ICT Enabled Distribution of Services: Service Positioning Strategies, Front Office Information and Multi-channeling

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Welcome to my journey around the landscape of distribution of services in the business to business / business to consumer hybrid employability industry. I had a tremendous time the last past years of researching and writing this thesis and it is my intention to provide the reader with the same pleasures and surprises. But I have to warn the reader as well….it hasn’t always been a sunny trip and sometimes I had to climb steep mountains, you might expect the same.

To get an idea on the theme, the contents, the target group and presentation style of my thesis, I simply refer you to chapter one. After reading this chapter you should have a clear idea on what to expect from this thesis and you can decide on going further on my journey or taking another track. Dutch speakers are referred to the summary in Dutch at the end of this thesis to get a first idea. At this point I limit myself to thanking all those people who played an important, pleasant or challenging role during my journey.

There are a view episodes in my journey I’ll never forget. I started my first interview with asking Guus Kok, director marketing and communications of Gak Nederland about two connected lines without any further symbols on a whiteboard in his large and almost empty room. He spontaneously filled the room with an expose of about 35 minutes finishing with the question ”do you have any other questions?” I stumbled “well actually not” and we talked for another thirty minutes. Thank you Norbert van der Hoek, Hans Flick and Harrie van Velthoven for enabling me to do the case study at Gak and thank you Roberto Lee for your support and patience in tackling bureaucratic hurdles.

Part of the case study protocol was to invite interviewees for the interview with sending them a small letter in which I explained things. Remko Schermerhorn, who prepared the way at Unique Nederland for me and supported me in that case study, found my approach of sending letters too impersonal. So he went to Hoogeveen, Apeldoorn, Hoofddorp and Amsterdam to shake hands, explain and personally hand over letters. Thanks to Remko’s personal approach, we always felt welcome and had fine interviews. Remko, I still enjoy sharing experiences and diners; thank you for your company, not only during the Unique episode of my journey but for almost the complete journey and hopefully beyond. Hans Coffeng, thank you for providing us with the opportunity for conducting a nice case study and thank you for your appreciation for the case study report. Sole never tasted that good as the one in Muiden! Edgar Mulder, thank you for being our anchorman and host.

The PrimaVera research network has always been an inspiring network for the last past years and I like to thank all network members for their encouraging comments and suggestions and their empathy. I will never forget Chun Wei Choo’s comment on one of my working papers: “Economies of relationships, ….whooh… I like that”. Special thanks go to Ard Huizing for his support in my early research
years before the start of this thesis and to Wim Bouman for accentuating methodological issues during that period. Our working together learned me a lot and as Ard and I regularly say to each other….probably we should do it again. Very grateful I am to Jan Truijens, who simply responded to a presentation on my research design by opening doors at Interpolis. Jan, opening doors for a colleague at your prime employer shows confidence, thanks! Tom Mescher, thank you for doing the intake and directing me on the path of Frans van der Pas. Frans and Chris Simons thank you for providing me with much information and a highly challenging case study. Jeroen Waltmans thank you for your support and the many personal talks at railway stations and in trains.

I still see myself sitting in a too small room with Machteld Roos at Sioo, looking for clues in their education program documentation with Gerhard Smid walking by, just speaking his magic words… “You two look like a couple of accountants”. Thank you Gerhard, I already felt quite unsure on whether I would ever get a grip on Sioo’s world. Sioo’s field of working is so close to mine but you’re approach seemed so far away at that moment. So, as a good accountant, I continued my hobby reading about philosophy and epistemology in the evenings and I dived into your swimming pool of fine literature on third generation evaluation, double loop learning, reflective practitioners, etc. As you already understand….I became more unsure about the whole journey, but at least enjoyed the swimming pool and gained some background to understand Sioo’s approach. Thanks to the willingness of Gerhard, Jaap Boonstra, Chrétien Felser, Marguerithe de Man, Marianne Kranenburg and Saskia Cortlever-Keus to exchange their experience with me, to reflect on their experience and to listen carefully to my findings, I have been able to present the Sioo case in chapter Eight. Thank you Gerhard and Jaap for opening doors at Sioo and providing me with the opportunity to experience your challenging world. I’m still confused (probably on a higher level), but at least I know that I’ve never been an accountant. Machteld, thanks for your extraordinary accurate support.

Special thanks go to Rik Maes. Rik, our cooperation one way or the other always feels to me like a learning space in which you let me discover knowledge, experience and repertoire. Be it in research settings, educational settings, organizational settings or administrative settings; be it on philosophical matters, didactical matters, technical matters or personal manners, there is always something to learn and you provide room for it and you inspire me to do so. The most inspiring rooms you provide for are the educational spaces we work in. The Executive Master in Information Management (EMIM) at first and the Bedrijfskunde and Informatiekunde certainly not at least, provide me with many people I learn with. Although they are too numerous to mention, I like to mention Toon Abcouwer, Luc Hobeke, Dick Rijken, Rene Jansen, Bas Parson, Jan Grijpink, Anna Snel, Albert Boswijk, Chun Wei Choo, Claudio Ciborra, Tony Briant and Joe Pine for their inspiring different perspectives. Special thanks goes to Hans Jägers for his personal support and commitment and our fruitful cooperation within one of the EMIM blocks over many years. I further like to thank all those (ex) students who contributed to my insights by doing small pieces of research for their master thesis. Some of them already have been mentioned, others are Henriëtte Brijder, Daniël
Preface

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Lieve Mireille, Rianne en Jelmar, niets in dit boek raakt de essentie van mijn leven, jullie zijn dat, iedere dag.

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