

January 2006

vue

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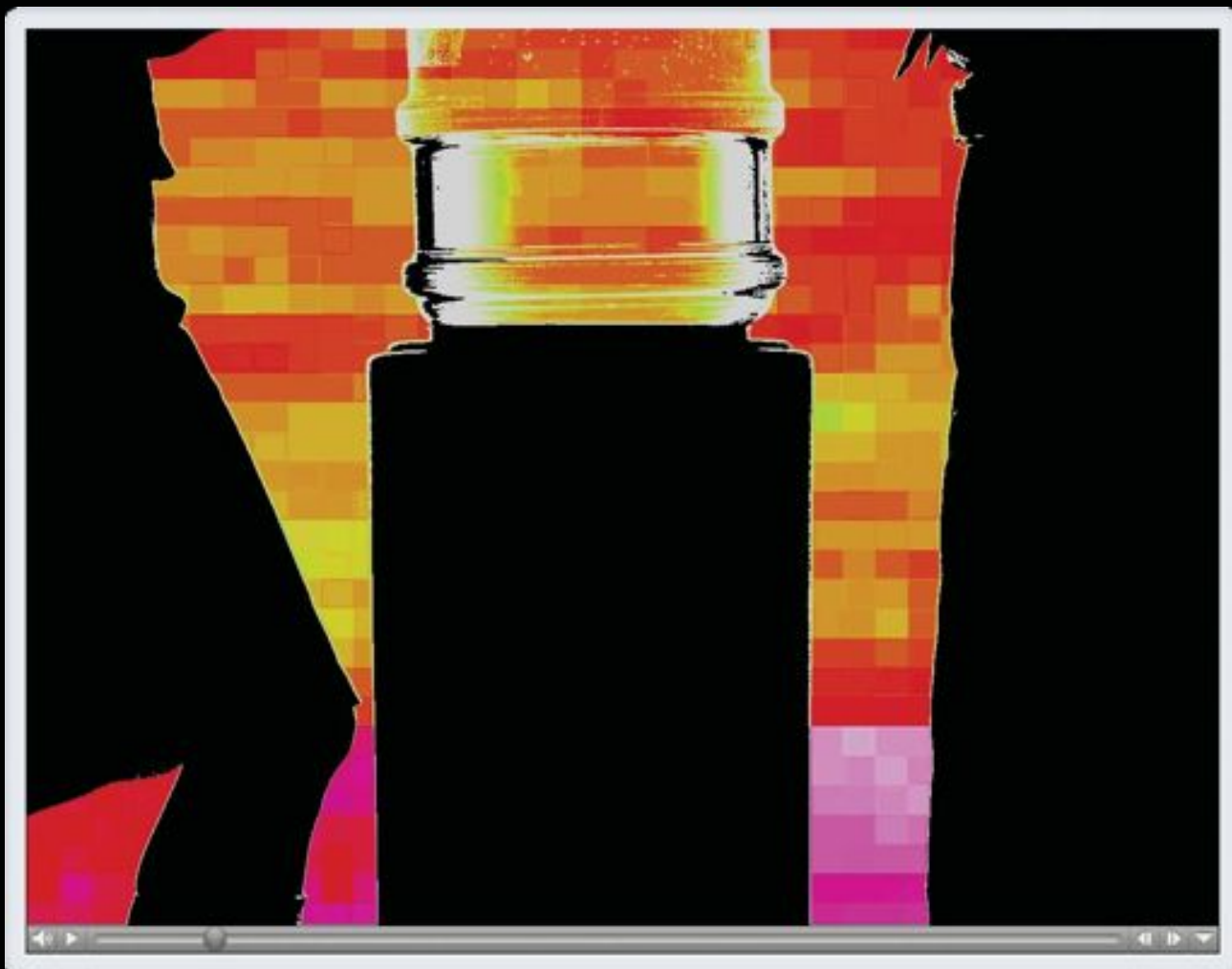
Inside this month's edition:

pour on the rapport – by David Kwechansky

evolving copy testing – by Kim Short

book review: Hy Mariampolski's Ethnography for
Marketers – by Mark Lovell

the revolution will be digitized



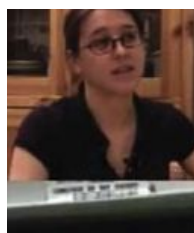
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by Pierre Belisle

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documentary video and online technologies in qualitative research¹

by Pierre Belisle, CMRP

The multi-channel television universe, satellite television, and digital video age is upon us. Video cell phones, miniature camcorders, and webcams abound. Our culture is video-rich and video-enabled. What might this mean for qualitative research?

