

From practicality to pinnacle: Netnographic study on Bungee Jumping

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Abstract: Technology is the backbone of today's world specially the internet. The usage of internet has been increased significantly in last few years. People love to communicate through the virtual medium and they feel connected to the world. They share their feelings and experience regarding a special issue. The sharing of the feelings and experience makes the virtual world more significant and approachable. People can take up any avatar and can behave in any manner they want to be recognized. The specialty about the virtual community is no one is bothered of caste, creed, religion or profession. Everyone is treated same and people share more and more when they are not being judged. The blend of virtual world and ethnography opens the door for new methods of research that can probably reach the large audience in the internet world. Hence, netnography is a perfect mixture of web based ethnography which can be used in a particular manner. This study directs to concede the feelings and experiences of people involved in bungee jumping. This study uses the concept of netnography which is given by Kozinet in order to better understand the feelings and experience in the virtual world. The result of this study illustrates three main points and eight sub points. The research portrays the themes of adventure experience, arrangements and supply, and achievement, considering the feelings and experience in the web community.

Keywords: Bungee jumping, Adventure sport, virtual community, online communities, experience

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I. Introduction

Internet has changed the way to look at the world. It has opened many opportunities for everyone specially for researchers. And with the effect of internet the trend of online communities/virtual communities has been increased insignificantly. Day by day users are attaching themselves to those communities to which they feel related. In these communities users share their feelings, experiences and sometimes seek advice for a particular product or a service. In this process users need not to give their original identity but can use any avatar they want. The main purpose is to analyze and understand the people's perception.

As the internet has opened so many doors for the consumers to experience number of things being only in the virtual world. Countless users communicate in these communities to gather the information and to get the solutions for their problems. Hence online communities bank on communication and synergy between the end users. Therefore due to communication and interaction users form new connection with others and also form social bond in virtual communities. Thanks to these communities that they make possible for the users to interact and exchange their ideas with the users all over the world.

Nowadays people are very busy so whenever they get some time they try to get into something which relax their souls. And one of the activities people usually get involved into is adventure sports. It include many sports like rafting, kayaking, camping, mountaineering, bungee jumping, sky diving, scuba diving etc. Sharing experiences and feelings in the virtual community are treated as an important variable in adventure sports. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to explore the themes or aspects for bungee jumping in an online group, taking into the picture of the sharing experience of the online group members. For this reason, this research aims on bungee jumping, which is an adventure sport.

Bungee jumping is a serious and extreme adventure not a fun evening in the mall or park. In India it is being offered by Jumpin Heights, just above the river Ganges to make jump more happening and refreshing in the lap of Mother Nature.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Virtual Communities

Manuel Castells states that communication is the public space of the network society. Societies emerge and change by dismantling their association under the stress of new potential relationships and establish new set

of associations that grant people to live side by side without self destroying, in spite of their conflicting values and interests.

Chao et.al.(3) explains that community related conclusion assumption plays an important role in hidden knowledge sharing for quality and quantity, although personal outcome assumption have an adverse but meaningless effect on quantity of knowledge sharing. Furthermore , Alexander et al. (4) in his study suggests that people outlook their knowledge as a public good, belonging not to them individually, but to the whole institution. When such cognizance exists, knowledge sharing is motivated as moral responsibility and society's interest not by self interest. Berry et.al(5) suggests that internet is used to maintain the relationship with friends, although family and neighbors' are to be in a densely knit social network. They also suggest that social networking is useful for keeping in contact the family and friends who are geographically and socially dispersed. The use of internet is also associated with decrease dedication to online community.

Keith et.al. (6) has revealed some facts regarding the movement to a new suburb as depressed contact and support. But local computer network helped the residents in maintaining the contact and support at all levels. As the high speed network's connectivity increases, the contact and support also increases. They also said that internet is not special but when it comes to long distance communication internet is far better option than telecommunication. The increase of internet has influenced the ways in which people connect or communicate, removing the monetary cost of long distance communication. Abel et.al. (7) has taken the trust as the main factor in the communication of virtual communities. The sub factors which affect the knowledge sharing are the skill, honesty and compassion in the online communities. His sharing includes that the three factors are positively related to knowledge sharing behavior. The study shows that the trust based on the skill is highly strong clairvoyant of knowledge sharing behavior. He also explains that the three dimensions are inseparable and are related to each other. Another finding shared by him is that trust is significantly related to quality, quantity and focus of the knowledge sharing. C Romm et.al. (8) suggested that the variables that can be used as building blocks of online communities and societies are already in existence. Now the virtual communities are known to everyone, they are not hidden from anyone. This study identifies some variables which affect potential member's willingness to join the online community. The virtual communities are transforming the society in the both ways.

