Using the Virtual Makerspace

Presented by: Equity in the Making Lab

Run a Tiny Café for Rapid Feedback

The Tiny Café approach is an ideal method to conduct an engaging and time-efficient study, with interactions as short as 5 minutes. The Tiny Café offers researchers an opportunity to establish a presence in locations frequented by their desired participants, enticing them with refreshments and coffee in exchange for a few minutes of their time. This method obviates the necessity of recruiting and scheduling participants, streamlining the research process.

For more detailed information on this methodology, please refer to the provided link here.

Activity Objectives

Acquire prompt data in an informal environment by implementing a Tiny Café. This method ensures:

- Swift turnaround of data collection.
- Output for quantitative and qualitative purposes.

Step-By-Step Overview

Before the Study

1. Consider the purpose and/or question framing the need for the Tiny Café. Is it to test usability? Experience? A starting point for co-design?
2. Create a game plan on what you will ask the participant to do, and what information you want to learn from them.

3. If possible, see if any co-researchers or research assistants are willing to work the Tiny Café with you.
4. Gather any materials you need such as a questionnaire, or set of questions to verbally ask the participants. Additionally, you might want to have the virtual makerspace open on both a VR headset and a laptop.
5. If time allows, put up signs to advertise the Tiny Café with the time and location.

During the Study

1. Meet participants where they are. For example, in the library, student union, and/or in a classroom hallway. Also consider what time you would be seen by most participants – such as between classes or during lunch.
2. Set up your Tiny Café table with your research materials, snacks and refreshments.
3. Greet and invite people to participate in your study in exchange for some refreshments or snacks.
4. Invite your participant to explore the virtual makerspace on either the VR headset or the laptop. You can either follow up their exploration with a few questions or a quick survey, or ask them questions while they explore the space.
   a. If you prefer a low technology alternative, you can also take screenshots of the makerspace and print them out. Then, show participants these pictures to learn their perspectives on them.
5. After you receive the number of participants you aimed for, you are complete!

Example

Below are examples of questions to capture a student's first impressions of a makerspace. Categories include:

- Spatial and physical design
- Emotions
- Perceptions of equity, inclusion, and diversity

Spatial/Physical Design of Makerspace	User Feelings and Emotions	Impressions of Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity
How would you describe the overall layout and organization of the makerspace?	How did you feel upon entering the makerspace for the first time?	Based on your first impressions, do you feel that the makerspace is

Did you notice the signage in the makerspace? If so, what are your thoughts on them?	Did you feel a sense of belonging or welcome in the makerspace? Why or why not?	Were there any visible efforts to create an inclusive environment, such as inclusive signage or resources that cater to different learning styles and abilities?
Were there any aspects of the makerspace design that hindered your ability to navigate or access resources?	Were there any elements of the makerspace that made you feel intimidated or overwhelmed?	Did you observe any barriers or challenges that could potentially exclude certain user groups from fully participating in the makerspace?
How would you rate the accessibility of the makerspace, considering factors such as lighting, noise levels, and physical access to resources?	How do your first impressions of the makerspace impact your willingness to return and engage with the space and its resources?	How do you think the makerspace could better communicate its commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity to first-time visitors?