toluna Kimberly-Clark

Kimberly-Clark Mothers Community: Enhancing Collaboration Between Humans and Platform

Introduction

Over the past few years, the research and insights industry has witnessed significant transformations driven by technological advancements. Much like in other fields, there has been considerable discussion about whether professionals in our industry will be replaced by machines that autonomously perform most of the work. We present this case study with this question in mind.

When we think about online research communities, what is the role of the machine, and what is the role of the human? With all the platform-based resources and functionalities available for this type of study, is it possible that humans could be replaced? And if not, how can machine capabilities and human skills work together to unlock a deeper understanding of consumers and their behaviors?

Context

Kimberly-Clark Corporation (KCC) is a brand committed to making a difference in people's lives and they take this mission very seriously. To fulfill this commitment, they understand that they must be as close as possible to their consumers by understanding their routines and daily challenges. This proximity allows the company to develop increasingly relevant products that meet real needs.

In 2023, KCC recognized it was important to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of new mothers with babies up to 3 years old, so they decided to connect with these women and gather insights on both baby care and the intimate well-being of the mothers themselves.

Given this context, the Toluna team knew that a Community on the Toluna Start Qual (TS Qual) platform would be the perfect methodology to connect KCC with consumers. There, we could engage mothers in activities related to Kimberly-Clark's areas of interest, while also providing enjoyable moments for participants to share their experiences with other women who were going through similar stages of life. All of this, combined with advanced technology that makes community interaction easy and enjoyable for participants, while enabling data collection in various formats, ensures a comprehensive view of the topics under study.

Immersion meetings

The universe of mothers and babies has countless peculiarities. To ensure smooth and authentic interactions with participants, we understood that it would be essential to immerse ourselves in this universe. KCC's participation in this process was crucial. Above all, it was fundamental that the interactions, which were entirely mediated through the platform screens, had a human touch, ensuring a welcoming community where they would feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

In a series of meetings, we gathered with the client to discuss various topics ranging from babies to female care: diaper rash, allergies, menstruation, intimate hygiene, urinary incontinence, and more. We then brought all these learnings into the creation of activities, definition of interaction patterns, and analysis of the results.

Retrospectives

Due to the duration of the community and the need to share learnings with the client throughout the nine weeks, we implemented retrospective meetings at the end of each activity cycle. In these meetings, we consolidated the learnings from each topic studied and prepared for the next cycle. In a community project—especially one with so many participants—the ability to analyze the results of all responses and interactions is essential to generate valuable insights for the client. **While the platform collects data and facilitates the organization and storage of information, it is the team behind the project that interprets the data,** contextualizes it, and turns it into actionable narratives and strategies.

100 mothers of babies	30 mothers of babies up to 6 months old 70 mothers with babies from 7 months to 3 years old
Duration	9 weeks
34 activities	Questions about baby care habits and routines Questions about women's (mothers') care habits and routines Concept testing Product testing
Community observers	130 people from various teams at KCC

Planning

A project of this scale requires very thorough planning. While the subject is familiar to many people, we needed to have a deep understanding of the nuances and technical aspects to properly explore them with participants and make good use of the functionalities offered by the TS Qual platform.

Secondly, no matter how well you define the activities and interactions beforehand, an online community is a living project that can change according to participants' responses and engagement. For a two-month community, the Toluna and client teams needed to continually ensure alignment.

Recruitment, engagement and incentives

The offline recruitment team played a crucial role in integrating participants, even if they were invited by the Toluna panel. Due to Brazilian cultural nuances and the very sensitive nature of the community topics, it was very important to create human connection and provide clear communication. By explaining the dynamics of the community and the importance of each mother's participation, they were able to establish trust from the start. After all, they would be talking about their children and intimate lives.

The offline recruitment team's involvement extended beyond recruitment. They also worked to ensure sustained participation over the two months and avoid the need for replacements. To do this, they regularly communicated with participants outside of platform engagements via their most commonly used channels.

Additionally, the offered incentives showed respect and gratitude for participants' time and opinions, acknowledging the challenges of motherhood and reinforcing respect for their commitment to the community. **Supermoms!**

Moderation, communication, and belonging

The moderation of the KCC Community was a key factor in creating connection and closeness with the mothers.

While the platform offers various moderation tools and features to encourage engagement, including activity proposals, comments, likes, and notifications, it is crucial to leverage these effectively to foster an exchange-friendly environment.

