

Diary studies

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Diary studies in user research are a longitudinal technique used in anthropology, psychology, and User Experience research, primarily to capture data from participants as they live through certain experiences.

There are two types of diary studies:

1. **Elicitation studies**, where participants capture media that are then used as prompts for discussion in interviews. The method is a way to trigger the participant's memory.
2. **Feedback studies**, where participants answer predefined questions about events. This is a way of getting immediate answers from the participants.^[1]

Background

Diary studies originate from the fields of psychology and anthropology. In the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), diary studies have been adopted as one method of learning about user needs towards designing more appropriate technologies.^{[1][2]}

Advantages

Advantages of diary studies are numerous.^[3] They allow:

- collecting longitudinal and temporal information;
- reporting events and experiences in context;
- determining the antecedents, correlations, and consequences of daily experiences.

Limitations

Diary studies might generate inaccurate recall, especially if using the elicitation type of diary studies, because of the use of memory triggers (e.g. taking a photo and writing about it later). There is low control, low participation and there is a risk of disturbing the action. In feedback studies there is also low control, and it can be troubling and disturbing to write everything down.^[4]

See also

- Diary studies in TESOL

References

1. Carter and Mankoff (2005). When participants do the capturing: the role of media in diary studies. *CHI '05 Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human factors in computing systems*.
2. Palen, L., & Salzman, M. (2002). Voice-mail diary studies for naturalistic data capture under mobile conditions. In *Proceedings of Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW '02)*, pp. 87–95. New York: ACM.
3. Lallemand, C. (2012). Dear Diary: Using Diaries to Study User Experience (<http://uxpamagazine.org/dear-diary-using-diaries-to-study-user-experience/>)UX Magazine 11.3, August 2012. (<http://uxpamagazine.org/issue/11-3/>)
4. Kuniavsky, Observing the User Experience, A Practitioner's Guide to User Research September 21, 2012,

ISBN 0123848695.

External links

- Diary study guide (<http://www.webcredible.co.uk/user-friendly-resources/web-usability/diary-study-guide.shtml>)
- The dos and donts of diary studies (<http://www.eriontheinterweb.com/2011/07/the-dos-and-donts-of-diary-studies/>)
- Diary studies in HCI psychology (<http://www.slideshare.net/UPABoston/diary-studies-in-hci-psychology>) slides

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