

Qualitative analysis

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Overview

This session is designed to provide a step-by-step guide for beginning qualitative researchers...who want to know how to apply the appropriate strategies for data analysis, interpretation, and reporting.

Qualitative data analysis methods

- Here are five methods of qualitative data analysis to help you make sense of the data you've collected through customer interviews, surveys, and feedback:
 - Content analysis
 - Thematic analysis
 - Narrative analysis
 - Grounded theory analysis

Content analysis

- Content analysis is a research method that **examines and quantifies** the presence of certain words, subjects, and concepts in text, image, video, or audio messages.
- The method **transforms qualitative input into quantitative data** to help you make reliable conclusions about what customers think of your brand, and how you can improve their experience and opinion.

Content analysis Example

For example, you may run a customer survey with open-ended questions to discover users' concerns—in their own words—about their experience with your product. Instead of having to process hundreds of answers manually, a content analysis tool helps you analyze and group results based on the emotion expressed in texts.

Some other examples of content analysis include:

- Analyzing brand mentions on social media to understand your brand's reputation
- Reviewing customer feedback to evaluate (and then improve) the customer and user experience (UX)
- Researching competitors' website pages to identify their competitive advantages and value propositions
- Interpreting customer interviews and survey results to determine user preferences, and setting the direction for new product or feature developments

Content analysis benefits and challenges

Content analysis has some significant advantages for small teams:

- You don't need to directly interact with participants to collect data
- The process is easily replicable once standardized
- You can automate the process or perform it manually
- It doesn't require high investments or sophisticated solutions

On the downside, content analysis has certain limitations:

- When conducted manually, it can be incredibly time-consuming
- The results are usually affected by subjective interpretation
- Manual content analysis can be subject to human error
- The process isn't effective for complex textual analysis

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis helps to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns in qualitative data.

- For example, product teams can use thematic analysis to better understand user behaviors and needs, and to improve UX. By analyzing customer feedback, you can identify themes (e.g. 'poor navigation' or 'buggy mobile interface') highlighted by users, and get actionable insight into what users really expect from the product.

While content analysis and thematic analysis seem similar, they're different in concept:

- **Content analysis** can be applied to both qualitative and quantitative data, and focuses on identifying frequencies and recurring words and subjects.
- **Thematic analysis** can only be applied to qualitative data, and focuses on identifying patterns and 'themes'.

Table 3. Description of Emerging Themes

THEME	DESCRIPTION	
Gender and labor	The role of gender in leadership	
<i>Subcategories</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Significant Statement Examples</i>
Management style	Relationship of gender to management style and process	“When it comes to effective negotiation, the execution of business, there are some problems with women. I don’t know to what extent, but there is a certain... lack of confidence.” (P52 female participant, Alentejo, p.12)
Vertical	Vertical segregation according to gender	“there are a lot of women [leaders], but the decision making and the most important positions are always given to men” (P55, male participant, Alentejo, p.10)
Career	Influences of gender in career development (mobility)	“Some women don’t pursue or are not selected for management positions because they show unavailability” (P54, male participant, Alentejo, p.7)
Decisions	Gender and decision-making at managerial level	“they [women] have another level of emotionality when managing relations, when trying to get consensus” (P58, male, Alentejo, p.23)

Thematic analysis benefits and challenges

Some benefits of thematic analysis:

- It's one of the most accessible analysis forms, meaning you don't have to train your teams on it
- Teams can easily draw important information from raw data
- It's an effective way to process large amounts of data into digestible summaries

And some drawbacks of thematic analysis:

- In a complex narrative, thematic analysis can't capture the true meaning of a text
- Thematic analysis doesn't consider the context of the data being analyzed
- Similar to content analysis, the method is subjective and might drive results that don't necessarily align with reality

Narrative analysis

- Narrative analysis is a method used to **interpret research participants' stories**—things like testimonials, case studies, interviews, and other text or visual data.
- Some formats narrative analysis *doesn't* work for are heavily-structured interviews and written surveys, which don't give participants as much opportunity to tell their stories **in their own words**.
- Narrative analysis provides product teams with valuable **insight into the complexity of customers' lives, feelings, and behaviors**.

Narrative analysis benefits and challenges

Businesses turn to narrative analysis for a number of reasons:

- The method provides you with a deep understanding of your customers' actions—and the motivations behind them
- It allows you to personalize customer experiences
- It keeps customer profiles as wholes, instead of fragmenting them into components that can be interpreted differently

However, this data analysis method also has drawbacks:

- Narrative analysis cannot be automated
- It requires a lot of time and manual effort to make conclusions on an individual participant's story
- It's not scalable

Grounded theory Analysis

- Grounded theory analysis is a method of conducting qualitative research to **develop theories by examining real-world data**. The technique involves the creation of hypotheses and theories through the collection and evaluation of qualitative data.
- Unlike other qualitative data analysis methods, **this technique develops theories from data, not the other way round**.
- Grounded theory analysis is used by software engineers, product marketers, managers, and other specialists that deal with data to **make informed business decisions**.

Example

- For example, product marketing teams may turn to customer surveys to understand the reasons behind high churn rates, then use grounded theory to analyze responses and develop hypotheses about *why* users churn, and *how* you can get them to stay.
- Grounded theory can also be helpful in the talent management process. For example, HR representatives may use it to develop theories about low employee engagement, and come up with solutions based on their findings.

Grounded theory analysis benefits and challenges

Here's why teams turn to grounded theory analysis:

- It explains events that can't be explained with existing theories
- The findings are tightly connected to data
- The results are data-informed, and therefore represent the proven state of things
- It's a useful method for researchers that know very little information on the topic

Some drawbacks of grounded theory are:

- The process requires a lot of objectivity, creativity, and critical thinking from researchers
- Because theories are developed based on data instead of the other way around, it's considered to be overly theoretical, and may not provide concise answers to qualitative research questions