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Designing the Zero Waste Experience

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The conceptual outcome of this research is a design-driven innovation: A concept for a zero waste grocery market that fosters a more sustainable food supply and stimulates an enjoyable user experience. This user experience includes a paradigm shift – from groceries as products to groceries bundled into recipes.

The concept was developed alongside a design process using Design Thinking methodology. Furthermore qualitative interviews with experts, and an interdisciplinary design thinking workshop were initiated and conducted.

The superordinate question of this research is whether a grocery market that is based on zero waste principles can provide a better customer experience than an ordinary supermarket. And if yes, by which measure? To find out, qualitative interviews were conducted to gain insight in opportunities and barriers for zero waste markets. Based on a comprehensive literature review an interview guide was developed. Experts (n=9) specialized in food and food markets were interviewed.

In the following phase of this research workshop participants (n=31) from various disciplines (e.g. engineering, business, design, arts, health, food, politics) took part in an interdisciplinary design thinking workshop. The aim of this workshop was to ideate based on many different perspectives and finally to create rough prototypes of a zero waste market that provides a unique user experience.

As part of the innovation workshop five key elements were identified, that are crucial for a convenient user experience of a zero waste market concept. These elements were the guides for the subsequent conceptual service design process. The designed concepts show that the implementation of zero waste principles can lead to a more sustainable grocery market, but they do not per se lead to a better customer experience.

Within the innovation workshop setting, and in the subsequent service design process, several concepts were developed to increase the customer experience or to tackle known obstacles. Beside the development of a persona-based customer journey map and the conceptual touch points within this typical customer journey, an application prototype (mobile/web technology) was designed.

In the course of this work a startup was founded. The startup will implement the conceptual service design prototype presented in this research paper. The first shop will open in the fall of 2015.