explore the different perceived sustainability dimensions within a trip to the supermarket.

“As things stand, there simply isn’t sufficient demand for sustainable food to drive the required transformation in the food system.” The food Ethics Council - Beyond Business as usual, towards a more sustainable food system



Opportunity mapping organising insights from users and stakeholders

DEFINE

Retailers have been investing a lot of effort in improving how sustainable their stores and infrastructures are across multiple dimensions. While there is no doubt that this change is important and needed, it doesn’t reflect the full lifecycle impact of products through production, transportation, transformation and use. At the moment, most consumers are still expecting retailers to be providing them with everything they might want at any time of the year and at low prices. This demand prevents deeper changes in supply chains and through the lifetime impact of goods. The logic of the market is that it will adapt to meet demand. But right now demand is not understood fully because shoppers values and priorities cannot be conveyed based just on what they currently buy.

Backed up by insights, we had different recommendation for this retailer to explore ways of driving sustainability awareness with their customers so they can influence demand for more sustainable products.



IN THEORY

Sustainability challenges, including climate change, global poverty and social equity, all affect and are affected by our food system. In the long term, it is likely that changes to what we eat will be necessary. For this to happen consumer engagement with the issue of sustainability is key.

Co-creation sessions involve a group of users and/or stakeholders working together on different creative exercises and discussions. It invites people within the design process so they can both express feedback and ideas.



(L) Shadowing a trip to the supermarket from planning to putting products in the cupboard
(R) Early co-creation session with users looking at their sustainable efforts at home with products they buy in the supermarket

PHASE 2 – ACTIVE VALUES

Our client was interested in pursuing this project after we went back to the RCA to complete our MA second year. My other team members moved on to other projects and I was joined by Kate Wakely to explore how we could take further action on the insights uncovered in our initial phase. We aimed at making use of our experience in user-centred research and Design to influence consumption choices. Her background in anthropology and research, mine in Product Design and common expertise in Service Design made us a very complementary team to achieve this.

DISCOVER AND DEFINE

To build a picture of how consumers make sustainable choices and explore the challenges and opportunities that exist, we drew on a wide range of research methods and sources. We ran interviews with stakeholders, experts, regular and extreme user (e.g. consumption activists) and co-creation sessions. We also conducted many field visits and direct experience of current parallel experiences travelling across the London and sometimes the UK. Shadowing in store was very useful for us to understand choice in context. We also explored behavioural change models. When it comes to consumption choices, we can observe a clear disconnect between what people believe is important to do and what they actually do. It is called the value action gap. Even highly motivated customers struggle when the ability to act is weak.

Sustainability is an extremely difficult concept for people to get their head around. There are so many different dimensions and parameters to consider, and information is not always available to shoppers. Consumption choices fit within very short fleeting moments and contextualising every choice in the bigger picture is impossible within a reasonable time frame.

There is no common definition of what sustainability means when it comes to consumption, from both experts and consumers' perspectives. Every person we interviewed had a different vision of what matters and a different set of priorities.

Shadowing consists in following and observing a user's experience of a service and asking questions in context. It provides a rich and detailed view of how people use and experience a service that is not based on memory but also capture what people do, not only what they say they do.

www.designresearchtechniques.com/casestudies/shadowing



Concept and printed interface testing session with users

On the basis of our research finding, we defined that we should explore solutions that would:

- Simplify complexity of decision-making – make it as easy as possible for customers to care and have confidence, by providing clarity, credibility and comparability of information
- Go beyond generic communications - to help consumers understand their own impact, framed by what they care about and what they can control
- Personalise communication - to increase relevance and emotional hooks for individuals
- Define a more striking, bold ambition that captures attention and really demonstrates a commitment to sustainability for our client

DEVELOP

Our service proposition called Active Values allowed shoppers to make better-informed decisions by opening up internal sustainability data. It delivered personalised, simple and timely information through a range of digital tools for use at home, in-store and on-the-go, helping consumers to take action on what they care about. This would give the retailer valuable information about what their customers' priorities are and how this affects their purchases.