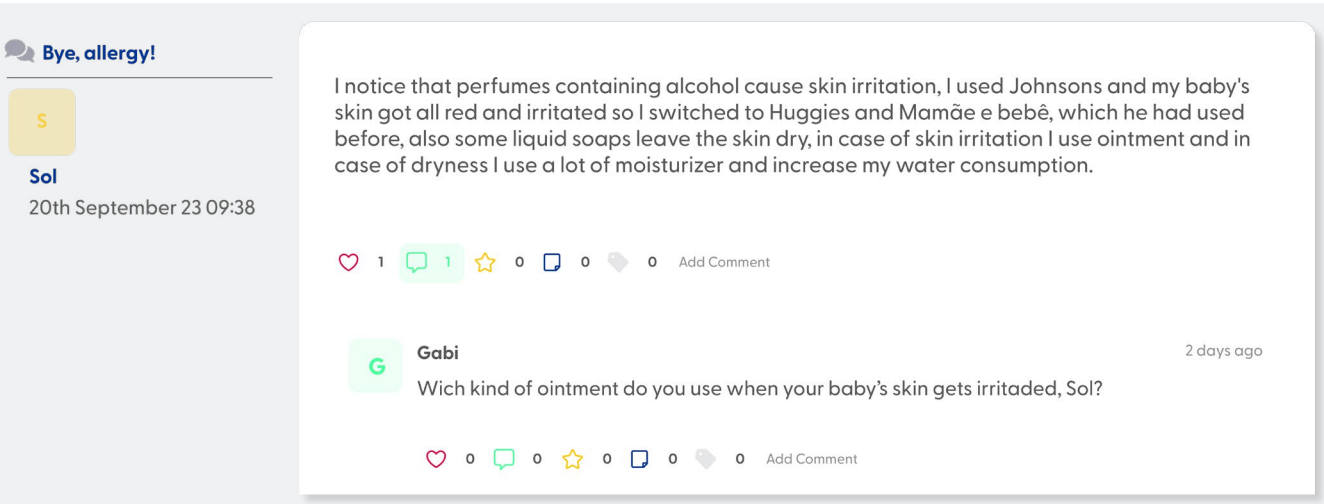
To achieve this, our team created and introduced a relatable moderator named "Gabi," complete with a biography. Gabi shared her personal experiences as a mother with two children to establish an immediate connection with participants and convey that it was a safe, supportive space for discussion.

Presentation

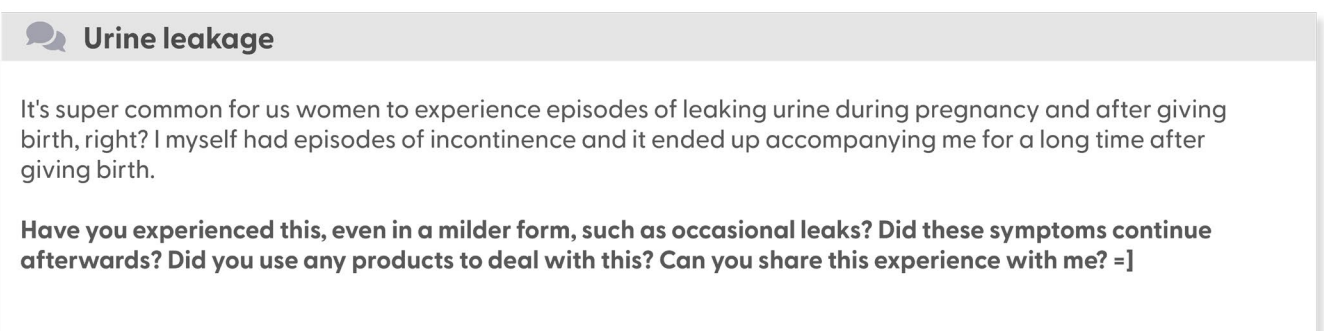
To begin with, I want to get to know a bit about you. This first round of conversation is for you to introduce yourselves. I'll start here and you can follow me in the comments, okay? As I said in the welcome, although my name is Gabriela, everyone calls me Gabi! I'm 31 years old and I work moderating communities like this one. I live in São Paulo, on the west side of the city, and I have two children: Matheus, the youngest, who is only 2, and Roberta, who is 5. I've been married to Cláudio for 7 years.
My life is veeery busy, but I do my best to stay balanced. I divide my routine between my work and looking after my little ones - fortunately, I have the help of my mother, who gives me a hand with childcare during the week.

