Reports   School of Marketing

2016-11

Qualitative Analysis Methods Review

Mona Mohamed
Technological University Dublin, monamd68@gmail.com

Mohamed AF Ragab
Technological University Dublin, mohamed.af.ragab@gmail.com

Amr Arisha
Technological University Dublin, amr.arisha@tudublin.ie

Qualitative Analysis Methods Review

3S Group

College of Business

By: **Mona Mohamed**

Co-authors: Dr. Mohamed AF. Ragab

Prof. Amr Arisha

2016

Table of Contents

Abstract

Qualitative research plays an important role in business research. The popular research methods that researchers used are; Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods. Researchers who conduct qualitative studies, often struggle to pick the best technique to analyse their data. This report aims to present six different methods that can be used to analyse qualitative data collected for business studies. A comparison between the techniques is found useful to present in order to help decision made by researchers who are embarking upon qualitative research studies. Qualitative Analysis Methods (QAM) can be used in some of the mixed-methods approaches as appropriate.

Introduction

Qualitative research is a type of social science research that relies on non-numerical data, often in textual form (Saunders et al. 2009). It is one of three major types of research adopted in social sciences, the second being quantitative research and the third mixed methods which combine the former with the latter (Creswell & Clark 2011). Qualitative methods provide in-depth descriptions in real contexts and focus on *"naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings"* (Miles & Huberman 1984). This enables researchers to obtain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon they are investigating. One of the most common and reliable methods of qualitative research is interviewing which can be described as "a purposeful discussion between two or more people" (Kahn & Charles 1957). The objective of interviews is to envisage the research topic from the perspective of interviewees and to understand how and why they form their particular opinions (King 1994). They provide an opportunity for researchers to acquire in-depth insights from the answers of interview questions, which could not be easily achieved through quantitative methods such as questionnaires. QAM seek to interpret *meaning* from qualitative data. By analysing their responses, researchers are able to explore the views and perceptions from participants to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (King 1994; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006).

Prior to data collection, it is necessary for researchers to determine what kind of QAM they will adopt (Burnard 1991). Moreover, when selecting the appropriate QAM, a number of factors should be taken into consideration such as the nature of the research question and objective, the purpose of the analysis, and the type of outcome data desired (Kondracki et al. 2002). To this end, QAM generally falls into two categories. *Manifest Analysis* focuses on *what the text says* and deals with content describing visible obvious components. On the other hand, *Latent Analysis* is concerned not with the words, but rather with meaning behind them and hence seeks to explore underlying concepts and relationships between them within the text (Graneheim & Lundman 2004).

Types of Qualitative Analysis Methods

The literature presents an array of methods applied by researchers to analyse qualititvate data and particularly interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Six main methods are identified and discussed below.

1. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used technique for qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). It is a method for determining, analysing and reporting themes within the text. It involves *"a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon"* (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006)*.* The thematic approach is useful for theorising across a number of cases and finding common patterns across research participants and the events they report (Riessman 2005). It permits the researcher to combine meanings behind respondents statements within their particular context (Joffe & Yardley 2004). It is also not a complex method but can be used to explore complex phenomena (Vaismoradi et al. 2013).

One of the advantages of thematic analysis is that it is a flexible tool which can potentially provide rich outcomes when analysing interviews. On the other hand, the challenge is that it depends on the expertise of the researcher in unveiling underlying themes so may be inconclusive if not undertaken correctly. In such cases, the negative outcome is due to a poorly conducted analysis or an inappropriate research question rather than the method itself. Due to its nature, thematic analysis is best suited for exploratory studies where the is investigating an area where not much is known from previous works (Vaismoradi et al. 2013).

2. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a structured categorising and coding technique used with large volumes of text to identify patterns of words used, their repetition, and relationships (Pope et al., 2006). It aims to describe "*who says what, to whom, and with what effect*" (Bloor & Wood, 2006). The main difference between Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis is that the former uses a descriptive approach in coding and provides quantitative counts of codes, while the latter provides purely qualitative accounts (Vaismoradi et al. 2013).

3. Structural Analysis

Structural analysis requires an examination of the syntax of the dialect to extract the findings (Riessman 2005). It is suitable for lengthy narratives and depends on the story being told based on the contextual information participants provide to answer questions. It is, therefore, not suitable for a high number of individual narratives but can be useful for detailed case studies and comparison of several narrative accounts

4. Interactional Analysis

This kind of analysis depends on the dialogic process between teller and listener such as in medical, social service, and court situations (Nielsen 2009). The approach requires transcripts that include all participants in the conversation. Because both the teller and listener collaborate to create meaning and concept, it is useful for studies of relationships between speakers in diverse field settings.

