

Qual and Co-Creation - An inspiring Combination

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Companies expect more than data and insights from market research. The selection of suitable research agencies is increasingly influenced by how well they are able to inspire, open up new perspectives and, in particular, provide creative ideas for innovations. Evidence of this is the significant increase in co-creation solutions on the agency side.

Qualitative market research and co-creation complement each other ideally, but they are completely different disciplines, each of which requires different competencies of researchers and consumers.

Qualitative inspiration

"We need to take a fresh look at this topic. I was thinking of something qualitative." This or something similar is often the beginning of exciting research projects. The motive behind the task is clear. It is about bringing out something new from the depths of the consumer's soul and to use it as an inspiring basis for the development of relevant competitive advantages.

Qualitative market research is rightly credited with diving deeper, looking more closely and listen more precisely. This is necessary, because the starting point of change processes are relevant and reliable insights. In the field of innovation, too, new product ideas are often based on previously gathered consumer insights.

From test person to participant: the new role of consumers

Insight-oriented research tends to view respondents as "naïve" consumers who are asked to evaluate, describe, decide or justify things, situations or emotions from their own perspective. To avoid a bias in (response) behaviour, respondents are often kept largely uninformed about the underlying research objective.

In the last few years, market research has discovered the creative potential of consumers and has taken advantage of it. However, co-creation projects are no longer just about consumer insights, but about consumer inspiration: The respondent becomes a "real participant" and his role in the research process is that of a "mature consumer", expert or consultant. The project participants not only provide information about themselves, but work in a team and are expected to develop, improve, combine, advise, outline, question and research in order to achieve a project goal that is clearly defined from the beginning.

To be able to fulfil these demanding tasks, participants in co-creation projects must have a variety of competencies: The project participants should be very creative, but

above all motivated and committed to work in a team. They should have a general as well as a specialist knowledge in different areas in order to be able to develop concepts and new ideas. The frequently asked question of whether the participants should belong to the target group or not, cannot be answered in a general way. However, it is important that they are deeply into the respective product category and understand it from their consumer's point of view.

Balance between openness and systematics

In order to be inspired and develop new ideas, one must be open to new impressions. The openness of all participants is a basic prerequisite for successful co-creation. The path to many, original and relevant ideas must, however, be planned systematically. It is important to define the relevant search fields with the client, to define the project goal and to communicate it to the participants as early as possible in the process. The methods for generating ideas must be integrated into a systematic creative process. The most important provoke unusual connections that lead to new ideas.

No matter whether online or offline: The role of the moderators of a co-creation process differs significantly from that of a moderator in a qualitative market research project. The ideal moderator is part of the team and therefore jointly responsible for the achievement of the goal. For this reason, he or she must often disregard the virtues of the qualitative market researcher, such as content-related restraint or personal neutrality. On the contrary he or she must stimulate, motivate, criticise, make his own suggestions and not infrequently prevent discussions. Unlike than in the typical qualitative research situation, co-creation is not about how attitudes are formed, expressed or justified, but rather on the diversity and quality of the ideas.

The evaluation of co-creation projects is also less process-oriented than result-oriented. This means that the ideas or concepts that are developed are the focus and and less the way in which they came from. Furthermore, behind every creative idea there are inspiring insights into what consumers want. Therefore, it is also necessary to carefully examine even unrealizable ideas for their "inspirational content".

Linking qualitative market research and co-creation

By the combination of market research the innovation processes in companies can be made more open, more creative and at the same time more efficient. In addition, practice shows that a hybrid approach is excellently suited to gaining inspiring insights into hidden consumer desires and motives.

About the author



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