Now I want to hear from you: tell me a bit about your life and daily routine, I'm very curious!

In other words, Gabi initiated the community with a transparent and welcoming approach. Her simple and relaxed language fostered a sense of belonging among participants and removed the feeling of obligation. This feeling was reinforced at every turn through her engagement over each of the 34 activities, in which Gabi interacted with the responses, whether by commenting, asking for more information, thanking, liking, or giving a star.



Creating Gabi as a moderator also enabled us to address delicate topics, such as urinary incontinence, in a lighter and more taboo-free way. In this example, Gabi opened the activity as someone who had already experienced the same challenge, which instilled confidence in participants to speak openly and without shame.



All of this human connection through technology made the community much more fluid and spontaneous. While participants were reminded to respond when they left an activity behind, they felt that they were casually sharing their opinions with each other on the proposed subjects. They tested products and discussed concepts, knowing that Gabi was there to listen. The participants ended up interacting with each other, often without Gabi prompting them. What valuable information!

Ultimately, KCC established itself on an equal footing within the community by adeptly gathering information without being intrusive or aloof. Instead, they fostered a welcoming environment for horizontal exchanges, utilizing the platform to enhance human connections.

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It was wonderful to be able to take part and learn a lot! Many of the week's activities made me research and delve deeper into topics and situations... I looked for products that met what we were talking about (and I couldn't find them on the market), I got to know the proposed brand in more depth and I was able to get to know the Natural care diaper line that I've become a fan of!!! I really loved it! Thank you for the opportunity, it was very enriching!!!

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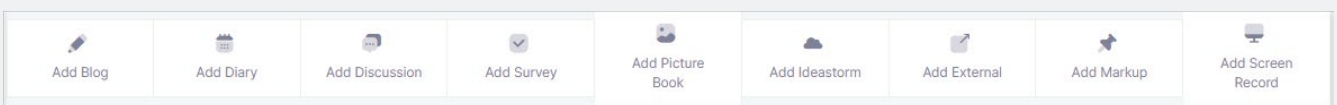
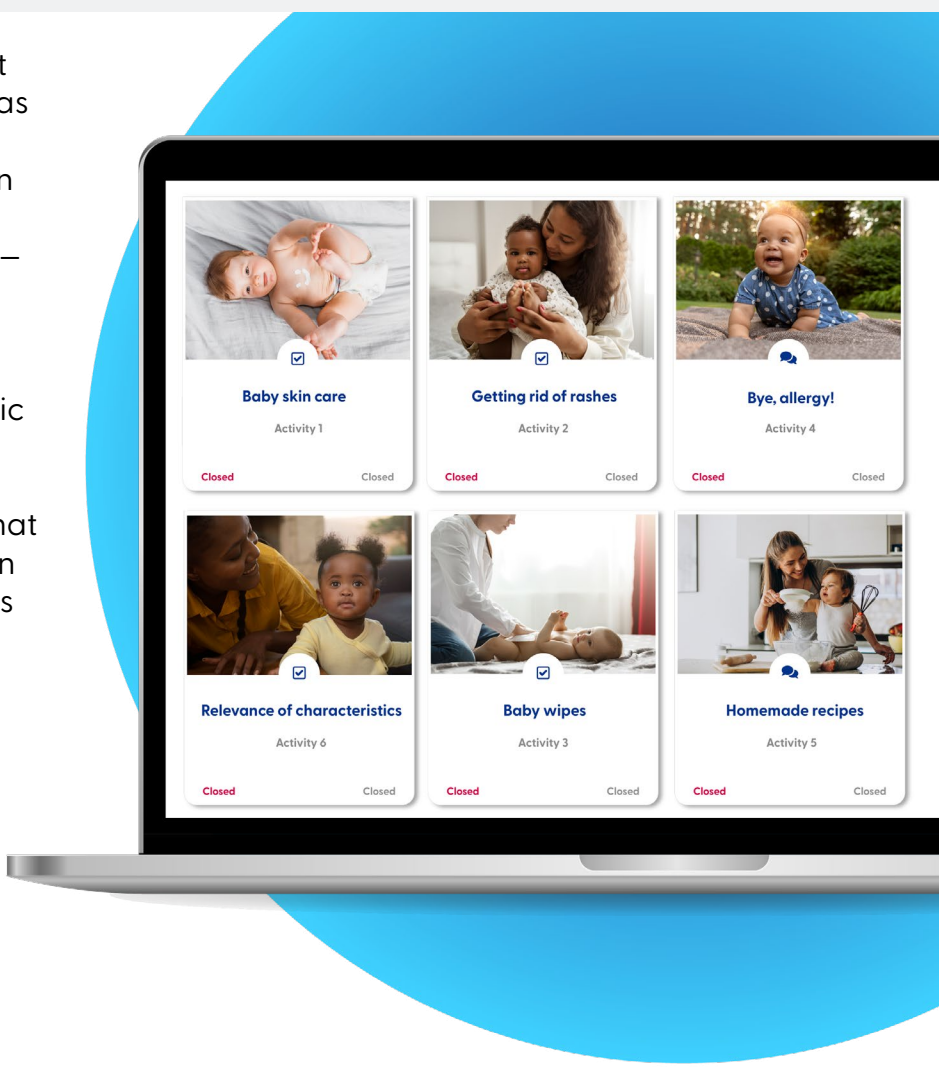
Activities



