



Videography in marketing and consumer research

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Abstract

Purpose – Marketing and consumer researchers have only recently been able to put videographic methods into their data collection and research representation toolkits. This paper provides an overview of these methods and offers some guidelines for their use.

Design/methodology/approach – We offer an overview of videographic methods that illustrates the considerable choice and diversity offered to budding videographers. With examples from different kinds of marketing and consumer research, from academia as well as marketing research practice, we survey, critique, and make recommendations about some of the best ways to use this method. We also promote current and existing venues for distributing videographic work.

Findings – We find videographic methods full of promise and in the early introduction growth stage in marketing and consumer research. Combined with decreases in the cost and availability of digital recording media, videography is ready for prime time.

Originality/value – Much observational data have been to a large extent “left on the table” because there have been no convenient, reliable, and cost-effective ways to capture and analyze them and build them into our research theories and representations. In this paper, we present an overview and a set of detailed examples that help to develop, systematize, and begin institutionalizing videographic methods in consumer and marketing research. The result is consumer and marketing research more attuned to the lived realities of everyday consumption, and a broadened research toolkit to capture and expressively present these realities.

Keywords Information research, Visual media, Ethnography, Data analysis, Qualitative research

Paper type Technical paper

Introduction

When Robert J. Flaherty left to film the first videographic classic, “Nanook of the North” in June 1920, he and his team carried 75,000 feet of film, a Haulberg electric light plant and projector, two Akeley cameras, and a printing machine on a journey that required six weeks of travel by rail, canoe, schooner and dog sled. Today’s digital revolution in video technology would have significantly lightened Flaherty’s load. It has affected everyone from the home photographer documenting a child’s birthday party to the state of the art film producer like George Lucas. In the past decade, the cost of being able to produce broadcast quality video has plummeted while the technological possibilities have exploded. Equipment to shoot and produce digital video has become substantially smaller, better, and more user-friendly. Technology has made it possible for the home desktop or laptop computer-owner to edit video, add special effects, and prepare finished products for distribution via videotapes, CD-ROMs, DVDs, or internet streaming. In terms of both marketing research and consumer research, an array of possibilities has blossomed and more innovations will undoubtedly emerge in the years ahead.



At the same time that the production side of videography has mushroomed, demand shows a revolution of rising expectations by consumers and clients raised on television, used to ever-more sophisticated film effects, and having rapidly grown accustomed to using the computer as a portal into the worlds of information, entertainment, buying, selling, working, and communicating, with an increasing reliance on images in each of these spheres of activity. In education, as well, the importance of visual material and electronics has rendered the blackboard an increasingly quaint relic of the past. When Nissan recently hired John Schouten and Jim McAlexander to conduct research on brand community among owners of its vehicles, the corporation insisted that the finished product be video only, with no accompanying written material. This is no longer an uncommon request among companies attuned to the power and impact of video-based research.

In this paper, we will explore emerging types of videographic research in marketing and consumption, as well as consider some of the special problems and opportunities such research presents. We will consider both video-based data collection and distribution methods. Because technology will continue to rapidly change in these areas, we will address general considerations rather than hardware-, software-, and technology-specific applications.

Video-based data collection (production)

As of this writing, the authors have hosted the first two annual Association for Consumer Research Film Festivals and will host the third in 2004. Between us we have conducted videographic workshops in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. And we have both produced and edited a variety of video-based research projects over the past 20 years. During the course of this work, we have used or encountered a variety of video data collection methods. In this section, we will discuss some of the most basic uses of video in marketing and consumer research – individual or group interviews, naturalistic observation, and autovideography – and also discuss some hybrids and emerging techniques.

The most basic use of video and still the most common is to video tape individual or group interviews. These can either be conducted in a research facility or focus group room or in a field setting. Videotaped interviews offer a powerful advantage over the more conventional audiotapes or field-noted interviews. Body language, often considered to be at least as important at communicating meaning as oral language is captured in video, but not in audio. Proxemics, kinesics, and other kinetic forms of body expression can also be captured. Once captured, these data can be subsequently coded and analyzed.

