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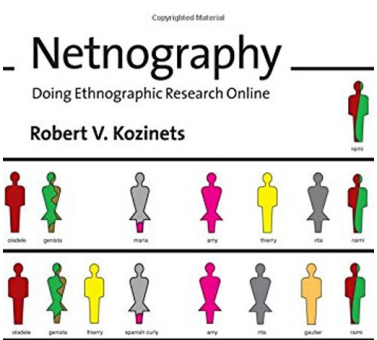

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Author's Profile

Robert Kozinets Robert V. Kozinets is an inventor whose techniques and ideas are extensively used by scholars and organizations worldwide. He created netnography in 1995, which is the application of ethnographic approaches to the study of internet interaction. Since then, he has instructed academics and businesses in digital research methodologies linked with marketing and branding ideas, practices, and ethics. His study supports a more cultural and passionate approach to the new media economy by posing issues about technology, entertainment, religion, and desire. He has edited or written eight books, including Netnography Unlimited in 2021. He has more than 120 publications, including multiple highly referenced papers in leading academic journals, seven research videographies, and numerous published poetry. Kozinets is an associate editor for the Journal of Marketing and the Journal of Consumer Research, as well as the incoming chair of the Journal of the Association for Consumer Research's Policy Board.

Abstract

This book provides a set of methodological guidelines for conducting netnography, a form of ethnographic research adapted to include the influence of the Internet on contemporary social worlds. The aims of this Book This book intends to provide a set of methodological guidelines and a systematic approach to the culturally oriented study of technologically mediated social interaction that occurs via the Internet and related information and communications technologies. As you read the book, try to incorporate the descriptions and examples into a basic, personal netnography project. Despite the numerous names researchers have given to their methods, there are very few specific guidelines for how to conduct and present an ethnography of an online community or culture. In consumer and marketing research, authors have generally adopted the singular term "netnography" to refer to the ethnographic study of online cultures and communities.

Point of View

In the field of consumer and marketing research, netnographies have become a widely accepted form of research. They have been used to tackle a large variety of topics, from applied questions of online advertising to more general investigations of identity, social relations, learning, and creativity. There is no doubt that new research on the use of Internet and other information and communications technologies is adding significantly to the literature of cultural studies, sociology, economics, law, information science, business and management fields, communication studies, human geography, nursing and healthcare, and anthropology.

Our social worlds are going digital, with perhaps hundreds of millions of people interacting through various online communities and their associated cybercultures. To stay current, our research methods must follow. This book provides a set of methodological guidelines for the conduct of netnography, a form of ethnographic research adapted to include the Internet's influence on contemporary social worlds.

Netnography is a form of ethnographic research adapted to the unique contingencies of computer-mediated social interaction. It is a participative approach to the study of online culture and communities. The very act of participating in a community changes the nature of later data analysis. Researchers may benefit from adopting the approach of netnography. Using a common understanding and a common set of standards for such studies will confer stability, consistency, and legitimacy. If you engage with the book in this way, you will leave it with a wealth of hands-on knowledge. The goal of this book is to enable the researcher to approach an ethnographic project focused on any type of online community or culture fully informed about what they will need to do.

Researchers may benefit by adopting the approach of netnography, a form of ethnographic research adapted to the unique contingencies of various types of computer-mediated social interaction. The core of netnography — what differentiates it from a gathering and coding of qualitative online data — is that it is a participative approach to the study of online culture and communities. Even if the data are of archival interactions, during data collection it is incumbent upon the netnographer to struggle to understand the people represented in these interactions from within the online communal and cultural context in which they are embedded, rather than collect this information in a way that would strip out context and present culture members or their practices in a general, unspecified, universalized manner. Participating in a community alters the nature of subsequent data analysis.

Objectives of this Book

This book aims to provide a set of methodological guidelines and a disciplined approach to the culturally oriented study of technologically-mediated social interaction that occurs through the Internet and related information and communications technologies. The methods that these various fields have used to investigate these topics are still somewhat uncertain and in flux.

As with any type of methodological handbook, the more you engage with this text and use the examples, the greater your learning experience will be. As you read through the book, try to use the descriptions and examples for a small, rudimentary netnography project of your own. If you engage with the book in this way, you will leave it with a wealth of hands-on knowledge. The goal of this book is to enable the researcher to approach an ethnographic project focused on any type of online community or culture fully informed about what they will need to do. After working through a few historical details, some necessary definitions, some potentially useful theory, and some methodological comparison and contrast, the book proceeds into a detailed description of the approach of netnography. The book includes a glossary that readers may find helpful. The glossary summarizes terms and concepts used in the book and in the field of online community studies, as well as the occasional unavoidable acronym. This chapter will provide some further elaboration upon the need for the separate ethnographic approach termed netnography.

Why We Need Netnography

A recent set of postings on the author's blog debated the necessity of a separate term for ethnography conducted online. The debate benefited from the insights of a number of commenters, especially those of Jerry Lombardi, an applied anthropologist with considerable marketing research experience.

Despite the many names that researchers have given their methods, there are very few, specific, procedural guidelines to take a researcher through the steps necessary to conduct an ethnography of an online community or culture and to present their work. In consumer and marketing research, the authors have generally adopted the use of the single term "netnography" to refer to the approach of ethnography applied to the study of online cultures and communities.

Most of this type of work written after the term was coined uses the guidelines and techniques that have been published about the netnographic approach. A community is not fixed in form or function; it is a mixed bag of possible options, whose meanings and concreteness are always being negotiated by individuals in the context of changing external constraints.

Online Culture and Cyberculture

What is being shared among the members of these online communities? This brings them to the sticky and contentious topic of culture. Throughout human society, computer technology and its related bank of practices and traditions are increasingly fusing with existing and new systems of meaning. This mingling can produce surprising and unique cultural formations; these new cultural fusions, would be cyberculture.

The term cyberculture can be defined through a futuristic and technologically utopian perspective, as a symbolic code of the new information society, as a set of cultural practices and lifestyles related to the rise of networked computing technology; or as a term to reflect on the social changes brought about by access to the new media, respectively. With global Internet access continuing to grow, and time online continuing to expand, the authors are going to see prodigious growth in the quantity, interests, and influence of these communities and their attendant cultures.

Reference

Kozinets, R. V. (2014). *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. London: SAGE Publication Ltd.