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MyNews

PMD Method Workshop 7.3.2012

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Executive Summary

This report gives an overview on a workshop, organized by Tampere Research Centre for Journalism, Media and Communication (COMET) as part of Next Media Project and more specifically Personal Media Day activities.

There are few workshops and seminars focusing on methods of audience research, usually the methods remain in the context and the main function of seminar presentations is to present results. However, in ethnography methods play a big role and they are usually carefully explained in research literature.

The observation from the participants, both PMD and COMET researchers, was that it was very useful to focus on methodology and experiences of other researchers. Also meeting researchers from different research fields doing audience or media use research was seen valuable, for different research practices usually have different approaches and hence carry different research questions, different way of using methods, different references even though the subjects and the themes were alike.

The workshop created lively discussion and provoked participants to give feedback and ask relevant questions on completed, ongoing, and planned research

The workshop concluded with a kind of “list of needs” in audience research the participants came with during the discussion:

- Need for multiple method audience research and combining qualitative and quantitative research
- Need for being able to select and narrow the scope of the usually huge ethnographic data
- Need for defining the central concepts in PMD together, such as ‘the media’ ‘news’ etc.
- Need for develop and imply visibility also in the data collection processes (e.g. the visual cards in Q methodology)

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1 List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

PMD	Personal Media Day

2 Introduction

As part of MyNews research COMET organized a workshop on research methodology for the Personal Media Day researchers and COMET researchers to meet each other and discuss the methods of audience research. The workshop was held in the University of Tampere on 7th of March 2012. (See program in the appendix.)

2.1 Background of the seminar

The aim of the workshop was to share the experiences of doing qualitative audience research, to learn from other researchers about methods, and to get useful tips as well as advice based on others' experiences of doing research. The focus of the workshop was though on the methodological issues instead of results even though most of the research projects presented had already reported the results elsewhere. In the feedback this approach was widely appreciated by the participants. They felt that this type of information is often left without telling in reporting and presenting research. In this sense the seminar served its purpose offering different insights to the practices of audience research conducted by researchers of different institutional and theoretical background.

Another aim of the workshop was to discuss among PMD research partners about the ongoing projects in order to find out useful places for co-operation as well as avoid possible overlapping in the research tasks.

3 Methods of audience research

The methods discussed in the workshop included the familiar qualitative research methods such as thematic interviews and questionnaires. Also media diaries were widely discussed for many of the Personal Media Day projects had chosen to collect diaries as research empiria. In this section, the presentations of the workshop are briefly summarized.

3.1 Ethnography, media diaries and Q methodology

Riitta Perälä and Merja Helle (Aalto ARTS) gave an interesting presentation of Q methodology which was unfamiliar to most of the workshop participants. They also presented their PMD research as an example of media ethnography that combines different methods in order to obtain a full picture of the adaptation of media in everyday life. The presentation provoked a lot of discussion about the ethnography as a method, about its benefits and challenges. The Q methodology was found inspiring in its way to use cards in organizing media contents and tools to an individual portfolio of one's media landscape and how this sorting done by the media users produces a wide collection on data to be used as basis for a more detailed picture on the importance and use of different media. The method is presented more profoundly in a Next Media report by Perälä & Helle (2012)

Using multiple methods to study media adoption in everyday life. Comparing three research methods: media diaries, Q sorting and sensory ethnography. (WP1 eReading Deliverable 1.1.3.2).

3.2 Longitudinal research on media use

Timo Kuula (VTT) presented the method and the results of his earlier media use study. The especially interesting element in the ongoing study was to return to the earlier interviewees and repeat the study in this current media environment with the technological developments and rapidly changing use of media contents. This approach adds a timeline in the media use research in PMD and interestingly gives a view to individual life histories and possible future expectations of changes in the media use of the interviewees.

3.3 Children as audience

Niina Uusitalo and Susanna Vehmas (COMET) gave a presentation on media use and media environment of children. Their presentation based on a longitudinal research of media use of children of four different age groups (5, 8, 11, and 14-year-olds), the same children three times (years 2007, 2010, 2013). The N each year is about 60.

