



Short Review

Role of ethnography in research

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Abstract

Country is moving to words 'digitization' where in 'Internet ethnography' is playing an important role. Ethnography means description of people or culture. Presently Ethnography research is playing an important role in social sciences and Management Research. This paper deals with Theoretical description of ethnographic research.

Keywords: Ethnography, Digitization, Anthropology, Internet, Cultural artifact.

Introduction

Ethnography means description of people or cultures¹. In Ethnography Research, if suppose a researchers is interested to study an analyze village conditions, village people then he should completely immerse himself in to the lives, village culture and situation. Actually study of ethnography initiated originally from Anthropology². Where in it is said that a researcher would visit tribal area and stay there for a long period (i.e. at least one year) to learn about nature of work and living condition etc. Group of researcher from United State contributed the idea of cultural relativism³. One researcher concentrated on the use of documents informant where as some other researcher stated that researcher should engross himself by living for a long period of time with villagers and collect information by using participant observation and experience their way of life⁴. Ethnographer should study and analyze complete culture by considering social, culture and economic aspect of village conditions.

Forms or Types of Ethnography

Ethnographers from holistic School (Realistic Ethnographer): The researcher here should identify the group or category of people he is observing and he should go 'native' and collect data after living like a local person.

Ethnographers from semiotic or thick description school⁵: Some villages or local people follow certain rituals or worship certain goddesses here researcher should study and analyses all the aspects considering the culture.

Ethnographers from critical school (critical Ethnography): In some cases village people are more influenced by political environment or decision taken by political leaders. Policies implemented by political leaders play an important role in village development. Critical ethnography should study these aspects considering different groups in villages.

Features of Ethnography Research: i. The data collected is always in raw form. Initial collected data is not coded properly and also not structured. ii. Emphasizes on exploring social phenomena rather than testing of hypotheses. iii. Data analysis involves interpretation of the functions and meanings of human actions. The product of this is mainly verbal explanations, where statistical analysis and quantification play a subordinate role. iv. Researcher should describe the village culture in detail considering present living condition. v. Involve extensive field work where data collection is mainly by interviews, symbols, artifacts, observations etc. vi. Researcher looks for patterns of the group mental activities, their ideas and beliefs expressed through language or other activities, and how they behave in their groups.

The ethnography method is different from social science approach⁶

In social sciences usually research is based on collecting the data through questionnaire method. Ethnography concentrates on field work, face to face contact and requires long term commitment from the researcher. Here the researcher stays for a long time in the village and studies and analyses the group carefully rather than framing and testing hypothesis using any a statistical tools.

Internet and Ethnography

Ethnography view internet as a culture or cultural artifact.

Culture: In this internet is viewed as a virtual place where people form and reform a culture or set of practices and meaning. Here instead of travelling to a place an ethnographer can go on live and examine what people do in cyber space-interaction between them conventions they use (smiley face and other emotion etc.) This can be investigated by carrying out online interviews and observing interactions in chat rooms and collecting documents (i.e copies of website visited etc.).

Cultural artifact: Internet is viewed as a Product of a culture. Technology produced by people in particular context. The way in which people market develop and use it. No fixed way for internet or world wide web. It's in shape depends on individual or group (Hardware produced software vendors website developers etc.) observe internet as company website how it changes overtime, use inline or offline interview to explore social political context shaping website, audiences conceived by side developers.

Application of Ethnography (Example of Ethnography): i. Ethnography aids in study of village in detail. As the researcher stays in a village for a long period he can properly understand their culture, their way of life and the type of food they consume. ii. Study of ethnography helps in communication studies. Here the researcher studies the behavior, language pattern and culture of the people. iii. Presently many companies are making use of ethnographic study to understand village consumer perception regarding different products, their desires and influence of cultural practices on consumption pattern of different products.

IS and Computing Research

Zuboff carried out research study on IT based systems in different organization and explored how these systems were altering perception about the nature of work, the dynamic of workplace, appropriate management and organizational structure⁷.

Trauth studied companies involve in production of hardware and development of software. In respect of information economy. Here in he explored interaction between cultural context and information economy⁸.

Ethnographer approach can be used: i. To study and analyze behavior of employees of a super bazaar when manager is present and when he is not. ii. Examine health habits of village resident from a particular locality.

Advantages of Ethnography: i. It gives detail analyses of particular culture and situation of a village. ii. The finding does not emerge from artificial experiment but from lives of the people studied, which can be used as experiments for artificial studies. iii. It is used study Institutional context of IS and computing practices considering all the stake holders and human, social, organizational and technical aspects of IS development and application. iv. It can be used to study the introduction of new ICT System and how people respond and adopt it over time (Long period).

Challenges or Limitations of Ethnography: i. Ethnographer should have good knowledge about the political, historical and culture of the village selected for the study. To understand this considerable training and time is required. ii. Researcher should handle social relations, persuade others to open up and deal with

ethical aspects of observing others and so on. iii. High cost is involved in this type of research. Researcher is required to spend long time in the field where in he should first establish the trust with the residents of the village. iv. Ethnography depends more on field study, actual survey, presentation of critical incidents and actual involvement of village residents. The study does not involve any scientific approach, quantification and hypothesis testing.

Conclusion

In the Era of 'Digitization' ethnographic research, plays an important role. One should not view 'Internet as Culture'. Ethnographic study enables the researcher to experience. The culture study can be conducted regarding Impact of "Digitization ICT" on village respondents.

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