



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research



Reflexive introspection: Methodological insights from four ethnographic studies

Amandeep Takhar-Lail ^{a,*}, Pepukayi Chitakunye ^b

^a University of Bedfordshire, Park Square, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 3JU, UK

^b University of the Witwatersrand, School of Economic and Management Sciences, Private Bag 3, Johannesburg WITS 2050, South Africa

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 January 2014

Received in revised form 2 March 2015

Accepted 5 March 2015

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Introspection

Reflexivity

Consumer culture

Consumer introspection theory

ABSTRACT

This article contributes to scholarly knowledge relating to the methodological significance of reflexivity within consumer research by bringing fresh insights relating to the interplay between researcher and informant self-reflexivity. Findings from four ethnographic studies help us to extend our understanding of reflexivity within the data collection phase of interpretive research by explaining how the researcher and the researched can contribute to, and therefore impact the research environment significantly through a variation of reflexive practices. Reflections on our previously conducted ethnographic data sets reveal four reflexivity positions located at the intersection of the researcher and the informant: (1) co-researcher reflexivity, (2) informant controlled reflexivity, (3) researcher controlled reflexivity, and (4) liminal reflexivity. Within this context, we reveal how knowledge is co-created or co-produced by both the researchers and the informants. We then make some suggestions for addressing challenges faced by researchers within these reflexivity positions and the associated practices.

Crown Copyright © 2015 Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Reflexivity in qualitative research has a relatively long history spanning at least a century (Finlay, 2002). According to Lynch (2000) “reflexivity is a central and yet confusing topic” (p.26) because it can be difficult to establish just what is being claimed. While reflexivity has been discussed across a range of disciplines, such as philosophy (Foucault, 1970), anthropology (Latour, 1988), sociology (Ashmore, 1989), and psychology (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) the discussion of reflexivity within consumer research has been scarce to date (Bettany & Woodruffe-Burton, 2009; Takhar & Chitakunye, 2012). In fact, the discussions of reflexivity within consumer research have tended to be around introspection (Hirschman, 1986; Holbrook, 1995; Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993), and centred on the significance of the researcher maintaining reflexivity (Bettany & Woodruffe-Burton, 2009) within the research process. While we are not arguing against this trend, we argue for an in-depth account of informants’ inner voices through the use of a multiple methods approach (Takhar & Chitakunye, 2012) and by immersing informants in the research encounter and data collection phase over a longer period of time.

While extant studies have focused more on researcher reflexivity, and single person introspection, we focus more on multiple person introspection to generate deeper insights. What is of concern here is the notion of ensuring that as researchers we actually encourage our informants to think about what they are thinking and saying in more depth. This helps to co-create knowledge with researchers, as

informants hold the wealth of information that researchers are seeking, as they try to access the inner voices of the informants. Therefore, we suggest that informants should also engage in an ongoing process of “tracking, experiencing, and reflecting on one’s own thoughts, mental images, feelings, sensations and behaviours” (Gould, 1995: 719) when co-creating knowledge. Insights that are obtained from study participants are often used as the premise upon which marketing managers make their decisions. Therefore, informants’ inner voices are equally significant to consumer research (Takhar & Chitakunye, 2012).

We draw insights from Olsen (2012) to convey how we used reflexive introspection to discover new insights from previously collected ethnographic data in four studies that were conducted with different communities and with different purposes. Though the agenda for each of these ethnographic studies was different, our interactions with the data sets from these studies help us to discover new insights about multiple person reflexive introspection. Here, we use reflexive introspection to probe our data sets, consider our feelings as researchers, as well as those of the informants, as documented in our fieldnotes, observations, and other associated data sets that we collected. Given this background, the purpose of this investigation is to transform information emerging from four previously conducted ethnographic studies into shared experience. We do this from a multiple person introspection perspective as discussed by Gould (2012).

2. Consumer introspection theory (CIT)

Introspective work is gaining increasing attention within marketing and consumer research. For example, in 2012, the Journal of Business Research dedicated a special issue to Consumer Introspection Theory (CIT). Gould (2012) is of the view that CIT is a “possible organising, meta-

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 1234 400400.

E-mail addresses: amandeeptakhar@beds.ac.uk (A. Takhar-Lail), pepukayi.chitakunye@wits.ac.za (P. Chitakunye).

introspective paradigm” (p.454). Similar to Arnould and Thompson's (2005) conceptualisation of what they coined as consumer culture theory (CCT), “CIT is not one grand (meta) theory or reductionist metanarrative but rather includes a variety of perspectives and practices that rely on some form of introspection or other” (Gould, 2012, p.454). We interpret this as an extension of consumer research paradigms in that it helps us to penetrate deeper into consumer culture, and unravel the researcher and informant's inner-self.

