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Understanding Online Communities in the Age of Digital Boundaries: What is Netnography?

Dijital Sınırlar Çağında Çevrimiçi Toplulukları Anlamak: Netnografi Nedir?

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ABSTRACT

Netnography, which has emerged in the last thirty years, is a qualitative research method that is widely used in the field of marketing and has recently spread to different disciplines. It has been widely used in the field of marketing and its field of activity has started to expand with the increase in technology-human interaction. With its ethnography-based starting point, Netnography traces the traces of the culture that people build collectively in the digital world. The fact that the culture shared in this online environment is becoming more and more widespread thanks to social media applications is the advantages that bring Netnography to the forefront. However, although it is a research field clustered in the field of marketing in terms of its emergence, Netnography has recently started to find a field of activity in different disciplines. Therefore, this study reconsiders Netnography as a contemporary qualitative research method rather than a tool used in marketing. It examines the brief history of netnography over time, its philosophical and methodological underpinnings, how it differs from ethnography, how it can be applied, and how it has been and will be used in some areas of business studies.

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ÖZ

Son otuz yılda ortaya çıkan Netnografi, yaygın olarak pazarlama alanında kullanılan ve son zamanlarda farklı disiplinlere yayılan nitel bir araştırma yöntemidir. Pazarlama alanıyla yaygın olarak kullanılmaya başlanmış ve teknoloji-insan etkileşiminin artmasıyla etkinlik alanı gittikçe genişlemeye başlamıştır. Etnografya temelli bir çıkış noktasına sahip olmasıyla birlikte Netnografi insanların çevrimiçi dünyada ortaklaşa inşa ettikleri kültürün izlerini takip eder. Bu çevrimiçi ortamda paylaşılan kültürün sosyal medya uygulamaları sayesinde gittikçe yaygınlaşması Netnografiyi ön plana çıkartan avantajlardır. Ancak yine de ortaya çıkış alanı bakımından pazarlama alanında kümeleşen bir araştırma alanı olmasına karşın son zamanlarda Netnografi farklı disiplinlerde etkinlik alanı bulmaya başlamıştır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma Netnografiyi pazarlama alanında kullanılan bir araç olmaktan ziyade güncel bir nitel araştırma yöntemi olarak yeniden

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ele almaktadır. Bu makalede netnografinin zaman içindeki kısa tarihi, felsefi ve metodolojik temelleriyle etnografiden ayrıldığı noktaları, nasıl uygulanabileceğini ve işletme çalışmalarında bazı alanlarında nasıl kullanıldığını ve kullanılacağını incelemektedir.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, the world has been and continues to be intense technological development and human-technological interaction. With the gradual spread of these interactions, environments, where people gather remotely and build and share a common culture on various online platforms, have started to emerge. Therefore, social groups have started to come together both in physical environments and online environments. However, today more than one billion people use social media to communicate, create, and share information, views, and insights (Kozinets et al., 2014). To follow this intense interaction, which is produced with or without partners worldwide, various researches are carried out in related fields.

Especially, Escobar et al. (1994) argued that cyberspace in particular is a unique place to study the interaction of humans and technology, explaining that people are becoming increasingly connected with technology and that this interaction is mediated by culture. However, cyberculture is a conceptualization of the symbolic meanings of shared behavioral patterns created by the Internet, in a narrower sense (Kozinets, 1998). After the development of technology and the spread of human-technology interaction to different environments, people come together both based on entertainment and as a result of a social event or disaster and share a common culture. However, recently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this technology-human interaction has increased and intensified more than ever before (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021).

