



Information seeking by service designers: consulting peers versus documenting designs

Introduction

Service design is an information intensive activity. In this study, service design is defined as “a design that consists of a sequence of interrelated actions, multiple users or stakeholders, and different touchpoints”.

This study investigates service designers’ information behaviour and the roles people and documents play as information sources for service designers. We asked three research questions:

- RQ1** How do designers go about finding the information they need in a project?
- RQ2** What are the roles people and design documentation plays in a project?
- RQ3** For designers, what are the pros and cons of their information behaviour?

This study provides an overview of how the information sources are used by designers in different design phases of a project.

Research Methods

This study is based on semi-structured interviews with ten service designers. We chose interviews as our method of data collection because we are not only interested in service designers’ information behaviour but also their reflections on their situated information behaviour.

	Country	Job title	Seniority	Education	Project
A	China	Senior UX designer	6 years	Industrial design	Real estate
B	China	UX expert	9+ years	Architecture	Entertainment
C	Italy	Interaction designer	3-4 years	Interaction design	Insurance
D	Italy	Associate creative director	10+ years	Communication design	Insurance
E	Spain	Interaction designer	2-3 years	Media/interaction design	Consultancy
F	Spain	Design lead	7-8 years	Service design and innovation	Design
G	Taiwan	UX designer	1 year	Media/interaction design	Finance
H	Taiwan	Design lead	4-5 years	Industrial design	Telecom
I	UAE	UX specialist	2-3 years	Industrial design	Airline
J	UAE	UX consultant	10+ years	Accessories design	Airline

Table 1. Profile of the interviewees

Results

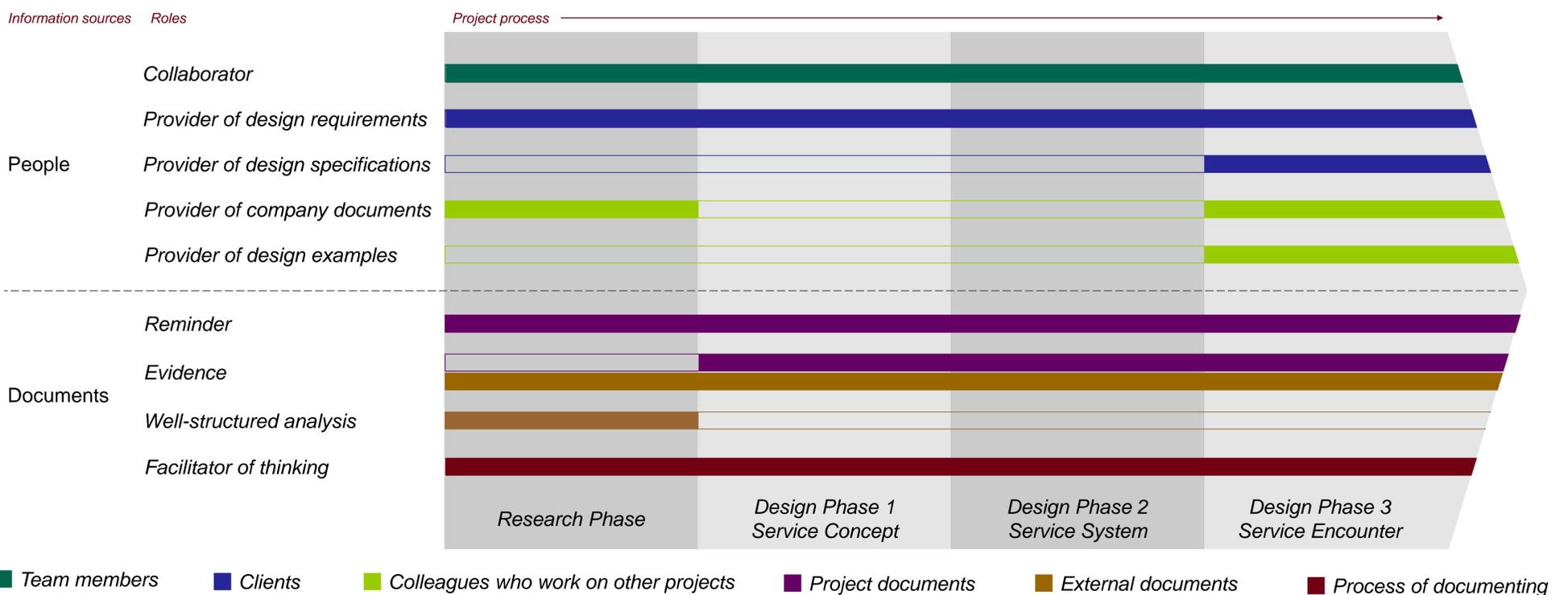


Figure 1. The roles people and documents play as information sources in a service design project.

Conclusions

<p>People are both easily accessible and high quality</p>	<p>Documents are important while they are being created</p>	<p>From people to poorly integrated documents</p>
<p>Team members are the most frequently used internal information source and clients the most frequently used external source.</p> <p>By being both easily accessible and sources of good quality answers, team members are an information source that avoids a choice between either accessibility or quality. In contrast, clients are the authoritative source of information about design requirements and design specifications but they are less accessible.</p>	<p>While creating documents, designers process information and interpret its implications for the design. The resulting document is secondary because its creation is a means to arrive at a coherent understanding of the available information. For instance, Interviewee E prefers reading documents that summarise activities in which she has taken part over reading documents that summarise design activities in which she has not taken part.</p>	<p>The interviewed designers’ source preferences evolve with their progress on their tasks because this progress increasingly provides the designers with project-internal documents that are tailored to the specifics of the project.</p> <p>The created documents are not integrated. For instance, Interviewee F mentioned that discoveries made during subsequent iterations will not lead to changes in the documents from the first iteration.</p>