

La Netnografia

Strumenti e Tecniche per la Ricerca Etnografica Online

Abstract

The aim of this work is to investigate, from a methodological point of view, the netnographic approach, highlighting opportunities and limits of its use for social research.

After explaining the reasons why social researchers need to develop an innovative and specific approach in order to study communications and interactions that occur through the Internet, the work provides a definition of netnography identifying its distinctive features and its main areas of interest.

Subsequently, the work describes the origins of netnography, highlighting similarities and differences with traditional ethnography.

The central chapters of the thesis are aimed at presenting the different steps for conducting a netnographic research, from the definition of the research aim and questions to the editing of the final research report. Within these chapters, the main methodological issues related to netnography are presented, underlining the importance of redefining some fundamental concepts of ethnographic research (such as travel, field, data collection and observation).

The work is focused, in particular, on the issues of researcher's presentation, examining the possibility of conducting a fully covered research (lurking) and highlighting advantages and limitations of this option. Moreover, the concept of participation is analysed in depth, illustrating the different degrees and forms that it can assume during a netnographic investigation.

An entire chapter of the thesis is focused on the criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of research (conformity, congruence) and on the issue of generalizing results.

In the final part of the work, two empirical research based on netnography are shown. These two case studies provide concrete examples of application of the methodological issues outlined in the previous chapters.