Charlotte (9) says that working or moving to another country in another time zone can be very difficult. One should be kind enough to the people who often travels. She adds that the research should not be kept in the books but it should reach to the people who find it difficult to cope up with the travelling habits.

Brown (10) conceptualizes that flow of information in the online networks between the participants is rather different than in the offline network. People tend to change their avatars according to the situations in the online communication. They exercise this practice very often. But it is the opposite in the offline network.

2.2 Netnography

From the time internet came into existence it is always filled up with all the possible information and people from different parts of the world are taking the advantage of that information in one form or in the other form. And from last two decades even the researchers are using this pool of information for various research purposes by means of a technique called as netnography.

In simple words we can say that netnography is the combination of internet and ethnography. And if we further unfold the netnography than the word ethnography means studying the people and cultures with their customs, habits and mutual differences. It is implemented in the computer based environment and also called as virtual ethnography. Netnography is an essential tool to review the virtual communities in respect to opinions, relation between them needs, demands and choices. Kozinets (11) conducted a study on contemporary consumption of coffee in an online coffee community and found that this method is much more convenient rather than the traditional ethnographic method. The online consumers are educated and much more knowledgeable about the product and also gave deep insight of the consumption patterns. The online communities specifically which deals into consumption related things are an important source of information and data to the marketer. In these communities the decisions related to consumption pattern and discussion related to the same has been found which provide the insight of the buying behavior. (12) The qualitative study revolves around the tourist industry of the Egypt. However the research has captures the underlying dimension that constitute a customer experience that has not been identified in the prior literature framework. The study has found number of implications for the brand, service and marketing managers. It is very important for the marketers to know the importance of the customer experience but very few have the knowledge about the components which makes the experience of the customer memorable.(13) The study reveals that whatever is suggested in the online communities interactions is based on the participants mood i.e they might open up much more on their own terms in the absence of the researcher. This study also gave some disadvantages to the Netnographic research like research is a non participant and an observer so he cannot directly mold the content of the text to other direction or according to his own purpose. Kozinets (14) gave this term netnography and it is

a mixture of internet and ethnography. He reveals that the netnography is ethnography transformed to the complexities of our modern, technologically mediated online world. He also argued that it is focused on the cultural insights.

2.3 Serious Leisure and Bungee Jumping

Stebbins (15) study about serious leisure represents an up to date and complete stock taking of modern leisure studies, aligned mostly towards ethnographic studies that have given the in depth meaning, career, social network that includes various refreshing and leisure activities. He divided leisure into three categories i.e. serious, casual and project based activities. Serious leisure activities shows long-term participation in activities which require knowledge, experience and skills. Hartzler (16) says that casual leisure touches to the activities like watching TV, listening to music etc. in which very less efforts and less physical activity is involved. (17) Serious leisure and casual leisure difference has been studied and it was found that people in serious leisure participate more actively and regularly in order to develop their skills and gain experience whereas individual in casual leisure participates irregularly just for the sake of the fun. In this respect bungee jumping can be assessed as serious leisure instead of casual leisure as individuals take part actively and regularly and improving themselves professionally with the skills and knowledge as a result of long term efforts.

III. Methods

The paper focuses and then execute the research methodology of netnography to attain its purpose. This paper outlines an empirical study that engage netnography to learn and know more about the feelings, emotions and experience of the bungee jumping among virtual communities members. A large online forum was studied to carry out the research. Because of the large online forums are available in the internet, the researcher used the keywords to narrow down the options of the forum that fits into the parameters.

