"WEBSITE ANALYSIS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH"

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid expansion of the internet, qualitative research has adapted to incorporate online content analysis, offering researchers new methods to examine phenomena in natural environments. This paper explores the role of qualitative research in analyzing website content, discussing its methodologies, applications, and challenges. Traditional qualitative techniques such as interviews, focus groups, and observations are complemented by systematic approaches like content analysis, triangulation, and grounded theory. The integration of web-based data collection has enhanced research transparency and accessibility, allowing scholars to examine elements such as design, content, and interactivity.

Additionally, this paper highlights the application of qualitative research methods in the internationalization of higher education curricula. By analyzing university websites, researchers can assess global engagement strategies and quality assurance frameworks. Various international models, including those endorsed by UNESCO and the OECD, provide benchmarks for evaluating education quality. Content analysis tools such as Nvivo12 and R Studio aid in structuring and interpreting data, ensuring rigorous analysis.

The findings underscore the growing significance of qualitative research in digital spaces, emphasizing the need for robust methodologies to address the complexities of web-based content. By leveraging qualitative techniques, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of global online interactions and the evolving role of the internet in academic and professional fields.

INTRODUCTION

Although Internet use remains somewhat restricted to Western cultures, the degree of international access to cyberspace is increasing with amazing speed. Recent statistics indicate the number of global Internet users grew from 563 million to 580 million in the last half of 2002[1] (Nielsen NetRatings). Moreover, certain trends indicate that much of this growth will occur in areas outside of North America.

With the increasing dependency on technology, there doesn't seem to be a time when websites weren't used for conducting research, even on a rudimentary level. Research can either analyse an already examined phenomenon further or approach a completely new one. The fast expansion of world wide web has a huge impact on the choices available for web users to engage with other web users and increased the scope of content generation we see on websites today.

One definition of qualitative research is a situated activity that places the observer in the real environment.[2] The world becomes a collection of representations as a result of this interpretive technique. Field notes, interviews, chats, photos, recordings, and self-memoranda are a few examples of the representations. In an effort to understand phenomena in terms of the meanings that individuals assign to them, qualitative researchers investigate objects in their natural environments.

[1] https://www.nielsen.com

[2] Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. eds., 2011. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. sage.

The following characteristics of qualitative research are listed by Flick (2009): the selection of suitable methods and theories; the identification and evaluation of various viewpoints; the researchers' reflections on their work as a component of the knowledge-production process; and the range of approaches and techniques available.[3]

Conventional qualitative research techniques, such focus groups, interviews, and observations, provide contextual relevance and flexibility while shedding light on social circumstances and human experiences. Nevertheless, these approaches have drawbacks such as subjectivity, bias, and time commitment. When using offline research sources, transparency and dependability became crucial issues. For this reason, official reports, information, testimonies, and other materials are posted on business websites for public viewing.[4] As a result, there is a recent upsurge in the use of content from different qualitative research approaches to reinforce website content. Instead of interacting with study samples, researchers can now easily obtain and process data via the internet. It's as easy as integrating web design analysis.[5]

Any aspiring researcher can improve the process and calibre of qualitative research by incorporating generating content from websites and examining elements including design, content, navigation structure, multimedia events, and interactivity.[6] Formal approaches, such systematic comparative methodologies, can improve the rigour and reproducibility of qualitative investigations, according to Griffin and Ragin (1994). In order to generate more reliable and broadly applicable results, the authors emphasise the advantages of integrating formal analytical tools with qualitative insights.

Qualitative data may be more difficult to analyse than quantitative data because of its open-ended nature. Three steps are often involved in qualitative research:[7]

I. Research planning entails deciding on the study's objectives, research questions, research methodologies, and participant count.
II. Researching: you do your investigation and collect information.
III. Analysing the outcomes: you examine the gathered information in search of trends and useful information.