A comprehensive examination of social interaction and the online experience from a human perspective is known as Netnography (Morais et al., 2020), and is nowadays widely used in various research. Netnography, which derives from an anthropological understanding of culture, uses ethnographic methods to study the cyberculture of online environments such as websites, online communities, and discussion forums (Rokka, 2010). Even though ethnography is a fundamental methodology for understanding the cultural issues of communities, netnography has been an important tool for capturing the "*cybercultures*" produced by online communities (Kozinets, 2015; Tavakoli & Wijesinghe, 2019). And cultural richness and openness of online social spaces, or cyberspaces, attract the attention of qualitative researchers more and more (Kozinets et al., 2014)

Netnography, like the other qualitative methods, supports the notion that people should be carefully studied, battling the tendency to reduce people to statistics and decontextualizing their parts and characteristics (Morais et al., 2020). Especially, newly emerging social spaces and emerging spreading cultures there make netnography a unique tool day by day. Because the basic logic here is that a netnography can be used to investigate a certain issue if people are discussing it online. Otherwise, there won't be any observational data to gather if they aren't talking about it (Kozinets & Nocker, 2018). However, netnography involves the understanding of cultural elements such as cultural understanding, language use, rituals, roles, identities, values, stories, myths, and, centrally, meanings in this environment of virtual discussion areas (Kozinets & Nocker, 2018).

Netnography, which has been widely used in marketing research since it was first introduced, has become widespread in different fields in the last decades. Especially, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people started to use the internet more than before. Recent statistics show that the usage of the Internet has risen by 20% in the whole world (Dixon, 2022). These habitual changes bring forward to pave the way for building new cybercultures on social media sites. Therefore, interactions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic between people from all around the world have increased and intensified more than ever before (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021). This has brought Netnography to the forefront in recent years. This prominence has attracted the interest of various researchers in reconsidering Netnography ((Morais et al., 2020; Discetti & Anderson, 2023). As part of this interest, therefore, this paper reconsiders Netnography as a contemporary qualitative research method rather than as a tool for marketing. accordingly, this paper examines the brief history of Netnography over time, its philosophical and methodological underpinnings, where it differs from ethnography, how it can be applied, and how it has been and will be used in some areas of business studies.

This study, which examines the historical trace of netnography, its philosophical foundations, methodological processes, and its place in business research, consists of several chapters. Accordingly, in the first part, this article discusses the emergence of netnography and its points of differentiation from its counterparts such as digital ethnography (Pink et al., 2016) and virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000). The second part presents both the philosophical

foundations of netnography and how it differs from ethnographic research. The third part includes the methodological highlights of netnography and explanations of how this process works. Finally, the fourth part explains how netnography is used in business studies, and reviews how it could use in emerging areas with some articles.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY: THE EMERGENCE OF NETNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Netnography is a digital-based methodology that uses technology as an intermediary between individuals and the virtual communities that they create on the internet. Over the last three decades, with the ever-expanding internet environment, virtual communities and the study of these communities have become important (Lin, 2007). Since its appearance as a new research concept and method, it was first conceptualized in the 1990s by Robert Kozinents is marketing professor, to understand consumer behavior by using freshly digital places at that time such as chat rooms, forums, e-mail distribution channels, notice boards (Bartl et al., 2016; Scott & Marshall, 2009). In this regard, it uses technology to understand the behavior and communication patterns of virtual communities, which are mainly formed in the virtual environment (Morais et al., 2020; Toledano, 2017). Therefore, the change in virtual environments with the development of the Internet is directly proportional to the evolution of netnography over time (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018).

Netnography is a neologism word derived from the internet and ethnography words, and it is more commonly defined as the ethnography of the digital environment (Bartl et al., 2016). However, it is more than just using traditional ethnographic methods in qualitative research in a digital setting. On a digital basis, Netnography, in its most general sense, is the name given to participant-observational research and research practice where the data collected originate from the amount of huge data freely shared on the Internet (Kozinets, 2015). On the other hand, although there are many definitions (Hammersley, 2018), ethnography generally seeks to understand the practical and cultural interactions of societies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Van Maanen, 2011). When it is compared to ethnography, netnography undertakes this curiosity to online platforms, and it follows digital traces in different geographical regions (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). However, tracing societies in the digital world has created diversity adapting ethnography to the digital world. Just like similar concepts with netnography, ethnography in the digital world also finds a place in the literature such as digital ethnography (Jensen et al., 2022; Oreg & Babis, 2023), virtual ethnography (Álvarez-Bornstein & Montesi, 2016; Hine, 2000), online ethnography (Tunçalp & L. Lê, 2014), and discourse-centered online ethnography (Georgalou, 2016), and less frequently, cyber-ethnography (Lee, 2017; Ward, 1999). However, while digital ethnography is the most comprehensive of all these definitions, Netnography differs from others in its field of use which is only focused on the amount of internet data (Kozinets, 2016; Pink et al., 2016).