On the other hand when netnography was not discovered the traditional methods were used. The ethnography is an anthropological method which has been used and popular with social sciences, cultural studies etc. But for now these method has been combined with netnography and are being used in online environment.(1)

Since netnography is the implementation of applied online ethnography, it mentor the researchers in studying the process. Kozinets (11) found that the Netnographic approach includes following stages (a) making cultural entrée, (b) gathering and analyzing the data, (c) ensuring ethical elucidation, (d) conducting trustworthy research,(e) providing opportunities. This research is based on the implementation of the netnography method. In this investigation embraces a Netnographic study approach for exploring and examining how members share their feelings on experiences on www.tripadvisor.in and www.jumpinheights.com. The online community platform investigated for this Netnographic research was selected based on the criteria of having public online community with open membership system. People who have an interest in bungee jumping access the related website to see posts made by other people. This website is an online community evolved by people with the similar interest. The members of this community share their experiences, discuss various issues and concerns and make social interaction. The study was conducted from November 2017 to January 2018. Due to the large amount of data on the website, only the most widely read conclave were analyzed. Therefore, the final research contained 479 reviews given by various members. Data collection and analysis was done with Netnographic research tool developed by Kozinets.(11)

IV. Findings

This Netnographic research assess the reviews written by members of the online community. The bungee jumping experience of this virtual community have been divided into three main categories and ten sub themes on the basis of the analysis of the reviews. The main themes are preparation and supply, adventure and completion and the ten sub themes are essential requirements, equipment, jump cost, weather conditions, problems and dangers, hedonism, satisfaction and happiness.

4.1 Preparation and Supply

In India bungee jumping is offered by Jumpin Heights in Rishikesh (Uttarakhand). There is detailed information given on their website as well as on their offline counter. In addition to this the jump masters from New Zealand are available for the sport.

4.1.1. Essential Requirements

In activities like bungee jumping it is very important to prepare appropriate equipments. Once you reach the offline counter their executives guide you accordingly. Individuals doing bungee jumping has to submit all their belongings (watch, wallet, rings, chain etc) at the counter.

4.1.2. Equipment

Although the responsibility of the equipment is only and only of the organizers. But individuals can also check the equipment before doing bungee jumping. At the point of the bungee jump the jump masters provide all the necessary information required to jump. The whole equipment and machinery is being taken care by the authorities and their staff members. Even for the maintenance the machinery is shut down for almost two months in the rainy season.

4.1.3 Bungee Cost

During the activity there are few cost which are to be covered. There is detailed information regarding the cost is available on the website, which is very helpful for the jumpers. The information regarding the cost mentions per person costs of transportation, food, guidance etc. Individuals can also choose 2-3 activities as a part of group activities and costs is accordingly. Guidance is also available for the jumpers. Jump masters from New Zealand guide the individuals and also try to calm the individual's minds before the jump. Even the transportation is also available to reach the Jumpin heights. One can book the luxurious A/C Bungee Coach and enjoy the scenery of river Ganges before reaching the jump zone.

“Did Bungee jumping with Jumpin Heights, they are a perfect organizers for these activities. Their safety measures at best, activities and staff at best. Lifetime experience fulfilled with Jumpin Heights. A must go for all Dare devil adventures.”

4.2 Adventure

It is one of a kind of an adventure. People love to do this; they enjoy doing this and even do it again and again. After doing the bungee jump one has to take up a trek to reach up at the cafeteria. The trek is about 2-3 kms and for some it may be strenuous but walking in the beautiful wilderness gives the spirit to the individuals to walk up. The organizers have made arrangements while walking like having some benches for short rest and complimentary water bottle from the jump point.

“This is the place on my to do list from the past couple of years but this year I make it . I am an adventure loving person but this is something I saw doing in my dreams . At last as I reach this place make the reservations n done with all the formalities . My heart is like so fast but I make my mind and jump from the platform . You know it's the feeling you get from this thing is something you can't explain in words it's so deep hearted . And I m proud of myself that I did bungee that is India's highest bungee this year . The team the process is all up to the mark and you are 100% safe there it's true .

Highly recommended for the adventure lovers .”

4.2.1 Weather Conditions

Depending upon the season the activities are closed. For almost two months the site is closed for maintenance purpose. It is done in the rainy season so as to conserve the equipments and machinery in order to avoid the accidents.