By expressing their values, users generated an Active Values algorithm. This then allowed them to see through a single percentage how well products reflect their priorities, allowing them to build new shopping routines. Active Values also offered tools for better use at home of their carefully products like preservation and recycling information, expiration reminders to avoid waste, etc.

After developing the concept, we worked on designing the different touch points and platforms that would bring the concept to life. Testing sessions allowed us to validate our concept but also identify room for improvement in the overall experience and in the platforms we designed.



Active values exhibited at the RCA WIP Show

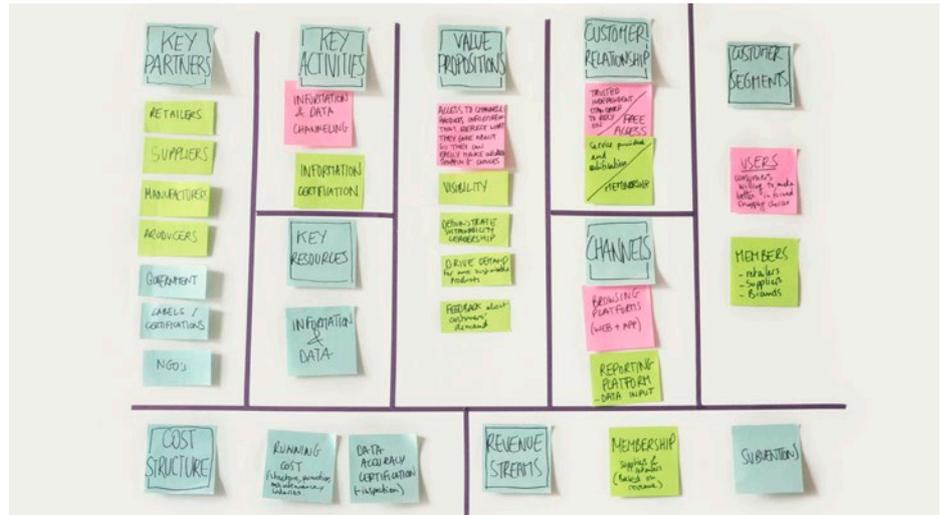
“Clarity + Creditability + Comparability = Consumer confidence” Lucy Yates, Green expectations - Consumers’ understanding of green claims in advertising 2015

Active Values was exhibited at the Royal College of Art WIP Show, where we presented it to a broader audience and gained further feedback. The public response was very encouraging but we identified the need and opportunity to move this proposition beyond the level of a specific retailer, as trust in a supermarket green and ethical claim seemed limited. It also enabled to find new volunteers for further user research, which is always challenging when you have no budget.



Co-creation session with users about initial concept

Active Values was focused on sustainability because of its initial brief. It became clear very quickly that there was a big opportunity to include health-related dimensions that reflect allergy, medical or dieting concerns. Similar to sustainability, what matters health-wise is subject to a lot of interpretation.



The Business model canvas is a useful tool for exploring different opportunities to make a service profitable.

PHASE 3 – DISCLOSED

I decided to take this concept of using a percentage to show how products reflect individuals’ priorities forward in my individual MA final project, believing that Active Values was a promising early concept but that the proposition needed to evolve and details needed to be considered. My ambition was to find a model for an independent structure to open up product information that would not only create value for end-users but also any stakeholders. It implied exploring business model and revenue streams options, data framework but also how those changes would impact the user experience. I later branded this new solution under the name Disclosed.

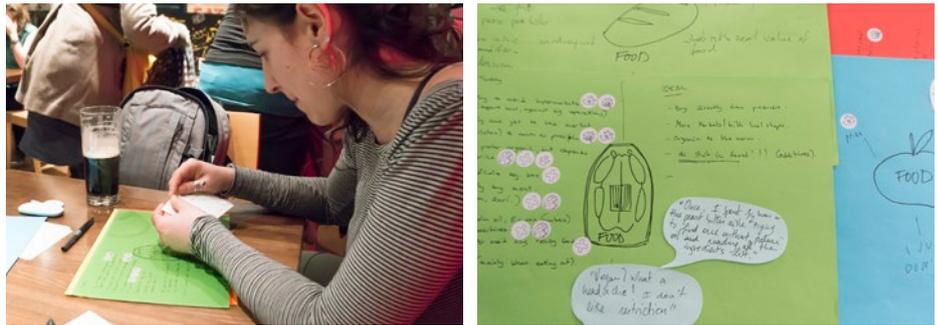
(RE) DEVELOP

I got the chance to meet with a few corporate responsibility, supply chain and sustainability representatives from major UK retailers and consumer goods brands. It allowed me to understand their agenda and how to make my solution attractive and valuable to them.