There are some powerful drawbacks, as well. First, when used without supplementary footage, such “talking heads” video fails to take full advantage of the medium. Second, the camera can prove an unwelcome hindrance to the formation of interviewer-interviewee rapport. Shoving a camera in a person’s face is both unnatural and obtrusive. It constantly reminds them that they are being interviewed, which is not always desirable. However, some partial solutions are possible. The use of a tripod can place a camera at a physical distance, which makes the interview situation more comfortable. In addition, the filming of an interview should be fully explained to the informant to help discharge any negative emotions that they might attach to it, and perhaps even to reframe it as complimentary. Finally, when conducted in another

culture using another language, confusion can easily ensue. To address this problem, we have sometimes arranged facilities so that the language in which the interview is conducted is recorded on one audio channel, while a simultaneous translation is recorded on another audio channel. If interviews will later be subtitled, this makes syncing the subtitles to the appropriate video material much easier. It also makes it possible for the video to be understood by speakers multiple languages, something we shall see can also be facilitated by certain post-production techniques. Multiple cameras, remote wireless microphones, and sound mixers make this dual-language method feasible.

The second common use of video in research is to record naturalistic observations. In recording naturalistic observations, the videographer is more interested in capturing what people do rather than what they say about what they do. For instance, Belk (2004) studied international tourist photography by videotaping tourists making photographs and videos at a variety of tourist venues. Similarly, Kozinets (1999) videotaped consumers dancing, drumming, and performing rituals at the 1999 Burning Man festival. Because cameras and camcorders are ubiquitous at such sites, the researcher does not stand out and is generally taken as just another tourist. Likewise Monnier and Gulas (2004) followed a Wally Byam Caravan Club of Airstream travel trailer owners on their joint trips across several US states.

Many variants to the naturalistic observation use are possible. Because those being observed continue to be available over a long period of time in such research, it is possible to use still and video material that has been shot previously in order to conduct visual elicitation by having them respond to watching their earlier behaviors (Heisley and Levy, 1991; Rook, 1991). A variant of observing a single group as it moves from site to site is to study a single consumption phenomenon, like collecting, over multiple sites, as was done with “the Consumer Behavior Odyssey” (Wallendorf and Belk, 1987).

Another common use of video in marketing and consumer research is to attempt to understand the consumer’s viewpoint by literally attempting to capture it onscreen. This autobiographical or autovideographical technique, which has some advantages over researcher-conducted observation, involves simply “giving the natives the camera”. One example of this technique is a video project by Sunderland *et al.* (2003) in which college students were given camcorders to take along on their evenings out in order to document their drinking behaviors and those of their companions. In a related project in the same video, pickup truck owners were given camcorders to record the uses they made of their trucks. Without the presence of a researcher, informants are often more spontaneous and self-directive in their behaviors, showing what is important to them rather than the researchers. A high level of candor and the presence of natural rather than researcher-elicited behavior is the goal of such self-ethnography.

In a retrospective application of this sort of self-ethnography, Rook (1985) obtained home movies and videos of Christmas celebrations from a sample of informants. By making copies of these home-mode documentaries (Chalfen, 1987), a variety of Christmas-related behaviors can conceivably be studied, including gift-giving rituals, holiday décor, feasts, and celebrations. Sammy Bonsu has likewise gathered a collection of funeral videos made for or by surviving family members in Ghana. Here, the videos potentially aid in later visual elicitation and in gaining an insight into rituals that may otherwise be difficult to talk about at the time or to later recall in detail.

A larger effort to gather home-mode videos as well as industrial and promotional films is being coordinated by “film archivist” Prelinger (1996, www.prelinger.com).

A compromise between unobtrusive researcher observation and autovideography is collaborative videographic research. A study of the new black elite in Zimbabwe was jointly conducted by Belk and the MBA students of Africa University (2000). These executive MBA students were themselves a part of the group being studied, which aided in gaining access and trust. By interviewing and observing those they knew, they had advantages that the researcher would have taken much longer to gain by himself. The method is not perfect, however, as conspicuous self-presentation by these friends was always a possibility. Whereas self-ethnography presents another truth than that of the researcher, collaborative research involves a negotiation between the researcher and those studied.