4.2.2 Problems and Dangers

In order to have most out of the amazing experience one should be aware of the problems and dangers. The bungee zone deals with all kind of problems and dangers which an individual can think of while doing bungee jumping. The bungee zone has summarized few of the medical conditions in which they do not allow anyone to do a jump. Even they are maintaining standards by following the guidelines of Australian and New Zealand standards Authority for commercial operations in bungee jumping. They have also hired professionals from New Zealand who are technically qualified to do the job.

“We have been there with 15 of our friends group and opted to go for adventures activities . Some of us have dropped the idea of bunggy jumping as we were scared but 4 of us did do the activity. The trainers and the people are trained and knowledgeable about the trade and quite safe act.”

4.2.3 Hedonism

Hedonism in other words we can say that it is the most important intrinsic good that a human life aims. It includes happiness and pleasure. Therefore it plays an important role in choosing the adventure sport and participating in it again and again.(19)Accordingly here are some examples by the jumpers:

“Unforgettable Memories

My pictures will speak louder than my words.. had a great experience at Jumping Heights.. If you want to make yourself feel that you are alive then Try Jumping Heights.”

“Bungy i liked most

I did bungee jump first time and it was a very nice experience . They have a trained crew members . Love to visit again.”

“Awesome place to go

Its was really Wow feeling to be here for weekdays masti with friends, its super classy place to go, they have three different kind of activities, the best part was 83 mtrs Bungee jumping however they have 2 more good activities like flying fox and Giant swing. They all are very professional and very helpful while doing there job. At the end they will provide a Dare to Jump certificate along with badge.”

“Adventure trip#must visit

First of all i want to say about safety, that was obviously trusted... Second thing is that everyone should go in his/her life for bungee jumping n flying fox...@jumping heights..... I loved that experience “

“Once in a life time

Bungee was in my bucket list from a long long time. After checking all options in India, I chose Jumping Heights. Trainers are highly qualified and staff is very friendly.

Experience can't be described in words. Gushing of wind when you are going down, fear in your heart and the achiever feeling once it's completed.”

a. Completion

While approaching the end of the adventure, the jumpers proceed for their return journey through trek up. As the bungee jump was amazing same was the trek. Its a 2-3 kms trek with benches along the trek to keep the tiredness away. On their way back they plan another pursuit to be attained.

4.3.1. Satisfaction

While doing one's favorite adventure sport always fills the person with many emotional experiences. These can be joy, excitement and fear. These kind of emotions plays an important role in bungee jumpers life for being satisfied.(20)

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Bungee was in my bucket list from a long long time. After checking all options in India, I chose Jumping Heights. Trainers are highly qualified and staff is very friendly. Experience can't be described in words. Gushing of wind when ur going down, fear in your heart and the achiever feeling once it's completed.”

“This is the scariest thing I've ever attempted, but was one hell of an adventure ride. The bungee jump is must for all adventure lovers (provided you don't fear heights) and is recommended. The place is owned by ex-army men and the activities are done by jump master experts from New Zealand. The place is well maintained and clean. Safety given utmost importance and hence it's worth every penny.”

4.3.2. Happiness

Completion is incomplete without the happiness, and happiness comes when an adventure comes to an end. It gives great happiness and satisfaction to the jumpers. The happiness of completing one task always leads to the next task.(21)

“Whoaa, a place you cannot forget, definitely a place on every ones bucket list

Bungee, Triple Zip-Line, Tarzan zwing, wow what an experience, you wait for your turn your heart racing mind speculating over the fact that you want to or not do it. Once you do it you are like "what happened" wanting to do it again because its only the second time that you get the real feel of it.

Out of the world, first of its kind in India, excellent, trained and courteous staff.”

V. Result and Discussion

The main motive of this research is to examine the experiences of the individuals who perform bungee jumping using an ethnographic approach. The study reveals three main and eight sub themes. The first theme is preparation and supply, which refers to the preparation of bungee jumping and it has 3 sub themes like essential requirement, equipment and bungee cost.

The other main theme is adventure which refers to the thrill and excitement generated by the bungee jumping. It leads to weather conditions, problems and dangers and hedonism. And the last theme identified is completion that refers to the ending of the task. It includes satisfaction and happiness gained by completing the task. Individuals share their experience, joy excitement and fears also which is a part of completion.

Overall the first step is always very important and other steps come along the way.

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