



Exploring a Mini World for Maxi Insight

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As Online Communities or MROCs have become more established, many researchers have said they can only succeed with large numbers. Large groups of over a hundred respondents (or more) are used to gain qualitative insights. This research shows that a small group, selected carefully and facilitated with the toolbox of a qualitative researcher can provide deep insights for strategic marketing decisions.

Situation: Great ideas – Small budget!

The client for this work was a start-up: Mixtable. Mixtable is an online service for young professionals to meet offline to have fun and meet new people. It is not a dating platform.

A mini-community, with 15 active respondents was created. Participants used multiple ways of communication: input via a mobile app to collect data (photos, videos, emotions) and an online discussion forum for longer and more detailed responses and to build on the contributions of others. The start-up company was able to quickly feed burning questions into the community and get immediate feedback.

The research started with the first idea of the start-up: testing the concept. Later, and on an ongoing basis, the mini-community provided insights that shaped the product, website and marketing tools. The research was done in six phases:

1. Two-day group discussion (over the weekend) to bond and build trust – and also to get familiar with the technology of the platform
2. Diary to capture an evening out via the mobile app
3. Follow up online discussion for one week about the expectations for a successful evening out, description of the status quo and to gain feedback on the concept of the service
4. Based on the feedback and the uncovered unmet needs the website for the online service was redesigned and an online usability test with group discussion provided insights on appeal, understanding of the concept, as well as the registration process
5. To gain a better understanding on the acceptance of the service provided, participants were sent to actually test a Mixtable and provide feedback with a diary via the mobile app and follow up group discussion
6. Based on these learnings the website and logo were finalized and with an online discussion finally disaster checked!

This process took place over a period of seven months.

Conclusions

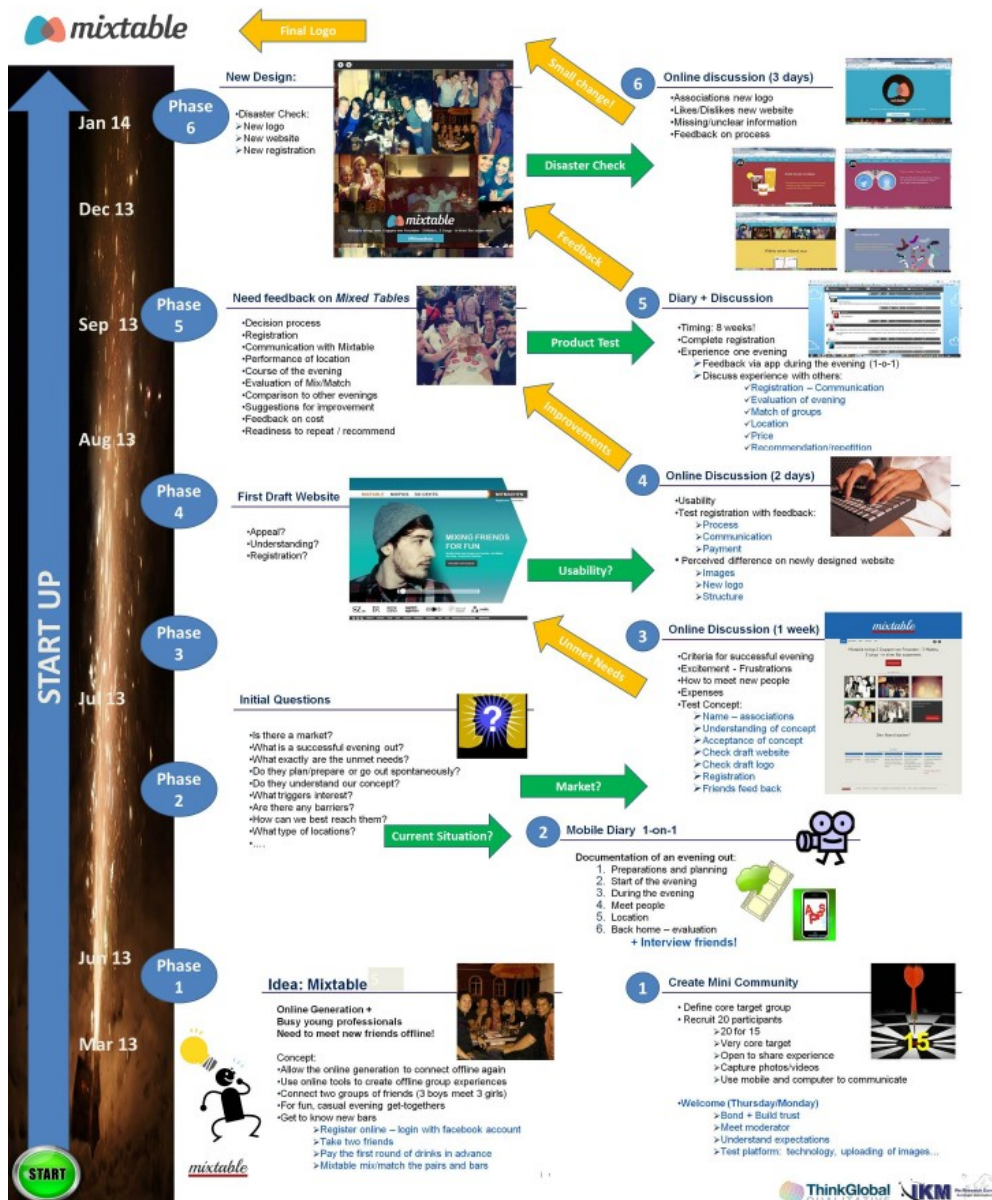
IKM's experience with the Mixtable project shows the potential for an ongoing community with small numbers. This community does not need to be massive in scale to be effective. A

small community also does not require a special research platform, but can be effectively executed with current off-the-shelf mobile and online research tools to get excellent results.

This is the image of the Inspiration Zone Poster presented by Ilka Kuhagen to the Worldwide Conference on Qualitative Research in Budapest in May 2014.



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Want more information? This brief article provides just a few of the highlights of the research. Please contact info@ikmarketing.de for more information about the project or the methodologies discussed, or to arrange for a presentation.