While observations are often obtrusive, unobtrusive observations are also used[1]. Some experimental work is underway in New Zealand using a small hidden camera in a baseball cap worn by consumers who have agreed to have their shopping patterns studied. At a cooperating shopping mall, these shoppers go about a shopping trip of approximately an hour, with the camcorder recording their movements and interactions. The pragmatic lines between unobtrusive and obtrusive videographic observation can be quite fine, however. While both shoppers and mall management are aware of the recording, the unobtrusive nature of the recording raises ethical questions. Other shoppers and clerks are not aware of the camcorder and thus may be recorded without their permission. In addition, shoppers who forget about the unobtrusive camera need to remember to turn it off in dressing rooms, banks, and other sensitive areas. This is less of a problem in public settings than in private locations like a mall. When using videographic methods that involve concealed cameras for research purposes, it is of the utmost importance that good research ethics protocols be followed. We strongly caution academic researchers to consult with their Institutional Review boards while planning such research.

One study has used a combination self-ethnography and semi-unobtrusive measures by placing video cameras in the VCRs of several consumers (Brodin and Ritson, 2004). Using picture-in-picture technology, the study was able to record not only the consumers watching television, but also the television content they were watching at any given moment. Like the New Zealand shoppers, it appears that those in the study sometimes forgot about the recording being made and engaged in a variety of intimate behaviors on-camera – even though they previously gave their informed consent to be videotaped. Short of video surveillance tapes (whose quality is often moderate and which raise additional ethical concerns), this may be about as close as we can come to a fly-on-the-wall perspective on mass media consumption in naturally occurring situations.

Although little research has thus far been done using interactive video and computer-mediated communication using a web videocamera, it is likely that there are numerous untapped potentials for this sort of technology, as well. Because it is interactive, immediate, yet less obtrusive than having a cameraperson or camera crew present, it may be possible to gain access to information that is difficult to come by in other ways. For example, in one of the many video chat forums available online, people could reflect on the possessions in their offices and their meanings, the books on their shelves, the videos in their home libraries, or the foods in their pantries. The workings

of their computer hardware and software, the music they are listening to, and the clothes they are wearing should be relatively easy to study in this way, as well.

Gathering self-presentational visual data from individual web sites and BLOGs is another potentially rich way of gathering consumer-initiated data and overlaps with netnographic studies (Kozinets, 1998, 2002). For example, a number of newly wealthy Chinese young people have begun to maintain online records of their brand consumption in a variety of areas including clothing, music, film-going, watches, computers, computer games, and more (e.g. www.blogcn.com/user/darcy, www.blogcn.com/user/vicky1127/ and www.blogcn.com/user/lovelynaive/). They show and give accounts of what they like and dislike about their latest acquisitions, some have even gone to the extreme of photographing their meals before they eat them and posting them on their BLOGs. A number of these sites, while in Chinese, also have bulletin boards where others leave comments and questions on the consumption patterns of the sites owner, often comparing their own experiences.

There are also large numbers of individual webcams publicly available (some of them on pay-per-peek pornographic web sites). In the same way, Brodin and Ritson's (2004) informants acculturated to the presence of video cameras in their VCRs, these 24/7 webcams offer relatively unobtrusive observation of individual and group consumer behavior. For example, the Earthcam web site www.earthcam.com/ offers links to a huge array different webcams. These webcams can allow researchers to observe and record video of consumption in public places like clubs, festivals, restaurants, beaches, resorts, on city streets, and in universities, in private consumption venues such as people's garages, kitchens, and other rooms, and in ways that focus upon children, pets, computers, and much more. As consumer research meets reality TV meets the unblinking internet eye, researchers gain access to a world of video and data that simultaneously raises exciting potentials and significant ethical dilemmas. Here, we encounter elements of Dziga Vertov's mechanical eye and Jeremy Bentham's panopticon as famously analyzed by Foucault (1977), except that the observed is now exhibitionist rather than either candid specimen or prisoner. In some ways, this is similar to the exhibitionistic do-it-yourself performances observed by Kozinets *et al.* (2004) at ESPN Zone, which they theorized was an "obverse panopticon" phenomenon.

While technologies will no doubt produce other possible video production opportunities in the future, the basic set of possibilities are either "perspectives of action" or "perspectives in action" (Snow and Anderson, 1987). Perspectives of action involve people talking about behavior. For certain topics like consumer ethics, this may be the only readily available means to gather data. The videotaped use of projective techniques and metaphors may be ways to go beyond these constructed accounts however (Belk *et al.*, 2003; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995). Perspectives in action instead record behavior rather than accounts of behavior. For many topics, a combination of both approaches is superior to using either by itself. Thus, Kozinets (2001) studied fans' activities at Star Trek conventions by both videotaping and participating in some of the fan behaviors enacted there, and also by talking to participants about the meaning of their activities[2], consumption, and productions.

