

Towards running a feedback session: examples of discussion from the fieldwork task when it was carried out in an Indian context.

Problems with the task

How can you tell whether someone is foreign or Indian?

What about ‘mixed’ groups where both are together?

How do researchers introduce themselves in order to interview customers or shopkeepers?

Would the groups of researchers make a difference? Compare experiences of ‘mixed’ teams – was one researcher treated or spoken to differently than the other during the fieldwork process? For example, in their team, Santhosh was asked to leave his bag at entrance, and Sharon was allowed to take hers in.

Descriptions or judgements?

Nabin: can we see any individual act of purchasing from his report?

Nitesh: how did you know that ‘shopkeeper was treating like a prince’? Just from the conversation with the Spanish customer?

Jyoti: already analysed into differences between foreigners and Indians. For example, she was trying to explain why Indians were getting more excited about shopping — ‘because they are more familiar with the kind of stuff they are looking at’ – is this justified?

Jashodara: ‘with so much Hindi (the local language of the setting) being spoken, the foreign woman shies away’ – but how can you tell this is why?

Scene-setting

Shakuntala: who was in your mind when you described Dilli Haat?¹

Santhosh: mentioned kinds of shops, existence of security guards, kinds of magazines on the racks outside the shop

Nitu: only one with a map

Rachel: says who she is describing Khan Market for

Introductions and responses from shopkeepers?

Ruth: on third visit introduced to shopkeeper: did you explain yourself? Might this have affected the reply? What if Sharon or Rachel had asked the same question?

Need for better preparation

Rachel/Geetanjali sat and tried to prepare—and both reported on their discussions?

Ruth: because no interviews with customers, couldn’t say anything about their experiences? Would this have been overcome if you’d had many visits, just on the basis of observations?

Sharon: observation overload: too many things that could be observed

Rachel/Geetanjali sat and tried to prepare—and both reported on their discussions

¹ Dilli Haat is a large enclosed complex in New Delhi, where artisans from around the country come to sell their products.

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Personal reactions:

Soumita: good on your own responses, but could a reader picture the shops without being there?

Nitu: honest that she was not very interested in the writing up afterwards

Style:

Jyoti: very much based on notes, not on continuous prose. Was this on purpose? What are the benefits and weaknesses of this style?

Ideas for future observation/enquiry

Sharon: do Indians buy imported goods while foreigners buy Indian craft goods? Beginning to look for generalizations that could be tested later—grounded approach?

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