

THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN TEXTILE DESIGN

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Abstract

Etymologically, ethnography comes from the Greek words *ethnos* (nation, people) and *graphia* (writing) and means therefore a written presentation of a people or a population and seeks to identify and interpret its universal traits. With its roots in cultural anthropology, ethnography focuses on small-scale societies and the original central concept remains within the meaning of culture. In anthropology, ethnography developed a way to explore the everyday realities of people living in small scale, non-western societies and to make understandings of those realities explicit and available to others. The approach relied on the ability of all humans to figure out what is going on through participation in social life. The techniques ethnographers use follow the routine of the everyday life. Thus the research techniques and strategies of ethnography developed and evolved over the years to provide ways for the ethnographer to "be present" for the mundane, the exceptional, and the extraordinary events in people's lives. With the advent of postmodernism, ethnographic perspective became a valuable tool in the design of new technologies. This has presented a new set of challenges for designers as they design and built applications that leverage powerful, digital technologies for use by people of all societies and cultures. The field of design has been an adjunct to art and craft and in a postmodern context. With the transformation of design into an industrial discipline came responsibilities that the field of design studies has only recently begun to address methodologies. Design is now becoming a generalizable discipline that may as readily be applied to processes, interfaces. To understand design as a discipline that can function within any of these frames means developing a general theory of design. From methodological perspective there is no solid theoretical framework which can assist the craftsman or the novice textile designer to consciously integrate their culture in designing products. For this reason this paper challenges designers to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of ethnographic research in textile design and explain qualitative techniques that can be used in ethnographic researches for textile design, searching for meaning in socially constructed reality or a traditional context.

Keywords: Ethnographic research, textile design, design science research