In summary, videographic data can be collected by videotaping group or individual interviews, by engaging in naturalistic observation, by using autovideography (where informants videotapes themselves and their lived experiences), by engaging in

collaborative videographic research, by using concealed camera methods, and by taking advantage of opportunities to use interactive video and computer-mediated communications. We have briefly outlined some advantages and concerns with these methods. Once these videographic data are collected, a variety of analytic tools can be marshaled to code and categorize them. Videographic analysis follows the basic principles of interpretive analysis, from grounded theory building to hermeneutic cycling. Video analysis can happen holistically, or take place through a very formal frame-by-frame procedure. Once the data are analyzed, the actual presentation of the film is planned. In the next section, we turn our discussion to the preparation of the videographic film that the researcher produces and distributes.

Video-based data dissemination (post-production and distribution)

One of the more compelling advantages of video presentation is the ability to engage the audience with a multi-sensory set of materials that ideally make it easier to gain not only a cognitive knowledge about something, but also a more emotional and “resonant” (Sherry and Schouten, 2002) knowledge of the experience of something (Belk, 1998). At the first two ACR Film Festivals, focal topics of videos, besides those already mentioned, have included art festivals, food and eating, American Girl dolls, tattooing, Macintosh computer enthusiasm, extra large clothing purchases, sex aids, advertising sabotage, swap meets, soccer fans in Europe and Asia, peace movements, publicity surrounding a kidnapping, home comfort, dance, consumer illiteracy in Japan, women’s consumer roles in Greece, market relations in India, Chinese funeral practices, US Civil War reenactments, Olympic souvenir consumption, spiritual experiences in the American desert, and fashion consumption in Nazi concentration camps. As this rich array of topics suggests, the possibilities for marketing and consumer research using video are endless. However, as Thompson, 2003 (personal communication) recently observed, videographer’s attraction to dramatic and intriguing topics cuts both ways, in that it might reinforce stereotypes that interpretive research is mere “entertainment” or journalism and not scientific or rigorous.

We observed an interesting and perhaps telling phenomenon at the 2003 Film Festival. The nonvideo presentations on topics related to the videos often made it a point of verbally citing the videos. More than mere academic inter-referencing, the tone in which these citations were offered suggests that while the verbal presentation was apologetically about something, the videos were the real thing that they were about. That is, there appears to be a certain facticity about a video that somehow appears to be more real than mere words about the same phenomenon. There is both testimony to the power of video here and a certain danger that video may be engaged more passively and acceptingly than other types of presentations.

This elision of the post-production process for video seems to carry over from the suspension of disbelief that we have learned to apply to films and television in our lifetimes of watching these media. Yet it is important to realize that the editing, sweetening, titling, scoring, and other enhancing that goes on in the editing process is capable of telling many “truths”. Even the cuts, dissolves, and bits of music that are usually added to a video can do much to determine its emotional impact on the viewer. The intentional portrayal of a particular truth (or set of truths) is as present in a videography as it is in all research. But adding the visceral effects of music, pacing, sounds, imagery, and color adds to research an entirely new dimension of unconscious

emotional manipulation. An account of these processes is outside of the scope of the present paper, but it is clear that as audiences we need to develop a critical visual literacy in the same way that we now critically review a paper or study we encounter in print, even though we sometimes lack the ability to control the pace of the video presentation (Heisley, 2001; Oswald, 2003).

While television journalism and documentary filmmaking continue the positivist pretense that the visual cannot lie and presents facts and the truth, documentary filmmakers, television editors, and video ethnographers all know that they are telling stories, creating (hopefully compelling) visual collages, and attempting to dramatically shape audience reactions. There is no such thing as a neutral image that is simply there as a fact, especially after the substantial creative winnowing that must take place in editing. Nor is the person with a camera a non-intrusive fly on the wall. Rather, the video ethnographer and editor is most often closer to being an artist and storyteller (Chatman, 1980; Lothe, 2000). Some of us are better at this than others, but these are skills that can be learned and improved.