The model I developed is based on a transparency certification: the Disclosed label is awarded to products after data provided by retailer has been authenticated. Retailers and brands pay a membership to receive the label - the Disclosed platform and label offers them a new kind of visibility and differentiator for their products in the market. Consumer demand is voiced to its members so retailers and suppliers can better understand how to align their products with consumers’ priorities.

This phase required deepening the granularity around data and parameters in order to define how to measure, use and present them. I spent a lot of time getting into quite technical desk research to sharpen my understanding of supply chain and product data. Disclosed only includes parameters that are objective enough and not open to interpretation. This data builds on existing certifications and all the information currently expressed publicly such as nutrition and ingredients. It also includes easier access to information that often already exist but is hidden in internal databases, as it is assumed not to be applicable to the consumer experience. This includes modes of production, transportation and greater detail of the recyclability of packaging, country of origin, GM status etc.

“My only way of making a difference about what matters to me is through my consumption choices”
Lead user interview



Research sessions with users to understand how to organise and breakdown product information

The technical side of data was not the only challenge the parameters presented. I ran a series of user research sessions to find an appropriate framework for breaking down and presenting parameters in interfaces. The challenges there were to cluster parameters but also to find a way of not overwhelming entry-level users by presenting too many things, while at the same time not frustrate more expert users who might want to avoid specific things like hydroponics and monoculture. Running sessions with users from both ends of the spectrum really helped.

Personas are very common tools in Service Design. In theory they are very useful if made properly but I find it is rarely the case. It often feels that they are made up ideal users that meet business needs which can be completely unrealistic. Instead, I decided to choose three lead users from all my interviews. They all had different set of priorities, very different consumption habits and were at different stages of their journey towards mindful consumption. I organised sessions with them regularly to challenge my designs. When working on my own, I would question myself about what they would think about my ideas.

DELIVER

To bring this concept to life, I worked on things that are normally out of the scope of a Service Designer’s role, including branding, information architecture, interface design etc. I liked getting out of my comfort zone, learning new things and I believe it was very important for me to later communicate about this project, within presentations or exhibitions beyond just a concept.



Sam, 27

- Aspires at becoming a vegan but loves chicken too much
- Lactose intolerant
- Tries to avoid gluten
- More about the environment than society
- still difficult for him to articulate what he think is important
- Shops at **Waitrose, Tesco** and Sainsbury's



Ruth, 32

- Weight watching
- Loves to discover new products
- A lot of shortcuts to choose products
- Online shopper (**Qcado**), very fast once a week
- Tries to avoid chemicals but doesn't take the time to read everything on the packaging