The tools available in TS Qual make it possible to combine activities—such as extracting text, images, and video in a single activity, creating a discussion forum with media sharing, or even more visual features such as markup—all within the same environment! With a dashboard of pre-defined activities, the platform allows us to address both exceptional and specific needs. When you combine these capabilities with a touch of human creativity, you can create activities that are more relevant to your audience. In the case of KCC's community, mothers found it both easy and enjoyable to take part in the activities.



To create an effective activity, you must first have a specific objective for it. For the mothers and babies community, this became clear through consistent planning, immersion meetings, and continual alignment with the KCC team. Once you have clear objectives in hand, you must choose the tool (or combination of tools) for each activity. On the one hand, you are aiming to obtain responses in formats that lead to insightful analysis, whether that is through image/video uploads, multiple-choice questions, or open-ended responses. On the other hand, you want to ensure that the activity shows respect for the participants' reality to obtain good engagement.

The powerful alliance between technology and human skill is highlighted again here. With so many options in TS Qual, only a person can fill the "intellectual gap" of the platform: understanding the participants' life stage and context, knowing how to effectively articulate prompts during activities, and balancing the need for results with the participants' profiles, so as not to disengage them. In the case of the KCC community, the participants were mothers with hectic routines and numerous roles/responsibilities. Therefore, the activities could not be burdensome.

After determining the best tools for each activity, communication and description of tasks was also a differentiator. Gabi's attention to language not only made activities easy to understand but also brought assertiveness and levity to the community. There is always some room for doubt in human interactions, so when questions did arise, Gabi clarified them directly with each participant. When we noticed many participants having questions or difficulties in general, we adjusted the activities directly on the platform. A community is a living project for people, so TS Qual reflects this by being equally dynamic and allowing real-time adjustments. This undoubtedly contributes to the overall health of the community.

Due to all the care in the creation and execution of activities, as well as the work done by the offline recruitment team to foster human connection, the lowest participation rate across 34 activities was 86%. This means that only 14 mothers didn't respond to that activity. Long live the synergy of technology with humans!

Diversity and segmentation

TS Qual enabled us to connect mothers from different regions, with unique perspectives and characteristics, in a common place for two months. In addition to quotas related to demographic diversity and babies' ages, we also considered other characteristics related to skin color/type and mothers' intimate regions. This helped us compose a diverse community that further enriched the project.

Community diversity

Babies' age	30 mothers with babies aged 0 to 6 months 70 mothers with babies aged 7 months to 3 years
Region	50 mothers from Recife (Northeast Region) 50 mothers from São Paulo (Southeast)
Mix of social classes	classes A, B and C
Other mapped characteristics	Babies' skin type: very sensitive, mixed, normal Mothers and babies skin color: very white, white, light brown, dark brunette, black Mothers' urinary incontinence: none, mild, high Mothers' intimate irregularities: never or rarely, occasionally, frequently

In addition to enabling diverse connections, TS Qual allows to tag and segment participants. This tool was essential in the KCC community. Segments were created based on mapped characteristics, which allowed us to read responses by segment or even send segment-specific activities. With a targeted approach and diverse perspectives, we had a solid foundation for a more comprehensive analysis resulting in more inclusive and disruptive insights.

Conclusion

With a platform like TS Qual, our first thought is that it has everything we need for an insights community project: the capacity to allocate up to hundreds of participants, mechanisms for moderation and interaction, different tools for proposing activities, and possibilities for monitoring and analyzing engagement status and community health. In fact, there are so many features that one could quickly conclude "There's no way an insights community wouldn't succeed here."