The two published reports of the research ("Mä oon nyt online" and Naamatusten verkossa) can be found on the internet:

Uusitalo N., Vehmas S. and Kupiainen R. (2011) Naamatusten verkossa:
<http://tampub.uta.fi/tulos.php?tiedot=393>

Noppiari E., Uusitalo N., Kupiainen R. and Luostarinen H. "Mä oon nyt online!" (2008): <http://tampub.uta.fi/tulos.php?tiedot=227>

The methods used in this study seemed inspiring and very suitable for doing media use research with children. The parents of the kids were well included in the process by informing and advising them about the project. The younger the kids the more playful the research setting and the given tasks were, for instance the 5-year-olds were given a teddy bear who they walked through their home telling about different devices and how they used them, followed by the parent taking notes. The challenges of interviewing children, especially the youngest ones, were also shared in the presentation: one never knows how the research interview results but that seemed to be part of the interesting elements in studying children as media users.

3.4 Focus group interviews

Laura Ahva and Eliisa Vainikka (COMET) presented two viewpoints of doing focus group interviews. Both presentations focused on practicalities, advantages and challenges of group interviews in comparison to individual research interviews. Laura Ahva discussed COMET project Towards Engaging Journalism

(http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/research/comet/projects/interesting_journalism.html) and Eliisa Vainikka presented some experiences of a project exploring new reading communities (<http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/research/comet/projects/lukemiseng.html>).

3.5 Participatory design with high school students in social media

Auli Harju (COMET) showed examples of gathering empirical media use data in the classroom in relation to action research conducted as a part of SOMUS project (<http://somus.vtt.fi>). The main goal of the process was to create a climate change campaign in a participatory design process with two groups of high school students but the project also used media educational tasks, such as creating individual media use landscapes, and social media tools in interaction and planning processes. These tasks produced a lot of rich empirical material.

3.6 Social practices of news consumption

Juho Santasalo (Aalto ECON) presented his research plan concerning how news are consumed socially and what kind of practices relate to daily using and sharing of news contents in social media. The research comes close to MyNews project in PMD and the possible collaboration contexts were discussed.

4 Conclusions

The presentations summarized above provoked a lot of questions and discussion throughout the workshop. In this conclusion I present a lessons learned type of list on the discussions:

- We have to study the same 'n's (users) with different methods
 - Hence, all research need multiple methods?
- Qualitative research produces huge amounts of data:
 - How to cope with it: focusing, choosing, leaving out...
- Need of shared definitions in PMD:
 - Defining 'the news'?
 - Defining 'the media'?
- Visuality adds on methods
 - Use of pictures of contexts, social situations, tools, media products etc. in data collection
- Comparing results of group interviews and person interviews needed

- Not usual in research: using either one or the other as a method
- Problems of the approaches?
- What kind of data they create (group dynamics; discussion vs. interviewing etc.)
- How to obtain data on the fragmentation of media use?
 - Media use is also disconnected from devices (offline, f2f etc.)
- Media diary method is very versatile: used in many ways (even among the workshop participants!)

Appendixes

The program of the workshop on March 7th 2012:

10.00 Coffee

10.15 Workshop welcome

10.20-10.50 Merja Helle & Riitta Perälä (Aalto ARTS): From exposure to engagement

10.50-11.10 Timo Kuula (VTT): Pitkittäistutkimus mediankäytöstä

11.10-11.30 Susanna Vehmas & Niina Uusitalo (COMET): Lapsitutkimuksen metodeja

11.30-11.45 Laura Ahva (COMET): Mediankuluttajien ryhmähaastattelut

11.45-12.00 break

12.00-12.20 Eliisa Vainikka (COMET): Fokusryhmähaastattelut

12.20-12.30 Auli Harju (COMET): Osallistuva suunnitteluprosessi lukiolaisten kanssa

12.30-12.40 Juho Santasalo (Aalto ECON): Uutisten kulutuksen sosiaaliset käytänteet

12.40-13.00 Conversation: ideas and development thoughts