Netnography was first applied as an adaptation of ethnography and used cultural anthropology as the methodological basis for its development (Whalen, 2018). The expansion of digitalization over time has also increased the divergence from this methodological basis. Although differences in definitions and use of terminology reflect the diversifying approaches to online ethnographic research (Paoli & D'Auria, 2021), the emphasis and use of Internet data essentially distinguish netnography from digital ethnography and digital anthropology (Kozinets, 2015). Today, with the opportunities emerged such as Big Data, the spread of social media, formed new business models, Netnography research, as it was in its early days, is expanding and intensively used in marketing and, just recently, service research (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018), public relations (Toledano, 2017), accounting (Jeacle, 2021), human resource development (Discetti & Anderson, 2023), or emotional transmission and reception (Xi, 2023). Still, all these variations require a clear distinction to be drawn between the presence and the position of netnography.

3. DIFFERENTIATING LAYOUTS AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF NETNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is one of the most important methods in the study of cultural issues and requires the researcher to be immersed in the relevant environment, long-term exposure, and participation-observation (Nascimento et al., 2022). However, Netnography concerns the traces, interaction, and sociality in online platforms by following digital traces, and these traces can appear in different forms such as text, graphics, photography, audiovisual, and musical (Nascimento et al., 2022). When compared to the origins of Netnography, while the ethnographer needs to become a part of a member of the group and cultures to observe and describe them inductively within a certain form, netnographers do not need to become a members of the communities they observe (Kozinets, 2016). That is, while the ethnographer researcher has to live to understand the cultural context in which human actions take place where they research (Boellstorff et al., 2012), and empathize with it, the netnographer just watches and follows from the outside. In that way, the approach involves adapting traditional offline research techniques (like interviews, observation, etc.) for use in a digital environment (Reid & Duffy, 2018). Therefore, this changing contextuality has led to a differentiated set of philosophical, logical, and methodological tools, methods, and assumptions (see Table 1).

The changes in behavioral practices of societies because of technological developments and expansion over the thirty years have paved the way for many critiques, especially in sociology and anthropology. Because cultures and

Table 1.

Research Dimensions	Netnography	Ethnography
Ontology	Hybrid (both virtual and social)	Social, Cultural, Emic
Epistemology	Social Constructivist	Social Constructivist
Axiology	Critical, Transformative	Empathic, Descriptive
Method	Unobtrusive based on Anonymous Observation	Obtrusive Participation
Research Question	Isolated online communications (e.g. reviews, blogs, collateral and individuals)	Isolated communications (e.g. reviews, blogs, collateral and individuals)
Research Reasoning	Abductive	Inductive
Data Sources	Technologically mediated Online Data	Community including observer notes, logs, diaries, videos and photographs
Data Collection	Non-Participant Observation based on Secondary Data	Primary Data Based on Real-Life Observation
Researcher Position	Etic to emic, immersive, self-reflexive	Immersive, self-reflective, etic to emic
Research Focus	Online Communities	Human Society
Retroactivity	Possible	Not Possible

Adapted From (Discetti & Anderson, 2023; Whalen, 2018; Barlt et al., 2016; Kozinets, 2002)

communities thought to be more permanent and stable in those disciplines tend to move to a more discontinuous, transient, and dynamic environment (Kozinets, 2016). However, this changing nature of societies and cultures raises the fundamental philosophical perspectives that distinguish ethnography and netnography, and this divergence is mainly experienced in ontological and methodological aspects. At this point, Netnography ontologically considers both virtual and social assumptions rather than ethnography (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). The ontological basis of netnography is the premise that people and technology evolve together, which is defined as technogenesis (Nascimento et al., 2022). On the other hand, Ethnography has a curiosity about real-social, cultural, and emic groups in which an intact cultural group and shared patterns are studied and a different reality as it is grounded in real-time observation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; González, 2000).

