

A qualitative enquiry into the adoption, use and appropriation of smartphones by British South Asian young adults

Purpose of the paper: This paper discusses the methodology of a proposed research that aims to analyse British South Asian young adults' adoption, use and appropriation of smartphones.

Theoretical background: A number of disciplines including social studies, consumer research and technology appropriation lend theoretical insights into the proposed research. It is argued that the British ethnic communities deserve more attention in management and marketing research (Gbadamosi, 2012; Jamal, 2003; Nwankwo and Lindridge, 1998), due to the distinctness of ethnic consumption in developed societies (Chattaraman and Lennon, 2008; Rajagopalan and Heitmeyer, 2005). British South Asians can be identified as transient in their cultural self-identities, as they hold and exhibit values of both Britain and the Indian Subcontinent (Lindridge, 2005). Diaspora identity is exhibited both in purist and hybrid forms among British South Asian communities (Bardhan, 2011; Garbin, 2005). While South Asian youths are increasingly becoming an integral part of British society, there are concerns about them being soft victims of forced marriages (Chantler, 2009), religious extremism and social exclusion (Ali, 2008). Can the use of ICT (information and communication technology) be a panacea for them to integrate with wider communities? There is a rapid uptake and innovative use of smartphones in developed countries, leading to business opportunities for both network providers and mobile telephone manufacturers. Further scholarly research in this area could facilitate the development of socially and technically appropriate products and services.

Proposed methodology: The study will undertake qualitative methodology. A number of data collection tools including in-depth interviews and netnographic observations will be applied and triangulated to obtain respondents' opinions, perceptions and use of smartphones in light of their socio-cultural backgrounds. It is argued that triangulated methodology enhances the reliability of qualitative enquiries (Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Tiao, 2004). Hence, in addition to in-depth interviews, more human-oriented methods such as ethnography could be applied to get rich data as suggested by Dey, Binsardi, Prendergast and Saren (2013). However, Millen (2000) and Elliott and Jankel-Elliott (2003) indicated that there are difficulties in engaging with participants. Furthermore, logistically it is very difficult to apply ethnographic engagement with a wide number of respondents situated in various geographic regions. This is why the proposed research will apply netnography (Kozinets, 2002) to complement in-depth interviews. Approximately twenty respondents (aged between 19 and 35) will be selected using maximum variation purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) so that various linguistic ethnic (e.g. Punjabi, Bengali, Gujrati), religious (Muslim, Hindu, Sikh) and demographic groups (in terms of gender, occupation and income) are covered. The initial in-depth interviews will enquire about respondents' perceptions of smartphones, the reasons behind their purchase, the nature and purposes of use, technical/cultural difficulties and adaptations and change in lifestyle. Then the respondents will be invited to participate in the netnographic study when they will log and share their experience of using smartphones through Facebook and Twitter (an appropriate media will be selected based on the convenience of the respondents). The netnographic interaction will be a modern tool to replace the traditional diary-based research where respondents log their daily activities in diaries.

Findings: We are currently at the planning stage of this research.

Practical/social/methodological implications: This paper discusses appropriate methodological approaches to the proposed research and offers useful theoretical and practical understanding to future researchers and practitioners.

Originality: The paper critically assesses the importance and application of a triangulated methodology. In doing so it identifies and analyses how the study of cultural and social interaction could be conducted by combining traditional interviews with netnographic enquiries.

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