Epistemologically, most ethnographic filmmaking is distinguished by its forced break from positivist or pseudopositivist pretensions of objectivity. Thus, there are typically no “methods” sections in a videography, and the narrative flow of the videographic project is intended to engage an audience that is asked to suspend its disbelief in the reality of what is shown and to absorb the story being presented. But audiences are not naive and uncritical. A video will show more quickly than an academic paper if the evidence is weak, the questions are poor, the informant is uncomfortable or less than open, or the action is stilted. And an audience can identify sympathetic and non-sympathetic characters, including not only the subjects of the video, but the videographer, as well. By forcing the ethnographer to think about the audience reaction, videography challenges us to perfect our craft and not only gather good material, but also treat it in a compelling fashion. This challenge as well as the technical possibilities of videography and editing are more apt to summon creativity than most non-visual academic and managerial reports and papers. It is our hope that videographers will use this creativity to find new ways to see and to challenge and subvert the positivism and pseudo-positivism that still dominate consumer research.

We now turn to consider some more concrete aspects of videographic distribution. Two basic formats for disseminating video material may be labeled local access (e.g. CD-ROM, DVD, videotape) and distributed access (e.g. television broadcast, internet streaming). Local access media usually offer higher quality, better control of access to material and its pace, order, and sometimes control over language, view, and content. While web-based access can offer some of these options, as well, in addition to updatability and links to other related material, at the present time there are compromises in quality (in terms of lower frame rates, lower resolution, and smaller screen size) in streamed video material. With nonlinear media like CD-ROM, VCD, DVD, and web-based streaming, there is potentially far greater user customization. For example, rather than a linear flow of a program from start to finish, the user may access more detail on a particular theme or watch more of an interview with a particular informant. Of course, the producer must arrange material so that this is possible, but there are many possibilities that are becoming increasingly easy to incorporate in nonlinear media.

For example, in the CD-ROM of Menzel's (1994) "Material World" study of the possessions and consumption lives of families in 30 countries, the user may access a variety of types of information. For each family there is a "family album" containing still photos and video clips of the family. There is also a photo of the family and their possessions arrayed in front of their home. The user can highlight items in a list and see them highlighted in the photo or see what they mean to the family based on their interviews. Alternatively, the viewer can choose to see accounts of the country and its characteristics, a photographer's account of the time spent with the family, or the family's responses to a questionnaire about their lives. Or the viewer can see comparisons of the families in different countries in numbers, graphs, or photos focused on bathrooms, kitchens, foods, pets, music, schools, transportation, birth rates, nutrition, or leisure activities. The combination of sights, sounds, music, videos, and still photos can all be accessed in the order the viewer wishes for the country or countries they wish to consider.

Harvard Business School is now producing and selling "multimedia cases" on CD-ROM. For example, their "Microsoft Office 2000" case presents videographic interviews with key project team members, and live links to relevant web sites. Their "Building Brand Community on the Harley-Davidson Posse Ride" multimedia case presents rich videographic data on the biker community and its communal gatherings, in essence taking viewers along for a simulated posse experience. Their "Mountain Dew" case provides video of a number of advertisements, as does the INSEAD Fidji case.

With DVD even greater possibilities exist. Multiple language tracks, multiple views of the same action, "director's cut" comments on the presentation video, and simultaneous viewing of multiple scenes, mean that the possibilities are limited only by the filmmaker's imagination. For example, it would be possible to show the bargaining behavior between the buyer and seller negotiating an automobile sale at the same time that we hear a voice-over by either party describing the bargaining tactics, they were using and what was going on in their minds at the time (based on visual elicitation later conducted with both parties separately)[3].

Imagine a DVD or web-based presentation of a research project that could currently be put together from a project involving the reception of men to a print advertising campaign for Kama Sutra brand condoms in India. As Mazzarella (2003) discusses this recent campaign, it marks the first condom appeal stressing pleasure rather than safety and was introduced after years of free distribution of rather thick and unappealing condoms by the Indian government. The Kama Sutra campaign featured suggestive poses by attractive men and women in their underwear, along with quotations from the Kama Sutra and the slogan: "For the pleasure of making love". How is this forthright and highly sexual campaign being received in conservative India? The research is done and we turn to the computer on our desk to see the results. The initial screen is a Kama Sutra print ad with sitar music playing in the background and a half dozen navigation buttons reading:

- overview of campaign by account planner;
- the ads;
- focus groups with men 18-35;
- first six months sales and user interviews;

- survey of condom brand images; and
- published research.