Netnography has some differences in terms of construction knowledge although the epistemological perspective of Netnography is akin to ethnography (Discetti & Anderson, 2023; Xun & Reynolds, 2010). Here, netnographers, like other qualitative methods, have an emic perspective, apart from the fact that they see the co-creators of knowledge as participants (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). Besides, being technologically mediated and archived which enables historical investigation via retroactivity, knowledge sources are privileges that create epistemological value. For all these reasons, a reasoning divergence is observed in terms of concluding, making predictions, or forming an explanation based on the available data. However, Netnography, unlike ethnography uses inductive reasoning, uses abductive reasoning to evaluate its data. Abductive reasoning is a form of reasoning that is cancellable, non-monotonic,

and where the inferred fact must be plausible and verifiable (Paul, 1993; Thagard & Shelley, 1997). Additionally, it begins with the observation and verification of an anomaly and then generates foresight for deductive construction and inductive testing (Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021). In the case of netnography, it is epistemologically focused on the explanatory as most researchers used (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018), rather than the descriptive generation of knowledge. Also, Netnographic researchers make an unobtrusive observation from the secondary data they have. That is, it may have a more external perspective and therefore have critical and transformative axiology because of the secondary data rather than a face-to-face observation (Discetti & Anderson, 2023).

4. ON THE PATHS TO CATCH THE FURTHER SOCIETY: WHAT KIND OF METHODOLOGY DOES NETNOGRAPHY HAVE?

Netnography is a research method that is more specific in its methodological principles than cyber ethnography, virtual ethnography, online ethnography, and digital ethnography (Caliandro, 2014; Kozinets, 2018). Unlike them which focus on both online and offline communities to complement ethnographic studies, netnography focuses only on online communities by preserving the basis of traditional ethnography (Morais et al., 2020). Although Netnography is highly connected to its ethnographic roots (Jeacle, 2021), it differs from traditional ethnography and requires a new set of skills because of the unique nature of computer-mediated communication (Kozinets et al., 2014). The emergence and spread of online communities have created new dimensions of cultural issues, based on

catching the cultural projection (Tavakoli & Wijesinghe, 2019). While ethnography is a fundamental methodology for understanding the cultural issues of communities (Van Maanen, 2011), netnography has been an important tool for capturing the cybercultures produced by online communities (Kozinets, 2015; Tavakoli & Wijesinghe, 2019). Because Netnography utilizes online archives and existing technologies to rapidly and efficiently gather and sort relevant data (Kozinets, 2018). Eventually, the data of netnography is not only natural and rich but also cheap and quick to access (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018; Kozinets, 2010, 2018). However, it is not the downloading of internet reports or data. Netnography is the study of groups of people who come together in the context of a common interest. In this regard, it includes not only text-based forms of social interaction, but also a wide range of online content such as pictures, photographs, drawings, sound files, and audio-visual presentations (Jeacle, 2021). After all, Netnography is a design suitable for integration in a mixed methods approach. (Harrison, 2013).

One of the essential aspects that make netnography stand out is that participants can be optionally anonymous. Because users can be more participatory and open about their opinions (Mkono, 2013). At this point, it can pose an epistemological problem of data overload provided by the Internet, and it may become difficult to identify and categorize data due to the anonymity of users (Kozinets et al., 2014). Especially, with the spread of digital technologies, internet where social, political, and commercial relations are presented by users, Netnography is, therefore, methodologically positioned between discourse analysis and big data analysis by reaching groups or samples that are difficult to access (Lugosi & Quinton, 2018; Morais et al., 2020). However, to make ethnographically based internet research, different levels of adaptation are required, as it is very different from real-life social interactions (Kozinets et al., 2014). Therefore, Netnographic methodology includes being systematic, proceeding consistently with the research question, and well documenting the results (Kozinets, 2023).

