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Marketing 469

As a researcher investigating web users who illegally download music files, it is best to adopt the storytelling technique to elicit information and understanding from sources, rather than focus groups and interviews.

Storytelling is a technique where the researcher elicits information from participants in an unstructured manner, urging the participants to embellish their individual perspectives as part of a narrative, much like a story. It is best employed when individual parts of a narrative cannot be understood without understanding the whole narrative. In this technique, the storytellers, not just the researchers, serve as interpreters and analysts. The technique forces the researcher to relate theoretical abstractions and generalizations to the details experienced and collected by the researcher. Multiple storytellers can tell the same story from their unique viewpoints. The tradition of storytelling is not new in the field of information sciences. (Kendall and Kendall).

Storytelling has been employed to great effect to fill in the voids of information system documentation in the era of mainframe computing (Kendall and Kendall). Just as the voids in mainframe computing would require contextual information, so would contextual information be required in the case of illegally downloading music. The world of hacking invariably travels faster and more innovatively than the above-surface world of legal situations. In this world, the techniques of illegally downloading music remain at the shadowy fringes of legality. As record labels and ISPs seek to clamp down on online piracy, the proponents of illegally downloading music find different and more novel ways to download music. To those believing in illegally

downloading music, rules and record labels are merely hindrances to free speech and free sharing of information.

Storytelling would be able to provide the necessary leeway to the respondents to provide responses without getting stymied by the dictates of the process. A respondent could narrate how he defeated established anti-piracy controls and was successful in downloading the latest music, outlining his efforts in narrative form. Once the respondent has the leeway to provide the response in a narrative form, he would be able to provide hidden meanings and contexts as part of the narrative. The resultant picture painted by the respondents would be richer in meaning and context, and resultantly provide more valuable information to the researcher in the field of illegal downloading of music.

In contrast, if a researcher were to seek information about illegal downloading of music in the form of a focus group, he would be taking center stage with notes and papers amongst a groups of experts in illegally downloading music. Each expert would have to speak to the researcher, replying to the researcher's query. The focus group would have yielded insights into illegal downloading of music, but would have suffered from two major drawbacks- the researcher would not know all the questions to ask, as illegal downloading of music has many forms, contexts and frameworks and is rapidly evolving as a dark art form. The respondents, experts in their own right, would not be able to provide the context of illegal music downloading efforts due to the structure of the research tool.

Other qualitative means of eliciting information would be similarly error-prone. Just as focus groups would suffer from the limitation of the researcher

not knowing what to ask, he would be similarly unable to fill in all the knowledge gaps if he chose to undertake the research in an interview format.

Thus, by the use of story-telling, a researcher would be able to draw the complete picture, and develop the necessary insight into the field of illegal downloading of music- a feat that would not be possible through focus groups or other qualitative means of eliciting information, including interviews.

Work Cited

Kendall, Julie E., and Kenneth E. Kendall. " Storytelling as a Qualitative Method for IS Research: Heralding the Heroic and Echoing the Mythic." Australasian Journal of Information Systems 17/2: 161-187. 2012. Web. July 05, 2015.