5. Performative Analysis

Performative analysis is emergent in narrative studies. It extends the interactional analysis approach, but goes further than the spoken words and adopts a *stage metaphor* involving an "actor" who influences an audience through "doing" rather than only "telling" (Riessman, 2005). Researchers who use performative analysis also explore facets such as language and gesture. The performative perspective is suitable for studies which look at communication practices and identity construction (Riessman 2005; Schreiber et al. 1972).

6. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis focuses on the language used to convey meaning (Brown & Yule 1983). It identifies the way concepts are expressed and examine the actual words used. Discourse analysis aims to discover socio-psychological characteristics of the speaker rather from within the text structure. In business, it is applied for analysing manifest phenomena through the exploration of conversations within organisations (Alvesson & Karreman 2011). It is also common in disciplines such as linguistics and philosophy.

A summary of the characteristics of previously discussed QAM is shown in the table below.

Method	Description	Pros	Cons
Thematic Analysis	Systematically analyses themes and patterns within the text	• Suitable for complex phenomena • Provides rich outcomes	• Requires large considerable time resources • Depends on the expertise of the researcher in extracting themes
Content Analysis	Structured analysis of words, examines word patterns, repetition, and relationships	• Suitable for large volumes of text • Does not require much time • Useful for simple reporting	• Inflexible, provides only quantitative accounts
Structural Analysis	Examines the syntax of the dialect, the story being told	• Suitable for length narratives	• Not suitable for large number of narratives
Interactional Analysis	Focuses on the dialogic process between teller and listener, where both collaborate to create meaning	• Suitable for studies which examine relationships between the speaker and listener	• Unsuitable for exploratory studies
Performative Analysis	Adopts a stage metaphor and focuses on language and gesture i.e. doing not only telling	• Suitable for studies which explore communication practices • Gestures that provide the listener with more insight about the spoken words	• Building the analysis on unspoken words might give inaccurate output
Discourse Analysis	Focuses on the language to discover socio-psychological characteristics of the speaker	• Emphasize the communicative character of individual interactions and how individuals express themselves through languages,	• Only examines the actual words used, not necessarily the meaning behind them

Adapted from: Braun & Clarke (2006), Riessman (2005), Vaismoradi et al., (2013), Joffe &Yardley (2004).

Conclusion

This paper presents a review of the literature covering qualitative methods analysis applied in social science with a particular focus on six main methods; Thematic Analysis, Content Analysis, Structural Analysis, Interactional Analysis, Performative Analysis, Discourse Analysis. To help researchers to save time instead of going through large volume of publications about analysing qualitative methods, this report provides a useful summary and comparison.

References

Alvesson, M. & Karreman, D., 2011. Decolonializing discourse: Critical reflections on organizational discourse analysis. *Human Relations*, 64(9), pp.1121–1146.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp.77–101.

Brown, G. & Yule, G., 1983. *Discourse analysis*, Cambridge University Press.

Burnard, P., 1991. A method of analysing interview transcripts in qualitative research. *Nurse Education Today*, 11(6), pp.461–466.

Creswell, J.W. & Clark, V.L.P., 2011. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*, Wiley Online Library.

DiCicco-Bloom, B. & Crabtree, B.F., 2006. The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), pp.314–321.

Fereday, J. & Muir-Cochrane, E., 2006. Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), pp.80–92.

Graneheim, U.H. & Lundman, B., 2004. Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: Concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, 24(2), pp.105–112.

Joffe, H. & Yardley, L., 2004. *Content and thematic analysis*, Research methods for clinical and health psychology. California: Sage.

Kahn, R.L. & Charles F. Cannell, 1957. *The dynamics of interviewing; theory, technique, and cases.",*

King, N., 1994. *The qualitative research interview*, Sage Publications.

Kondracki, N.L., Wellman, N.S. & Amundson, D.R., 2002. Content Analysis: Review of Methods and Their Applications in Nutrition Education. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 34(4), pp.224–230.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M., 1984. *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*, JSTOR.

Nielsen, K., 2009. The Qualitative Research Interview and Issues of Knowledge. *Nordic Psychology*, 59(3), pp.210–222.

Riessman, C.K., 2005. Narrative Analysis.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 2009. *Research methods for business students fifth edition*,

Schreiber, P.A., Inquiry, S.L. & Summer, N., 1972. Style Disjuncts and the Performative Analysis Published by : The MIT Press Peter A . Schreiber Style Disjuncts and the Performative Analysis *. , 3(3), pp.321–347.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H. & Bondas, T., 2013. Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing and Health Sciences*, 15(3), pp.398–405.