4.1. Research Question

Focusing on the research question, collecting data, analyzing, and interpreting data are the four main processes of Netnography (Kozinets, 2023). The Netnographic research, first of all, begins with the identification of the research question due to its importance and is situated within a pragmatist research paradigm that links the research design to a fundamental research question (Discetti & Anderson, 2023; Kozinets, 2023). However, it should be clarified whether an online community appropriate to the research question(s) will be made through a group of people or a specific website (Jeacle, 2021). Also, research questions are formulated by focussing on cultural and empirical phenomena (Kozinets, 2023) and should appropriately relate to the interaction of technological and work-related or social activities (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). For instance, it can be to look for the

existential authenticity of local restaurants that offer cultural experiences to their guests by using their online visitor comments (Mkono, 2013) or to reveal the cultural perspective of consumption from online data (Ferreira & Chimenti, 2022). After that a research design is required in terms of the types of data required and where they can be obtained in line with the identified research question (Kozinets, 2023).

4.2. Types of Data Forms

Because of the fact that online data can be such large amount and voluminous, researchers may have difficulty in categorizing the data (Kozinets et al., 2014). In this context, depending on the research question to be addressed, there are three different data forms for netnography (Kozinets, 2015). The first is archival data which is gathered or collected only based on archival data such as online employee diaries, work blogs, WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Twitter, etc. (Discetti & Anderson, 2023; Kozinets, 2015). In this regard, Lusiantoro & Pradiptyo (2022) examined how self-organized social groups can stretch supply chains using data collected from group chats in WhatsApp groups, which were established and managed to coordinate various problems. In another example, Arenas Gaitán & Ramírez Correa (2023) investigated the emotions and positive sentiments of Twitter users to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on telemedicine among online community members in Spain.

Netnography is very flexible in terms of combining with other methodologies such as interviews, surveys, and experiments, all these combining should be in the line with research question and the research aim (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018; Discetti & Anderson, 2023). However, the second is the elicited or co-created data that the participant and the researcher produce together, synchronously or asynchronously, from questionnaires, interviews, and video calls (Discetti & Anderson, 2023; Kozinets, 2015). Matson-Barkat et al. (2022), for instance, used netnography for YouTube comments, combined with interviews with athletes as they applied a mixed design. Thus, they uncovered narratives of both sports consumers and athletes and the interrelated and co-constructed ways in which individuals make sense of the world around them. In such research, Netnography can provide productive interpretations and explanations of recurring themes with a wider audience (Xi, 2023). The last face of the forms of data is the produced data generated by a researcher in the form of immersive engagement and reflexive field notes (Kozinets, 2015). Here the researcher can combine the previous data forms as in qualitative research, depending on the planned research question (Discetti & Anderson, 2023).

4.3. Data Collection

The data collection process of Netnography begins with a precise delimitation of the research environment or data field (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). The subsequent scouting
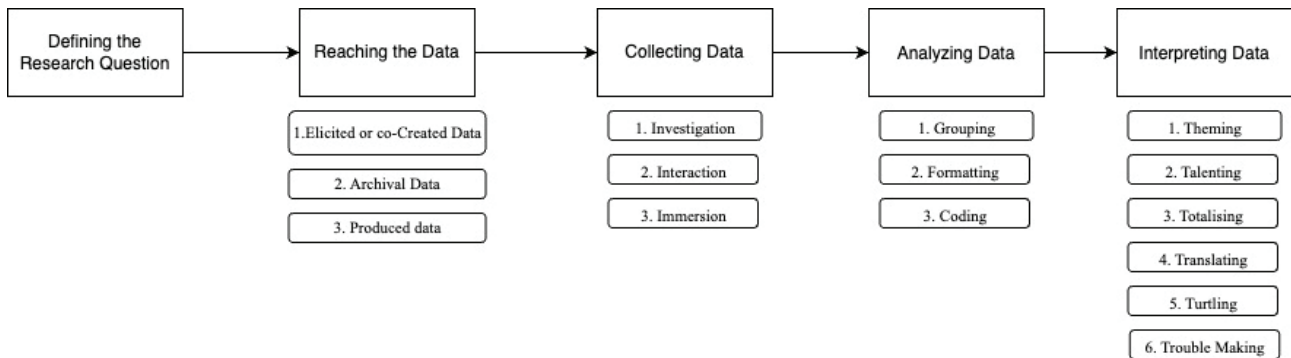
Figure 1. Illustrated by authors.