But the truth is that all this technology alone is not capable of welcoming people and making them feel part of a community, and therefore, willing to genuinely exchange experiences and opinions that will turn into insights. For that to happen, the human connection is crucial!

The Mothers and Babies community, held in conjunction with KCC, demonstrated the powerful alliance between technology and human connection in action! The alliance highlights that behind a robust platform, incredible tools, IDs, and dashboards, there are real people: on one side, those who need to know how to extract the best from technology and apply it coherently, and on the other, the people who need attention, proximity, and respect to give the data that will generate insights.

5 tips for a techno-human insights community

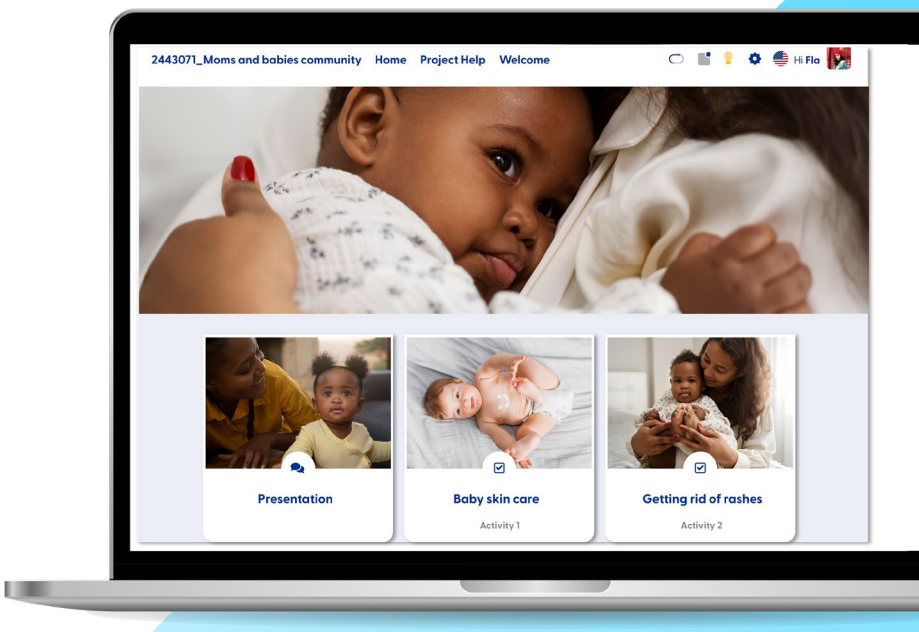
1. Space for exchange:
When developing the activities, remember that the participants are people with different backgrounds and routines. Create a pleasant environment and don't make the activities a burden! Technology is there for you.

2. People!:
Explore the human side through technology to create horizontal and close connections. Reinforce them with an offline team approach, if necessary. From the language to the form of interaction, participants feel more belonging and more at ease when they know that there is a person interested in what they have to say on the other side of the screen.

3. Community's theme:
Organize immersion sessions with the client to get to know the universe that will be explored, its nuances, terms, hypotheses, and doubts. This allows you to carry out relevant activities and engage in more productive discussions, resulting in better information both for the participants and for analysis.

4. Living project:
Remember that the community is made by and for people. That's why it may be necessary to make modifications along the way based on participants' engagement levels and responses. The platform is your ally for this.

5. Diversity:
Look for more diversity within the theme that will be explored to provide disruptive and inclusive insights. Use segmentation tools to enhance this diversity and boost analysis.



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About the Authors

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Flávia is part of Research team in Brazil. With a background in qualitative research, she is deeply motivated by extracting insights from human connections. She finds the synergy between quantitative and qualitative approaches particularly rewarding and is passionate about how each adds depth and nuances to overcome business challenges. Creative and curious, she is always exploring new ways to support clients and develop projects from inception to delivery. Flávia is very communicative and fosters teamwork to leverage diverse perspectives.

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Camila is Project Manager in Brazil and passionate about both quantitative and qualitative projects. She is enthusiastic about the innovation and creativity that market research provides and strongly believes in the enriching potential of qualitative insights. Camila is customer-focused and aims to exceed customer expectations by exploring new ideas and features. She values curiosity, innovation, and new ideas, with her expertise, she provides valuable insights into the projects, ensuring that the business receives the best possible outcomes.