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A Book Review:
Netnography: Redefined *

The relevance of researching online social networks and interactions cannot be questioned in the technologically advanced and highly digitized world we live in today (Belk, Price, & Peñaloza, 2013). Hence, Netnography as a methodology, which has been around for almost two decades, has more relevance today than ever. Kozinets's *Netnography: Redefined* supplements the previous version of the book *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online* by adding an epistemological background explaining why and how it is not just a methodology for online ethnographic enquiry.

The genius of the book is that it puts 'interaction' in the centre and defines culture and community around it, which easily explains the fluidity, complexities and the multi-networked nature of online social interactions. Concepts such as Techno-culture, Consocial identities, and networked individualism that are used in the book, help define the social universes and network archetypes. The reference to social network analysis further expands the readers understanding of different types of social networks researchers can analyse. Additionally, Kozinets excels in translating this axiological reference into methodological details.

Where the first two chapters indoctrinate the epistemological concepts defining networked sociality, the next three chapters outline the details of methodological differences and consequences of using these concepts. These provide the fundamentals of how to conduct Netnography within the defined epistemological constructs by outlining the 12 phases of Netnography including introspection, investigation, information, interview, inspection, interaction, immersion, indexing, interpretation, iteration, instantiation and lastly integration. Chapter 5 then goes on to explain the planning and preparation stages of conducting Netnographic research.

Chapter 6 outlines the complexities and dilemmas of conducting ethical Netnography research and deals with the issues of privacy in a public domain, informed consent and legal considerations. Chapters 7 to 9 further explain data collection, researcher participation and data analysis and interpretation in detail. Chapter 10 elaborates on data representation. Kozinets discusses representation as one of the criteria to differentiate between four types of Netnography that add to Netnography's redefinition.

The four types of Netnographies are Symbolic, Digital, Auto and Humanist. The symbolic netnographer would find meaning in cultures, groups and represent the social experience in textual form, as they are interested in creating narratives. Digital netnographers would use computer-assisted methods for analysis and visualization and focus on big data to derive inferences. The Auto-netnographer on the other hand would use a myriad of methods to create reflexive field-notes about their own understandings of social interactions experienced first hand. The book ends with a discussion and importance of the fourth type of Netnography - Humanist Netnography, (Chapter 11) where netnographers seek transformative ways including dramatizations, poetry, videography, social media, curations etc. to communicate findings. This enlarges their role in the wider scheme of research inducing shared systemic thinking and theorization.

The book is rightly titled redefined, as it redefines Netnography by placing it under the epistemological perspectives of techno-cultural social interactions which are defined not only by advancement in technology but also changing individualism, fluid cultural identities, and fragmented and delocalized communities (Amit & Rapport, 2002). Secondly, it redefines the online field of research and chosen methodology based on not only the research question, but also types of networks (audience and customer) and social connections (tight social networks or interest group alliances) one wishes to study, interest focus (sites, topics or people) as well as the method of representation. The netnographer is able to contextualize his/her research within a better understanding of networked communities and is further forced to question his/her role in the larger field of research.

One of the areas for future versions of the book to delve into would be the four types of Netnography the book finally ends with. Though symbolic Netnography is the one researchers are most familiar with, the discussion on other types of Netnography, specifically digital Netnography could benefit from clear constructs highlighting the qualitative aspects of big data. Though Kozinets rightly acknowledges the difficulty in comprehension of big data analysis as an ethnographic or anthropological science; however, placing it within the participant-observation domain needs to be elaborated on.

The book highlights the importance of studying online interactions and social networks, which provides insights for tourism research. Netnographic methods aid in exploring aspects of tourism demand such as customer satisfaction, travel patterns, itinerary mapping, and travel experiences etc. in detail. With social media providing an excellent interface between tourism suppliers and consumers, Netnography is beneficial in understanding value co-creation and evaluation of tourism services as well.

Conclusively, the example-based approach used by Kozinets makes it easier to understand Netnographic research constructs for practising industry analysts. The use of this method is already prevalent in the market research industry and has proved useful in not only Fast-Moving-Consumer-Goods domains but also other domains such as medicine and manufacturing. This book allows for direct application of its methods while listing tools to support achieving the desired results.

Academically, analysing plural understandings of material, cultural and social relationships has become a necessity for emerging scholars in the multiple reality, technologically advanced world of today. Hence, the book proves to be a great handbook for not only all netnographers but also social science ethnographic researchers who are ready to disbelieve and move away from the rigidity of cultural norms and static communities as base constructs for future research.

References

Amit, V., & Rapport, N. (2002). *The trouble with community : anthropological reflections on movement, identity and collectivity*. England, United Kingdom: Pluto Press.

Belk, R. W., Price, L., & Peñaloza, L. (2013). *Consumer culture theory / edited by Russell W. Belk, Linda Price, Lisa Peñaloza* (1st ed. ed.). Bingley, UK :: Emerald.

* *Netnography: Redefined*, 2nd Edition, by Robert V. Kozinets, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Boston, Sage Publications, 2015, x+ 305pp., ISBN 978-1-4462-8575-6 (pbk)