Clicking first on the overview, we see and hear an interview with the account planner explaining the concept work that went into the campaign. It is interspersed with clips of creative concepts considered, culminating in the final campaign. We next click on the focus group results and see more navigation buttons allowing us to watch entire focus groups with various demographic groups or to instead select topics that will take us to the relevant portions of the interviews. Different groups were conducted in Hindi, Gujarati, and English, but it is easy to select English subtitles for each. Each participant has a pseudonym shown below their image and we can also select a particular man if we want to see and hear more of his comments. We can also pull up a profile of the person speaking in a separate window. As we listen to the post-introduction focus groups discussing a particular ad, we click on another pop-up window to view the ad.

Now curious about how the brand introduction is doing in terms of sales, we navigate to sales charts comparing Kama Sutra and other brand sales over the first six months after product launch. It is clear in an instant that the brand is leaving others by the wayside, despite simultaneous introductions by two other brands and the more recent entry of a copycat brand, whose ads and packages we can also choose to view. In order to understand the sales results we turn first to survey results on brand images. We choose to look separately at differing age groups and sexual orientations. It is clear that the brand has captured its intended position as the forthright pleasure-oriented brand and that despite its high price it is strongly preferred by heterosexual men. It is also seen as being a highly Indian brand that is regarded as neither cheap nor prurient in its appeals to the ancient Indian *Kama Sutra*. Relevant portions of these results are keyed to depth interviews with users and we follow a few of these links to hear their own accounts of the brand. After we have explored more of these results we go to the section on published research where we find a list of references keyed to full text reports that are also searchable by words, phrases, or Boolean combinations. A link to a web site helps us search for related work in other Asian countries as visions of a global roll-out of the brand stir in our imagination.

The multi-media report in this scenario is neither difficult to imagine creating nor does it begin to exhaust the digital distribution possibilities for videography. If we are thinking of targeting a particular group of consumers and have suitable research to draw upon, it might be more desirable to be able to instantly call up interviews with people from this specific group and be able to see their homes, cars, workplaces, friends, pets, favorite magazines and television programs, as well as watch them as they prepare a meal, go shopping, or talk on the phone. Such real life slices of life can greatly reduce the distance between decision-making executives and the consumers they are trying to understand and reach. Perspectives in action video footage of customers driving while talking on their cellular phones might allow us to see the driver's actions, watch the speedometer, and monitor the reactions of other drivers. A picture-in-picture image of the party at the other end of the conversation, further rounds out the communication taking place.

These ideas are meant to be suggestive of the wide variety of possibilities opened up by videographic means of presentation. Along with the risks of uncritical acceptance of

videographic “evidence” as “truth”, come exciting possibilities to engage the minds and imaginations of various constituents: fellow researchers, practitioners, students, and others. Presenting videographic information on the world wide web may turn out to be an excellent way for consumer research to build familiarity and credibility among the wider, mainstream public that is unlikely to sort through the jargon of the average consumer research or marketing journal in search of nuggets of insight. In an age when book and newspaper reading on the decline, and video and television watching is increasing, videographic presentations are a consumer-centric way to communicate and disseminate our research.

Challenges and opportunities in videographic research

Enticing as these scenarios may be, there is a host of creative decisions that necessarily intervene between production and consumption of videographic research. We need hardly remind the reader that the magic of cinema and television depends partly on illusion. Because the viewer of video is often less critical than the reader of written reports, there is a special obligation for video researchers to try to tell a coherent story or stories without taking undue liberties with the visual and auditory data. It is our position that the obligation to use video effectively and fairly lies with the filmmaker more than the audience. Providing too many options to the user in the interests of making an unbiased and complete report is likely to confuse more than enlighten and to lose the dramatic story telling potential of the medium. The power of camcorders and of editing and visual authoring software is now such that restraint is a greater virtue than demonstrating all possible flourishes of sight and sound. The beginning filmmaker is apt to zoom too much, have too much camera movement, employ too many “cute” transitions, and use special effects where none are needed. These embellishments are more apt to distract than produce good video.

As with written ethnographies, there are many ways to craft a videography. Van Maanen (1988) categorizes the types of tales that ethnographers tell, but the options open to the videographer are greater than in the case of ethnographic writing. Based on the ACR Film Festival entries to date, some of the possible genres include exposés, documentaries, mockumentaries, heroic tales, journalistic tales, and those Van Maanen (1988) labels impressionist tales, realist tales, and confessional tales. Furthermore, most of these can be done in a variety of styles ranging from quick-cuts to comedy, tragedy, “voice of god” narration, didactic instruction, or Bollywood musicals.

