



## Case Study I: **Drive-through** innovation for a Quick Service Restaurant Client, 2006



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A QUICK SERVICE RESTAURANT (QSR) CHAIN wanted a comprehensive, ethnographic look at their brand's consumer experience. Drive-through was a major component.

Every year, an increasing percentage of QSR business is drive-through business. In 2006, for the first time, both in-car eating and take-out purchases accounted for more than 50 percent of overall QSR meals and sales, respectively.

We drew on our prior work on mobility for the food industry and for the mobile telecommunications industries. Our multi-national team—a French videographer/anthropologist, a Norwegian specialist in low-rider and car culture, an American business anthropologist and a handful of talented university students—conducted ethnography in four US cities. We shared results with one another and with our client through

a password-protected research blog. (We'll report on our research blogging at this fall's Ethnographic Practice in Industry Conference, sponsored by Intel and Microsoft.)

Our drive-through ethnography revealed new strategic directions for our client. We identified both short-term issues and strategic design scenarios. By linking anthropological theory with our data on the realities and meanings of in-car ordering and eating, we are helping the client imagine new service encounters and new products at drive-through.

The likelihood that our work will make a difference is enhanced because we have also been invited to discuss our work in upcoming meetings with franchisees—the women and men who have the power to implement many of the changes our research has suggested.