and selection of the data field is based on and collected within the boundaries of this research question (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). However, there are three main research collection procedures as drawn by Kozinets, (2019), namely investigation, interaction, and immersion (Nascimento et al., 2022). Investigation starts by first starting to understand the phenomenon, followed by online or offline interaction, and lastly, the researcher immersed in the field (Kozinets, 2019; Nascimento et al., 2022). Afterward, the researcher may spend days or months immersed in the field he/she is researching. The important thing is the insights he/she creates during the immersion phase (Kozinets, 2019).

4.4. Analysis and Interpreting of the Data

The researcher has to start the data analysis and interpretation operations after collecting the data (Nascimento et al., 2022). The raw data may need to go through various processes as in other qualitative research methods such as (de) coded, translated, filtered, formatted, and edited (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). For example, a series of classification processes such as word recognition, coding, and visualization may be required on the collected data if a conceptualization is to be made (Kozinets, 2015). However, Netnographic data passes through five different operation processes. These are collating, coding, combining, counting, and charting, each of which includes grouping, formatting, and coding processes (Kozinets, 2019). After data analysis, Netnography has six interpretation operations namely, theming, talenting, totalising, translating, turtling, and troublemaking (Kozinets, 2019). The interpretation process aims to explore the movement of data and theory to develop a new conceptual understanding. Netnographic research may need both abductive and intuitive analytical processes to generate, evaluate, and revise themes from the data (Discetti & Anderson, 2023). In this aspect, Netnography has a holistic reasoning by putting the pieces together.

4.5. Some Fragile Points of Netnography

Netnography, like all other methods, is not without its deficiencies. However, these deficiencies are mainly due to the strengths and flexibility of netnography and the ease of access to data. First of all, the topics that are currently spoken in digital environments can change very quickly. That is, what is trending topics on forums or social media sites may be completely abandoned after a while (Jeacle, 2021). This means that it may cause the topic being researched to become outdated. On the other hand, the unlimited space of digital environments and the anonymity of users can also cause problems. This issue is again related to the fact that Netnographic research is affected by the blurring of time and space and the dynamic complexity of data (Lugosi & Quinton, 2018). All this can lead to missing the contextuality of the topic under investigation. This threat is in line with the views of Kozinets (2015), who argues that context is everything and is constantly in a dynamic state.

Netnography, on the other hand, is limited by ethical issues. In the digital environment, users can express themselves openly and without hesitation, and Netnography can reveal hidden parts of cultures, experiences, desires, and expectations in these expressions (Morais et al., 2020). Before the research is conducted on social media, the nature of consent, the correct determination and respect of privacy expectations on social networking sites, and the anonymization of data gain ethical importance (Zimmer, 2010). Furthermore, due to the large number of users and the lack of one-to-one communication with them in Netnographic research, it is also difficult to deliver an informed consent form to them (Discetti & Anderson, 2023).

5. NETNOGRAPHY IN BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION STUDIES

5.1. Netnography in Marketing

In management studies, netnography has been used to understand the speech, language, online behavior, and symbolic repertoires of different interest groups (Kozinets & Nocker, 2018). So, the role of the netnographer is to show the many realities that are evident in other people's lives, not to determine the truth (Morais et al., 2020). In this context, in the field of marketing, netnography has offered an insight into virtual space concerning consumers' needs and wants choices, and symbolic meanings (Xun & Reynolds, 2010).

Other appropriate Netnographic subjects of interest to organization and management researchers include employees, managers, shareholders, the public, regulators, companies, non-profit organizations, and institutions (Kozinets & Nocker, 2018). Especially, the spread of online communities has created new dimensions of cultural issues that have a high impact and influence on stakeholders' decision-making. For example, there is a view that good reviews about a place which can be a bar, hotel, restaurant, etc. can influence both new tourists and investors in a good way (Tavakoli & Wijesinghe, 2019). This interaction between humans and technology has also enabled netnography to expand into new areas.