For example, Kozinets (1999) experimented with an MTV-like montage style possessing only video and sound, and presented it by reading an autoethnographic poem while the videography played in the background. Kozinets (2000) presented the same topic – Burning Man – but did so in a manner that mimicked the style of a conventional consumer research journal article. It began with an introduction and overview of extant theories, presented consumer interview data, presented frozen stills of the interviews with text and voice-over narration that then categorically analyzed the data that had been presented, and then aggregated the videographic data into themes. After the themes were presented, the narration turned to a short discussion section that provided insights about how the research extended current theory. In contrast, Kozinets and Sherry (2002), presented the Burning Man festival using no voiceover narration at all, narrated only by the words of informants, and with no apparent analysis provided – although the film itself was clearly providing an

analysis and the portrayal of a sacred journey from a profane reality to a sacrificial and sacrosanct one.

What this range of creative possibilities underscores is that if our written papers invoke the mantle of “science”, our videographic productions may be as likely to invoke the mantle of “art”. This is not a bad thing and it is likely unfortunate that we fail to put more art into our often formulaic written work. The difficulty, as mentioned above, is in the perception of others in the field (and perhaps outside) that this association with art somehow lessens and delegitimizes our research, moving it more into the realm entertainment than knowledge (see the debate at the start of Belk, 1998). In terms of production values, some researchers may choose to use professionals in order to improve the artistry of shooting the video and editing it. But this is certainly no longer necessary. Very few of the videos in the ACR Film Festival have done this and the People’s Choice Awards suggest that professional production is not necessary.

Good use of video media will keep in mind that the type of knowledge produced can be more experiential and emotional than we often attempt with our written work. In Barthes (1984) vocabulary, the visual can strive for the “prick” of punctum rather than the lesson of studium. That is, we should wish to make the audience empathize, feel, imagine, and recognize human conditions (Sherry and Schouten, 2002; Thompson, 1990). This need not preclude prompting the studium of reflecting, contemplating, and categorizing, but what visual research can add to qualitative marketing research best is an experiential dimension in which the viewer vicariously learns what it is like for the consumer.

We cannot attempt to teach the art and techniques of videography or the theory of visual analysis in the course of this short paper. However, we can recommend a few sources that may prove useful. At the more concrete and practical end of the continuum, sources like Gaskill and Englander (1985), Hampe (1997), Musburger (1999) and Rabiger (1997) may be helpful. For a more cultural perspective on filmmaking, we recommend Barbash and Taylor (1997), MacDougall (1998), Pink (2001) and Sherman (1998). Some more theoretical reflections on what visual images mean may be found in Floch (2000), Schroeder (2002), Scott (1999), Sontag (1977) and Wright (1999). And for more analytic perspectives on ways of understanding visual images, we suggest sources like Banks (2001), Emmison and Smith (2000), Evans and Hall (1999), Rose (2001), Taylor (1994) and Van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001).

With all the books, articles, journals, classes, workshops and DVDs that exist about how to shoot and produce video material, the interested videographer should have no problem finding help. We end with a final observation based on the ACR Film Festivals. To date, the majority of videos entered as well as the majority of prize-winning videos were first time efforts by the filmmakers. Some in each case were students. This is not to say that we cannot improve our videography with practice. But it is clear that there is little to stop the determined videographer from making and distributing their video research. How difficult would it be to take along a small video camera and tripod on your next data gathering expedition? How tough would it be to buy and learn a video editing program, and use it to produce your next masterpiece? After a bit of trial and error, you will likely be pleasantly surprised. Surely, it cannot be as heavy or as difficult as it was for Robert Flaherty, tracking his cameras and his 75,000 feet of film across the cold Canadian wilderness. We look forward to your entry.

Notes

1. I think the former examples of the tourists and Burning Man are pretty unobtrusive, especially since we note that we blend into the background because of the presence of lots of people with cameras. Also, if the shopper know the guy has a camera in his b-ball hat, isn't that sort of intrusive?
2. Since we reference the Burning Man stuff earlier (my addition), I went with the Star Trek research/video here.
3. This prior section was just moved down, when the above paragraph was inserted.

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