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Live video streaming of ethnographic studies will help companies reduce their cost of travel and logistics

Doing ethnographic research, live

MUMBAI, JULY 20:

You may not think about it much, but companies spend millions to understand how your domestic help washes your clothes — and they'd like to observe them on the job, firsthand, in the environment they work in.

Corporate teams from around the world can now watch and be part of such ethnographic studies from their offices, or on their mobiles if the data speeds are high enough.

Live video streaming of ethnographic research has been launched in India and 13 other countries by Majestic Marketing Research (MMR), under the brand „Ethnostream'. The tool is powered by a portable streaming system under license from two global service providers — Focus Vision and Active Video Group.

MMR has been working with Focus Vision for video streaming from its conference facilities for seven years now, where focused group discussions and consumer interviews are hosted. With the new tool, teams in non-urban locations will be able to join the proceedings at the conference facilities.

Ethnostream will help companies reduce the high cost of travel and logistics involved in ethnographic research today, said Mr Raj Sharma, President, MMR, in a wide-ranging conversation with *Business Line*. He explained, “We see ethnographic research being increasingly used today, with executives from research and product innovation teams, besides marketing, wanting to observe consumers and their behaviour firsthand in their natural environments, and converse with them. But this involves high cost on travel, especially for MNCs and executives from abroad, and it is also very time consuming. We see Ethnostream eliminating those issues.”

The video stream will be transmitted through the Internet and can be accessed at any location. It also allows for interactivity with the on-site researcher and instant translation. The system consists of a video camera, mixer, encoder and data communication modules, and claims a time lag of six seconds on a broadband connection.

Ethnographic studies contribute 20 per cent to MMR's revenues from qualitative research studies, noted Mr Sharma. The 185-employee team in India sees 40 per cent of its revenues coming from qualitative studies.

An advertising account planner working on a multinational FMCG company's brand quipped, “Good news for the company; bad news for us who get to travel to new countries once in a while for research.”

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