5.2. Netnography is Expanding: Netnography in Human Resource Development

Netnography has been intensively used in the field of marketing since it first emerged. However, netnography can provide an understanding of the interaction between digital business processes, organizational and individual work, and learning experiences. In this context, Discetti and Anderson (2023) have a proposition in their study that technology in HRD should be focused on learning, development, and interaction in the workplace. In this way, secondly, they want to encourage the spread of the use of Netnography to business areas other than marketing. They explained how Netnographic work is feasible both because HDR practices and organizational change processes are linked to digitalization such as remote working, digitalized learning, training, and people management & development are intertwined with technology, and because there are new methodological calls in the field of HRD.

According to the authors, in the field of empirical HRD, netnography can be used in three different areas. The first one is the online work context, which includes gig work and technology-mediated formal & informal, tacit and explicit learning methods. In the context of online work, employees are individual, i.e., separate and dispersed from each other, and they carry out their communication and knowledge sharing in common online spaces. Therefore, the authors argue that netnography can be an appropriate method for understanding and unveiling the tacit and explicit knowledge sharing, learning processes, and organization of employees on an issue. That is, they highlighted that these movements can be considered in the context of two areas that have been little researched in the field; social movement and grassroots organizing processes of solidarity, resistance, and collective action. Secondly, it can be a voice for minorities in the grey area of the work environment, such as poor working conditions. Third and finally, they think that it can improve HRD knowledge in hybrid working environments. They suggest that there may be new research questions related to learning in virtual organizations and work culture processes, such as connection, collaboration, and inclusivity, that include hybrid and physical environments.

In the theoretical field of netnography, according to the authors, iterative interaction between data traces and sources can be part of the process of developing a theory to reflect the digital and platform characteristics of work and employment. However, it can participate in this process from the areas of conceptual development, operationalization, conformation, and application. In this regard, Netnography can explore new areas and reveal established and previously unheard-of conceptual definitions and perspectives in conceptual development. In terms of operationalization, it can be useful in creating typologies to explain broader complex patterns. Also, confirmation and netnography can inform, support or refute existing explanations. Finally, in terms of Application, HRD theories in action provide insights for understanding actions on the side of action.

5.3. Accountability Insight with Netnography

Netnography is becoming an important tool in accounting with the development and widespread use of the Internet (Jeacle, 2021). Especially, advances in technology and new modes of public expression create a virtual environment that reinforces the principle of accountability. In this regard, based on examples previously used in the literature, Jeacle suggested that future studies of netnography should examine various topics in the field of accounting.

Institutions and organizations are now setting up official blogs, recognizing that online environments provide a space for discussion and debate in the context of community accountability. In this context, she argued that new studies will be suitable for accounting to use netnography to reveal the forces shaping accountability in this area.

Another point is the communication between government and citizens and their influences. Jeacle (2021) has raised here, for example, the issue of the extent to which online discussions are effective in shaping the content of financial reports. At this point, as Jeacle's (2021) suggests, Netnographic work can reveal and sort out the discussions of minorities and dominants regarding how powerful are their voices in web forums.

Consequently, netnography can be a tool for stakeholder engagement in accounting in both the private and public sectors. Hence, the author argued that it is a useful methodological tool for understanding how online communities affect accounting and, how accounting values and construct shape the configuration of online spaces.

6. CONCLUSION

Societies now interact and produce shared cultures on online platforms rather than face-to-face interactions. New research tools are emerging every day to increase our understanding of these interactions. Netnography has also received increasing attention over the last three decades and has become a means of generating knowledge from online communities. Netnography, which emerged in the

field of marketing, is increasingly being used in different disciplines. In this sense, this study invites researchers to use the possibilities of the online world by exploring the boundaries of Netnography. Within the scope of this invitation, this study examines the historical development of netnography and presents its philosophical perspective. Then its current uses in marketing and other fields are shown. Further and insightful studies will not only make netnography more functional but also enable us to grasp the culture and even the forms of organization produced by online communities. Netnography as a qualitative research method awaits researchers in a new normal world in line with new ways of life.

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