ILLUSTRATIVE VIDEO: GRAY HAMMOND AND THE CIGARETTE POWERWALL

Gray Hammond² is a seasoned researcher who has worked on the agency side, the client side, and now as a consultant and researcher.

Hammond envisions increasing uses for video, particularly in consumer research. In one recent example, Hammond used a documentary video to enhance dramatically a presentation being given to Ontario legislators.

Approach

Over one hundred youths aged twelve to fourteen were recruited to participate in “streeters” – interviews (individuals, pairs, and mini-groups) conducted on location... in the street, in school, and in convenience stores. The exchanges with the interviewers were videotaped by a



crew and the resulting footage edited in accordance with the findings of quantitative research conducted, also by Hammond, to study the impact of cigarette “PowerWall” displays in convenience stores on youth.

The on-location video added emotion, reality, and immediacy to the presentation, as did the decision to shoot the footage with a “hand-held” look.

Interviewing in familiar surroundings helped the teens to be more relaxed and more genuine than they might have been

in standard facilities (see Figure 1).

While Hammond believes that the future of documentary video may involve professional film and sound crews, it may also consist of “just hanging around with a little camcorder” to add authenticity and context to otherwise complex or un-involving presentations (see Figure 2).

Some Lessons Learned...

- Illustrative video clips can:
- be a powerful presentation tool when

key stakeholders or decision-makers are unable to view the original research; and,

- bring to life quantitative data or un-involving presentations.

ENHANCING ONLINE QUALITATIVE: RON RILEY AND THE UBIQUITOUS WEBCAM

Like many researchers, Ron Riley³ was intrigued by the strengths of online qualitative research, but frustrated by two key shortcomings: the need to communicate via the keyboard and the inability to see the participants' body language. Channel M2, the service he and a group of moderators and client-side researchers created, attempts to overcome these shortcomings by setting up a webcam on every participant's desktop.

Approach

Thanks to broadband access, a webcam (supplied and shipped by Channel M2), and a telephone, participants see and hear each other (and the moderator) on their computer desktop.

Observers, also on their home or office computers, can view the proceedings from a virtual backroom and communicate with researchers real-time via a "backroom" chat area.

The approach offers some immediate benefits:

- use speech to communicate (200 words per minute), rather than slower keyboarding (40 wpm, on average);
- allows moderators to see and analyze the rich cues of body language; and,
- eliminates the expense and annoyance that business travel has become.

Other benefits are shared with more conventional online research:

- the ability to create real groups using geographically dispersed participants; and,
- the ability to attract to the research respondents who might otherwise never appear on the conventional research radar screen, because they are outside major centres, or unavailable for an evening of research, or unwilling to par-



Figure 1: Screen capture from "Power Wall" video



Figure 2: Screen capture from a Channel M2 online group

ticipate in a group experience.

Finally, long-term benefits or applications may lie in the completely new types of research possibilities that remote video allows, such as:

- online ethnography, perhaps using wireless webcams;
- hybrid qualitative/quantitative studies (see Figure 3); and,

- online usability studies where the participant's face, mouse clicks, and desktop can all be seen remotely.

Some Lessons Learned...

- A Channel M2 approach may be particularly appropriate when:
- travel appears as a significant item on the project budget;



Figure 3: Screen capture from Immersion Tank interface

- monitoring body language is thought to be an essential part of the research project;
- potential participants may be unwilling or unable to travel to a central location; and,
- it is desirable to create a personal connection with an online respondent.

SELF-VIDEOS AS STIMULUS: TODD EISEN AND THE CUSTOMER CAM

Todd Eisen⁴ has had long-standing interests in the intersection of consumer research and storytelling. He thus formed Actionspeak, a service for clients and researchers that uses respondent-generated videos as the basis for a deep exploration of behaviour and motivation.

Approach

Using various video methods – respondent-worn videocams, personal camcorders, cellphone cameras, and others – participants record the tasks or experiences under study. The assignments can be as specific as assembling a BBQ, or as broad as spending an evening in a hotel, depending on the study objectives.

the Actionspeak approach engages respondents and democratizes research, by asking respondents to participate in making their own “marketing reality program”

Once participants have captured their experience on tape, they return to be debriefed. This debrief may occur at a standard focus group facility where either an Actionspeak consultant or the client’s moderator will debrief the respondent about the video, as it is screened.

The resulting interviews and the original respondent-shot footage are summarized and edited, for use within the client organization (and, often, for purposes such as training or corporate communications, far broader than the original study objectives).

The original source video is therefore both a *record* of actual behaviour and a *stimulus* that lets the participant view and comment on their own actions.