Although the CIT term was coined by Gould in 2012, introspective work has a long history within consumer research. For example, Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) reviewed introspective methods in other social science disciplines, and then identified five categories of introspection: (1) researcher introspection, (2) guided introspection, (3) interactive introspection, (4) syncretic combinations, and (5) reflexivity within research. Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) suggest that participant observers use two sources of data: (1) observational and interview material from people in a cultural group being studied and (2) reflexive material that emerges from being a participant studying that cultural group (Wallendorf and Brucks, 1993, p.342). Reflexive introspections from our ethnographic studies build on this paradigm as discussed by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993). In line with Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) we study a cross-section of consumers at various stages of consumption rather than one person over time. While Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) did not undertake empirical work within their study, our findings are grounded in empirical work that we conducted. We contribute to this paradigm by reflecting on our own analysis, and then developing an analytical framework that focuses on the co-creation and co-production of knowledge within the data collection process of the research encounter. Our emergent analytical framework integrates the perspectives, thoughts and feelings of both the researchers and the communities being studied. Further, this dimension also integrates into the work of Olsen (2012) whose discussion of reflexive introspection privileges the insights from the researcher in some ways, but also makes connections with the insights from the communities being investigated. Our intention is not to replicate the work of Olsen (2012). However, Olsen's experiences and thoughts encourage us to refocus our analysis on the idea of co-creation and co-production of knowledge in marketing and consumer research. More recently, studies have applied introspection and reflexive practices to different consumption contexts, some adopting a single person introspection approach and others a multiple person introspection approach (Brown, 2012; Gould, 2012; Kozinets, 2012; Minowa, Visconti, & Maclaran, 2012; Olsen, 2012; Wohfeil & Whelan, 2012; Gould, 2012). Our article contributes to recent literature by focusing more so on the multiple person introspection perspective, and also encouraging informants' reflexive practices to emerge within various research contexts.

2.1. What is reflexive introspection?

According to Gould (2006), there are two approaches to introspection, that is, (1) metacognitive introspection which focuses more on the investigator's own mind and consciousness and they think about their own thoughts and feelings, and (2) narrative introspection involving autobiographical thinking (Gould, 2006, p.194). On the other hand, Marcus (1998) is of the view that reflexivity allows other voices to emerge. We interpret these other voices as the inner voices of the researchers and the study participants. Drawing from this, we share the view that “applying reflexive introspection to previously experienced ethnographic research allows a reinterpretation of those experiences” (Olsen, 2012, p.468). Within reflexive introspection, previous studies have tended to focus their attentions on the importance of undertaking introspection alone (see Gould, 2012). However, we adopt a joint researcher introspection perspective and informant introspection perspective in our four ethnographic studies, with the intention of re-analysing our previously collected data sets in a bid to probe for new insights on our research experience. Here, it is also important

to acknowledge Gould's (1991) work in terms of introspection vs. extrospection. The former he says is a focus inwardly while the other is an outward focus. We are of the view that there is a kind of reflexive hermeneutic between the two. While his focus is less on others as fellow introspectors though he does have some indication of this (e.g., Gould, 1995), it does seem that this extrospective focus can act as a bridge between the self and others within our four ethnographic studies. Within this context, we argue that the researcher and informants are both focusing inwardly and outwardly, reflexively and hermeneutically, in their co-creations of the texts discussed, and within their own thinking.

2.2. Reflexivity from the emic/etic distinction

The emic (inside view) and etic (outside view) perspective have existed for over 50 years (Pike, 1954) and originate from the field of anthropology. The terms were originally introduced by linguist Kenneth Pike (1954) who introduced them as the linguistic terms of *phonemic* and *phonetic*. However, the etic and emic perspective are no longer only recognised within linguistics, but also fields such as language and social interaction (LeBaron, Mandelbaum, & Glenn, 2002) and participatory action research (Young, 2005). It is widely recognised that the two terms (emic and etic) clearly outline the differences in perspective and understanding as an insider and outsider, that may exist within any given context. In fact, the emic and etic perspective relate to the introspective versus extrospective focus in that, the focus is on the researcher versus informant perspective. Young (2005) suggests that the “insiders have personal experience of culture, whereas outsiders lack personal or lived experience of a particular culture” (p.152). LeBaron et al. (2002) compares emic and etic with participants (emic) and researchers (etic) of their interaction or their community/culture. The emic perspective is concerned with investigating how local people may think (Kottak, 2006). It focuses on comprehending how they may perceive and categorize the world, their rules of behaviour, what has meaning for them and is interpreted as being the ‘insider’ view or standpoint. It is largely interpreted as representing and reflecting the informant (insiders) perspective and interpretations of the world. It represents the viewpoint of the members of a culture or the group being studied or observed (Pike, 1967). Interestingly, “adherents of the emic viewpoint insist that the subject and not the researcher is the best judge of the adequacy of the research and analysis” (Morey and Luthans, 1984, p.29). The etic perspective is interpreted as being the inverse of the emic perspective and therefore considers and reflects the viewpoint and values of the researcher and therefore represents an ‘outsider’ perspective.

From an etic perspective “the researcher is the best judge of the adequacy of the description or analysis” (Morey and Luthans, 1984, p.30). Here, it is believed that the researcher's interpretation is likely to be more relevant (Harris, 1979). This is because the etic approach recognises that members of a culture are often too involved in what they are doing to interpret their cultures impartially or reflexively. When adopting an etic approach the researcher is able to emphasise what he or she considers important, therefore the end result is an account of the researchers' interpretations of the behaviour of the culture being observed. However, an etic account does require the researcher to attempt to be culturally neutral and limit any bias that may take place. According to Morey and Luthans (1984), most researchers fall “somewhere between these two extremes, utilizing both emic and etic approaches to complete their total research and analytical designs” (p.30). Therefore, when these two approaches are combined we are likely to accumulate the richest view of a particular culture or society. The emic and etic approach isolated on their own are likely to result in isolated views. Similarly, researcher reflexivity and informant reflexivity on their own are likely to result in isolated views. Bringing these together help to co-produce knowledge, and bring in multiple points of view to the idea of co-creation and co-production of knowledge.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10492696>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10492696>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)