An Analog Tool for Social Narratives

Columbus, Ohio USA

The Process

The postcard exchange they were given in the first interview contained a set of 12 artifact-related, recontextualized and black postcards to them that were designed using an interdisciplinary approach using processes from material culture studies. These cards varied in size, between 4 x 6” and 5 x 7”. The postcards were introduced in such a combination so as to allow participants the freedom to pick and choose from a variety of styles, sizes, and spaces. At the beginning of each interview, participants were handed a postcard packet that contained everything they would need for this project.

INTERVIEW 1 - DESIGN RESEARCH ACTIVITY
Interview 1 was to set the pace of the research and help establish an impression of trust and understanding between the participant and the researcher, improving the researcher-participant interaction. A ten-minute generative design research activity, involving postcard-making with the help of the research team, was conducted with each participant to gather socio-cultural narratives and provide an opportunity to see how the participants process the material. This was followed by an interview with the researcher.

INTERVIEW 2 - POSTCARD EXCHANGE
Participants were given a postcard exchange to engage with, explore, and reflect on their socio-cultural narratives. This activity aimed to gather participants' reactions and responses to the postcard exchange, and to encourage them to think about their socio-cultural narratives in a different context.

INTERVIEW 3 - PROCESS MEETING
A process meeting was held with the participants to discuss the postcard exchange and to gather their feedback. This meeting aimed to explore the participants' reactions to the postcard exchange, and to encourage them to think about their socio-cultural narratives in a different context.

PARTICIPANT/MANAGER MEETING
All the participants and managers were invited to a meeting to discuss the results of the study and to provide feedback on the study.

POSTCARD EXCHANGE

GENERATIVE DESIGN RESEARCH ACTIVITY
The postcard exchange was designed to engage participants in a generative design research activity, involving the creation of postcards that were then used to explore their socio-cultural narratives. The activity aimed to encourage participants to think about their socio-cultural narratives in a different context and to reflect on their experiences.

THE POSTCARD EXCHANGE

THE PROCESS INTERVIEWS AND MEETINGS
Interviews 2 and 3 were process and final round-of-one meetings with the participants and the researchers. They were held with questions that were used for preliminary analysis of the process and incoming data. The fourth interview is in its final stages of preparation where pairs of participants are brought together for a focus-and-meeting with the researcher upon the completion of study and collection of data (remaining participant-researcher interaction). There is also an ‘expert interview’ that will be conducted upon the completion of data analysis, which is an expert in several fields like design research, material culture studies, product design, and social anthropology, etc. These interviews will provide feedback and insights that will help to refine and improve the research.

Preliminary Results and Future Work

The research aims to study the role of design in shaping people’s socio-cultural narratives. It seeks to explore how the design process can be used to engage people in understanding and expressing their socio-cultural narratives. The research involves interviews, workshops, and postcard exchanges to gather participants' narratives and to explore their experiences. The preliminary results of the study suggest that the design process can be used to engage people in understanding and expressing their socio-cultural narratives.

Implications

This method (based on preliminary analysis) is useful for high immersion-low research for socio-cultural design, works well as a priming process for a larger research, for working with older adults, and in situations that call for provocation of refinement of thoughts.

AUTHOR(S)
Hemanatha Venkataraman

THESIS COMMITTEE
Dr. Elizabeth B.-N Sanders
Dr. Mary Anne Beecher
Dr. David Stealey

ORGANIZATION
The Ohio State University