The benefits of the approach include:

- the respondent-generated video is an invaluable window into the respondent’s world; it is raw, unedited, and uninflu-

enced even by an interviewer or moderator’s questions or probes;

- the same video provides a broad context for the consumer’s interaction with the client’s product, service, or environment;
- at the same time, it will often produce a crucial level of granularity or detail that recall alone may overlook;
- confronting respondents with their self-made videos encourages them to explore their motivations for *this* behaviour, or *that* choice, helping them to become deeply engaged in the research process; and,
- perhaps more importantly, this unique confrontation between a respondent and their actions allows clients and researchers to probe in entirely new ways, such as recollecting thoughts and feelings that occurred during the experience, or

exploring motivators that may have lain hidden at the time of the experience.

Some Lessons Learned...

- the Actionspeak approach engages respondents and democratizes research, by asking respondents to participate in making their own “marketing reality program”; and,
- the approach appears well suited to study motivations using a consumer-generated visual and experiential focus that seem appropriate for most brands and services.

MAKING ETHNOGRAPHY BETTER, FASTER, CHEAPER: SIAMACK SALARI AND THE IMMERSION TANK

An industrial designer by training, Siamack Salari’s⁵ interest in observational research culminated in his found-

ing in the year 2000 of *everydaylives*, a consultancy dedicated to the documentary stories of everyday lives and the belief that knowing about those lives can help marketers.

Approach

everydaylives (EDL) begins the process by “hanging out” with their target participants for at least one day of observation and filming. The captured footage is then edited down to a 45 minute doc-

uments; and,

- understanding the differences between what people have said they do and what they actually do.

While many clients have the means, the need, the time, and the inquisitiveness to undertake this type of research, Salari believes that further innovations are required to make ethnography even more widely accessible. Enter “Immersion Tank”.

...the approach may benefit clients who suspect that the observation of actual behaviour may provide insights and answers to questions that they did not even know they did not know

umentary that then becomes the topic of a question-generation session with the client team. The questions evolved there are asked of the participants on a return visit to the household while researchers play the compiled footage.

In turn, their answers become the narration of the final documentary that will typically contain an introduction of the households, pertinent scenes, and the understandings and insights gained by the researchers.

These findings and the finished video are presented to the client, followed by a “so what?” session that generates implications for the findings. These, along with the documentary, are then referred to senior management.

While the process is long and not inexpensive, it has proven invaluable in generating insights and, especially, in providing revealing contexts and suggesting areas of inquiry that the clients sometimes did not know they did not know. Typical studies have included:

- studying shopping-related issues, because so much of shopping is on autopilot where recall is often ineffectual;
- understanding what new questions should be added to regular Q&A sur-

Approach

Immersion Tank is a combination of online site/panel, site/picture and video collection centre. Recruited panellists (who generally have broadband access and their own video or digital cameras) are paid for a commitment to carry out assigned tasks (e.g., cleaning their stove). The participants upload their self-videoed (or self-photographed) task, and then comment interactively on the video (or pictures) via a bulletin board. Clients pay a flat rate, per respondent, per task, to gain access to the panel members and assign tasks.

Some Lessons Learned...

- On the one hand, the classic long-form EDL approach seems to require inquisitiveness, the willingness to accept long project lead times, and the readiness of researchers to ask basic questions about their consumers and their consumers’ behaviour;
- the short-form Immersion Tank, on the other hand, may prove to be an interesting entry-level approach to ethnographic study; and,
- either approach may benefit clients who suspect that the observation of ac-

tual behaviour may provide insights and answers to questions that they did not even know they did not know.

CONCLUSIONS

New online qualitative tools and video documentaries address the growing interest in observing in general and in observing on-location in particular. These approaches move beyond simply listening at a central facility.

The spread of video-making technology and the growth of a cultural video language gives researchers the **freedom to explore** this video world.

The question for researchers may be: “Are you the kind of person who likes to explore?”⁶

REFERENCES AND WEBSITES

¹ Readers may also be interested in two other documents: Video in research: introducing the video ethnography process – a presentation by Dr. Sarah Pink (University of Loughborough) given at the RCBN workshop on using video in teaching and learning research. Available at <http://www.cf.ac.uk/socsi/capacity/RCBNResource.html#video> and

When Online Qualitative Shines - a presentation by Susan Abbott and Betsy Leichter given at the 2005 Conference of the Qualitative Research Consultants Association. <http://www.qrca.org>

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⁴ Todd Eisen, Actionspeak, www.Actionspeak.com, email: todd.e@actionspeak.com

⁵ Siamack Salari, Everyday Lives, www.everydaylives.com, email: siamack@everydaylives.com

⁶ Walter Murch, noted film editor, quoted in the *Conversations*, by Michael Ondaatje, Vintage Canada, 2002

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