



A Presentation from The NewMR “Putting the ‘Qual’ in Qualitative” Event

28 March 2012



Mobile Qualitative Research: misunderstandings and miscommunications

Siamack Salari, EthOS



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Mobile Qualitative Research: misunderstandings and miscommunications

EthOS



eth•s

Speaker: Siamack Salari, EthOS, Belgium
NewMR Putting the 'Qual' in Qualitative Event, 28 March 2012, Session 2

Why we created the platform



- For our own employees to conduct participant observation in the field
- Replace video cameras
- Speed up tagging and editing
- Allow a lead researcher to monitor progress
- Share progress easily with clients

Mixed reality



- Our employees hated it because it completely changed the way they worked - device started out as a back up camera
- 98% of clients used it for auto ethnography
- Tagging and sorting was speeded up, but time is used to engage with respondents instead – no real savings
- Allow a lead researcher to monitor progress
- Share progress easily with clients who mostly want to see the end results

Why mobile is not all it seems



Participant observation

- Able to capture naturally occurring events as they happen
- No disruption caused by asking questions at the point of capture
- No knowledge of study objectives so minimal performances - eliminated by researchers
- Minimal risk of respondent fatigue

Self ethnography

- Showing and telling – based on tasks and questions
- Self edited (decision to capture becomes data)
- Instant rationalisation needed/ given with most entries – risk performances
- Respondents will get tired of showing you things (my diet)

Challenges of auto ethnography



- People are not natural film makers (benchmark films needed)
- People rarely film longer than 2 minutes - 45 seconds being the average
- Tasks need to be carefully designed to make sense and illicit emotional responses
- Although our app allows audio recordings, it's potential was a complete surprise to us
- On-boarding issues can EthOS people cry...



But mobile will change everything

- No longer need to recruit people – they can scan and launch a project instantaneously in a supermarket, car showroom, from a magazine article
- Real people, by the thousand
- Unprecedented intimacy and immediacy
- Qual/quant distinction will become irrelevant
- Respondents will become emancipated – conduct their own analysis (add, not replace yours)

Yet we need to understand



- Mobile will NOT replace many current methods
- Simply another way of slicing the consumer cake
- We love seeing mobile as a mixed/combination method
- Only participant observation will capture naturally occurring, spontaneous happenings (which is what ethnography and video are all about)
- Some of the best groups occur when respondents have already captured content to share on the day

Analysis & meaning



- Joanna Chrzanowska describes entries as Lego pieces
 - to be sorted, reduced and grouped by colour, shape and size
 - Use the pieces to build concepts, theories and insights
 - Beware you might not have enough colours or pieces to support an argument
 - A mobile platform MUST allow you to work rapidly backwards to individual pieces to see what you have left to reconstruct your model/theory/insight
 - An audit trail is key

Privacy & ethics challenge



- From EU's twelve golden rules of ethical research:
“Informed consent gives the subject a sense of control over their personal information or alleviates the fear that the data, samples or information will be retained or used in any other unintended manner”
- Consent forms do not allow for ‘mission creep’
- There is no such thing as ‘informed consent’ – context, mode and attitude changes over time
- Mobile tools can turn this situation around...

Mobile solution



- 'Receipt' sent as link to respondent as they are filmed, photographed, interviewed
- Allow them to take their time over whether they want to take part in explorations – or else 'remove me!'
- Follow your images over time – how many downloads, why?, by who? comments added, codes added and respondent decides when to stop access to their image

Where is mobile research today?



- Has been described as the Wild West
- Many, many players who are split between technologists and researchers
- Licence sellers and consultancies
- So enjoy the opportunity – test drive the platforms for free – and assign someone to champion it
- One client's reason why our platform was so popular with his team...

What it comes down to



- We can go home early!

Thank you



Siamack Salari

EthOS

Q & A



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Siamack Salari

Read Siamack's blog @ <http://www.ethnosnacker.com/>

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