



Do you dare to be your own disruptor?

Convenience solutions and the role of the supermarket of the future

By Chris Rijkers

In conversation with Rober Delver and Jasmijn Prinssen

We are at the beginning of an exciting time for food retail. The rapidly developing society demands a new interpretation of the supermarket. The consumer no longer thinks in the traditional channels. The consumer wants a tasty, easy and healthy meal for the right price, in the right place, at the right time. Sometimes that is at the supermarket on the corner, other times we order online, but it is certain that traditional channels will blur. I spoke about this with the formula manager of Plus Retail Rober Delver and my colleague Jasmijn Prinssen. We talked about the challenges, but especially about the opportunities for a new role for the supermarket.

Past performance is no guarantee for the future

The supermarket has all kinds of new competitors. During the corona crisis, we discovered the convenience of home delivery and meal boxes en masse. The flash delivery channels like Gorillas are also popping up like mushrooms. We will not suddenly eat more, so if the supply increases, this means that we will divide the 'pie' differently. A redistribution of the playing field is therefore inevitable, according to Rober Delver. Food retail is nibbling away from food service, while food service is nibbling away from food retail in return. A challenge, but also an opportunity. Because of these new dynamics, everyone has to reinvent themselves. Jasmijn: 'we are not taking two steps forward, the current disruptions require a jump to the supermarket of the future'.

Convenience solutions in the supermarket

Great strides have been made in the development of convenience solutions in the supermarket. The offer has not only grown, but the quality has also increased enormously. From ready-to-eat solutions such as food service in the store to fresh ready-to-heat meals for at home and ready-to-cook meal packages (modular cooking). In addition to the traditional microwave meals, all kinds of high-quality, healthy and varied choices have been added. The journey has started, but we are still at the beginning according to Rober, convenience is still insufficiently fulfilled. There are still plenty of opportunities here for manufacturers, but also for the supermarket. Certainly, in the combination of convenience and inspiration. "Take the meal packages, for example, now a limited range is supplied by manufacturers according to the possibilities they have in logistics, shelf life, etc., but why can't we also put this together in the store ourselves with a more varied range? We are now sticking to cutting cheese and meat products in the store, but why not a fresh sandwich spread package. Bringing together different flavors is where the power of the supermarket lies. We have to go from portioning to combining and inspiring."

We also notice in our projects that the role and therefore the meters for convenience solutions and experience are increasing. Naturally, the supermarket has a core that will continue to exist, part of which may shift to online. Left or right, new meters are added with Easy Food Solutions and Experience & Excitement. It varies per country and eat cultures, some consumers are used to spending longer in the store and to combine the trip with food and drink in the store, says Jasmijn. 'In our projects for major players such as Migros, Globus and Intermarché, food service and food retail merge seamlessly. These customers are used to the foodservice character of the hypermarket or supermarket. In the Netherlands, customer perception of fresh supermarket meals is still a real challenge.'

We have very different needs at different times. Traditional thinking in target groups should be extended with thinking in shoppers missions. At times I need convenience and speed and I am quite willing to pay a little more for that. The same goes for those moments when I need a product with a story or more experience. At other times I am purely driven by price. All needs come together in my shoppers trip, but where the center of gravity lies differs from moment to moment.



The customer should get to know the supermarket in a new way

The opportunity of the supermarket is the unique location of the supermarket. According to Jasmijn, the supermarket is still an extension of the entire neighborhood. A unique position from which the role of the supermarket can be further expanded. Both with an offline and online proposition. According to Rober, now is the time for the supermarket to really take on that role as the 'third place'. Supermarkets that do not know how to fill that in will lose their role in the current field of forces'. And because the Dutch do not yet know the supermarket as a food service party, the challenge for the supermarket is to introduce the consumer to this new role. Rober: 'Successfully fulfilling the need for convenience means making clear

choices. Supermarkets will never offer fine dining but are moving towards fast-casual and discount dining. Supermarkets need to invent food service in a way that fits the dynamics of the supermarket. This means looking at price differently, getting hospitality in your DNA, knowing the right flavors, impeccable quality and being Instagrammable too. And that is only possible by daring to make choices.”



Rober Delver has a great passion for food. Rober likes to think outside the box and likes a challenge. He is the Formula Manager at Plus Retail. PLUS is the cooperative house for independent supermarket entrepreneurs and their supermarkets. PLUS says 'Eat well. For everyone. Every day' central. PLUS has currently 263 locations in the Netherlands at recently took over the COOP stores.



Jasmijn Prinssen is Creative Director at JDV. Chris Rijkers is a retail and communication specialist. The retail design agency's creative and multidisciplinary teams work together with international big brands and local heroes.

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