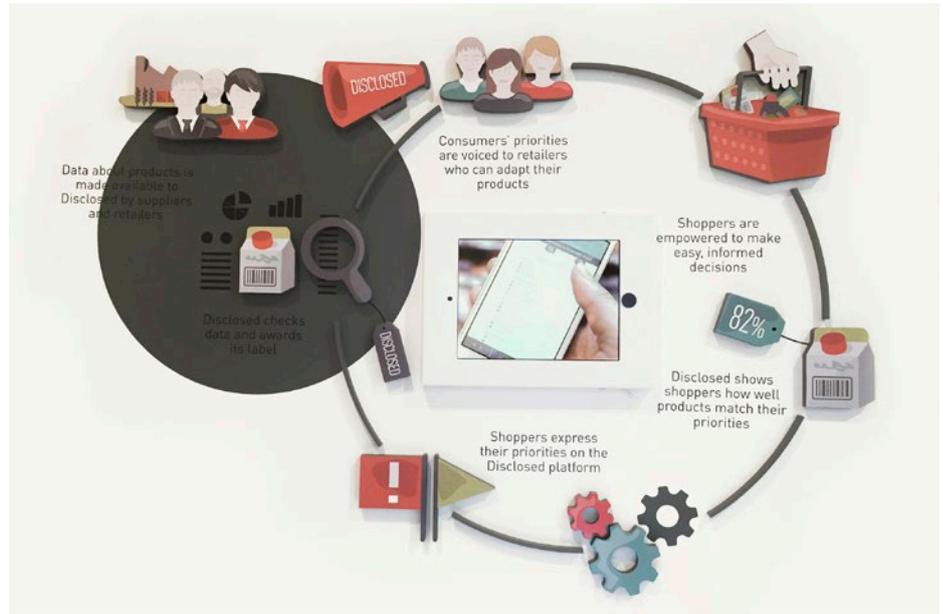


Kaisu, 26

- Doesn't eat meat but eats fish
- Avoids to buy anything she's not sure about
- Shift in consuming habits 4y ago
- Strong human focus
- Tight budget
- Strong feeling of guilt around consumption
- Never buys grocery online
- Mostly shops at Sainsbury's and M&S

Lead users

Personas are fictional profiles supposedly developed from a synthesis of insights that allow teams to keep users in the room during an on-going Design process.



Designs of the year exhibition – Wall graphic

I found working on my own a bit dry during this phase of the project as I believe Design is about collaboration, complementary skills and building on each other's' ideas. Kate Wakely joined me again towards the end of my final project. We got the chance to exhibit this project at several occasions, notably at Designs of the Year at the Design Museum. This service concept is quite complex and we had to explore different ways of simplifying our message. Together we worked on building an interactive way for people to express their priorities and see how a selection of items might reflect these priorities. It required quickly gaining basic developing skills and getting help from a brilliant programmer. Service Design projects are always difficult to curate within exhibitions, partly because there are not that many examples to refer to but also because they tend to be quite complex as they look at systemic and holistic solutions.

Disclosed gained great exposure through those exhibitions and received very positive reactions, which encouraged us to take it further. We currently both have full time jobs that we really enjoy and after spending quite a lot of time in education, we don't have the establishment or safety net to embark on an entrepreneurial journey yet. However, we continued to look for partners who might want to take Disclosed further.



(L) Disclosed Mock-up App interface

(R) Interactive Display at the RCA Show - by moving the sliders, visitors could see how it affected the score of different items

DISCOVER MORE

Student events and resources are continually being added so keep an eye on.

WEB:

[www.designmuseum.org/
design-student-resource](http://www.designmuseum.org/design-student-resource)

EMAIL:

learning@designmuseum.org

IN SUMMARY

During my studies in Service Design at the Royal College of Art, I spent the first year learning about Service Design and its methodologies. For me, this project was a lot about defining my own way of practising Service Design. It has been a great personal learning experience as I had the confidence to challenge what I had learned and adapt tools and methodologies to make the most of those in this project context.

While writing this piece, I realised how much work was achieved during the different phases of this project within quite complex timeframes. The ability to change directions and be responsive at many stages has been key for addressing stakeholders' decisions, user feedback or the complexity of the ecosystem we were looking at. We had to constantly question everything we were looking at and doing, which I believe is a lot of what Service Design is about.

YOUR CHALLENGE

1. Try noting down or drawing the phases you went through;
2. What types of research were you using at the start of the project?
3. Did you try any alternative types of research when you began to rethink your project?
4. Looking back, what would have been useful to help you come to a stronger understanding of the user/ stakeholder group for your design brief or puzzle? Are there any examples from Marion's research process that would be useful?
5. For your current project (or a future one), have you taken opportunities to...

REFERENCES, RESOURCES AND LINKS

1. Stickdorn, M. and Schneider, J. (2014) 'This is Service Design Thinking: Basics - Tools – Cases.' Bis Publishers.
2. Polaine, A. and Løvlie, L. (2013) 'Service Design: From Insight to Implementation.' Rosenfeld Media.
3. IDEO, 'Design Kit' (human-centred design toolkit) available at www.designkit.org
4. Roberta Tassi and DARC (the Research & Consulting Center of Domus Academy), 'Service Design Tools' available at www.servicedesigntools.org