APPROACHES TO QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

[3] Flick, U. (2013). The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis. Available at: http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/58869_Flick__The_SAGE_HB_of_Qualitativ e_Data_Analysis.pdf
[4] Al-Olayan, F.S. and K. Karande, A Content Analysis of Magazine Advertisements from the United States and the Arab World. Journal of Advertising, 2000; 29(3): 69-82.
[5] Flick, U. (2011): Triangulation. New and updated 3rd edition. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
[6] Cunliffle, A. L. (2019: Crafting Qualitative Research: Morgan and Smircich 30 Years On. Published by SAGE. Available at http://orm.sagepub.com/content/14/4/647
[7] Dey, I. (1993). Qualitative Data Analysis. A User- Friendly Guide for Social Scientists. London: Routledge.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

According to Craig et al. (2008), theory is considered a crucial phase in the design, assessment, and synthesis of evidence for interventions. By concentrating on particular factors or outlining the perspective the researcher will use when examining and interpreting the data, a theory can be utilised to define the scope of pertinent notions. Providing conceptual definitions, elucidating causal linkages, and testing theoretical claims empirically are all steps in the social sciences' theory development process (Jaccard and Jacoby, 2020).

Applying theory has several advantages, such as offering a common language for communication and a framework for designing and evaluating interventions. An accumulation of knowledge that might be utilised to forecast and explain results in novel circumstances can be made possible by this common understanding (Dalgetty et al., 2019; Jaarsma et al., 2020a; Michie & Prestwich, 2010).

A nomological network connects theoretical concepts like intelligence, effort, academic success, and earning potential. These connections are always referred to as propositions. Finding the main ideas and concepts that underlie a certain phenomenon or action is insufficient when looking for explanations for it. Finding and stating patterns of interactions between these constructs is also necessary. Propositions are such patterns of interactions. The researcher can start the study with a theoretical assumption if he expects, for example, that an action would result in a particular reaction. This proposition's opposites are hypotheses that will be addressed. During the research, it is the hypothesis that can be tested.

Since multiple theories are typically accessible, the researcher can use observations or empirical data collection to validate the theory that best matches the facts (cf. Zikmund et al. 2009: 42-43). According to Zikmund et al. (2009: 43–44). The prototype idea, for instance, can be used as a framework for assessing websites created for consumers from various cultural backgrounds. In turn, these assessments can assist people in producing more impactful online content for global audiences.

TRIANGULATIONS

In qualitative research, triangulation is the process of using several techniques or data sources to create a thorough understanding of a phenomenon (Patton, 1999). Through the convergence of data from various sources, triangulation has also been seen as a qualitative research technique to test validity.[8] According to Denzin, a better level of trust in the results is driven by the use of multiple methods and sources to obtain data.

Four types of triangulation were distinguished by Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999): technique triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation. The researcher compares the results utilising one measurement methodology with those from another. Triangulations increase the reliability of the results if the second approach validates the first one's findings. If not, it may be interpreted as evidence that relying solely on one metric or procedure is not necessarily trustworthy (cf. Bryman 2003: 1142). Triangulation enables

[8] Bryman, A. (2003). Triangulation. Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. 8 Nov. 2011. Available at: http://www.sagepub.com/chambliss4e/study/chapter/encyc_pdfs/4.2_Triangulation.pdf

academics to develop a more complex picture of the phenomena under study when it comes to website analysis. As an illustration, a group of researchers may examine the content of a website separately before comparing their results to reach an agreement. This improves the research's quality and objectivity.

GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory is an inductive method of developing hypotheses from derived facts, in contrast to conventional research methodologies.[9] Grounded theory is described as "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process". [10] (1998, referenced in Bryman & Bell 2011: 576). Data collection, analysis, and final theory are all closely related to each other in this approach. Open coding, in which the researcher methodically examines the website data to find recurrent ideas and concepts, is suitably adhered to by the theory. These have codes on them. Examining university websites for terms like "global citizenship," "diverse community," or "study abroad programs" to identify internationalisation themes is one technique to demonstrate how effective this is. Axial coding is then used to categorise them, and selective coding is used to create a primary theme. This theory's primary goal is to make sure that new insights are arising organically from the data rather than as a result of applying pre-existing beliefs.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Researchers have a plethora of chances to obtain and study data on the web's platforms. The question of whether the presented web information is enough across all study fields emerges in accordance with the earlier qualitative research methodologies covered above. Without a doubt, content analysis is the most suitable method for qualitative research when examining website content because web data is largely unstructured and comes in a variety of ways. Since it may be applied to both quantitative and qualitative research components, content analysis is a popular research approach for an unbiased, almost quantitative investigation of material. Qualitative content analysis, which is usually based on an individual's perspective, is comparable to textual analysis in that it is largely interpretive in nature and frequently does not use statistics for data analysis.[11]

It is described as "an approach to documents that emphasises the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts". [12]Allowing categories to develop from data and appreciating their importance in comprehending the significance of the context in which an item under analysis (and the categories that resulted from it) appeared are both stressed. However, there are numerous obstacles to overcome when doing content analysis on Web-based content, including coding and sampling. Generalisability and representativeness are impacted by the intricacy of the combination of different media features in the Web content.

[9] Birks, M., and Mills, J. (2010). Grounded Theory. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
[10] Corbin, J., and Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria. Qualitative Sociology, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1990. Available at: http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBF0 0988593
[11] Franzosi, R. (2007). Content Analysis: Objective, Systematic, and Quantitative Description of content. Available at: http://www.unive.it/media/allegato/Scuola- Dottorale/2011/allegato/Content_Analysis_-_Introduction.pdf
[12] Bryman, A., and Bell, E. (2011). Business Research Methods. 3rd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Potential issues with data collection arise from the websites' constant content changes. McMillan discovered that the majority of the research that used content analysis on the collected data was done in a period of one to two months.[13] There have been reports of data gathering times as short as two days and as long as five months.[14]

Finding the process, coding scheme, and categories is crucial since data validity increases reliability. Therefore, a careful operation of training coders and checking the reliability is of importance to overcome potential subjectivity.[15]

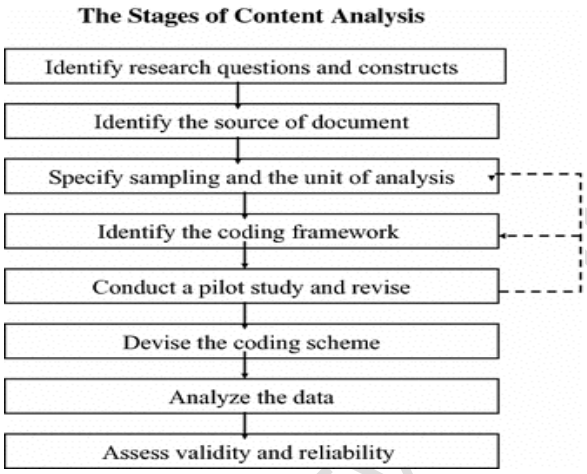

Fig: A flowchart for content analysis research

Numerous research have already been carried out, despite the difficulty of applying content analysis to Web-based content. For instance, Singh and Baack used content analysis to examine how cultural values are represented on websites in Mexico and the United States[16]. Using Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions[17], Callahan's study[18] looked at cultural differences and similarities in university website design. It discovered that while there are correlations between graphical elements and Hofstede's index values, they are statistically weaker than first thought. New tools that use automated computer programs to assess Web information were created concurrently with the advancements of the Web.

WebAnalyzer is a software program that was introduced[19]. It automatically collects and examines parameters including a website's HTML code and details about its characteristics, such as the

[13] R.F. POTTER, Measuring the "Bells & Whistles" of a New Medium: Using Content Analysis to Describe Structural Features of Cyberspace. In *Proc. of 49th Annual Conference of the International Communi- cation Association*, (1999), San Francisco, CA.
[14] Zikmund, W. G. et. al. (2009). Business Research Methods. 8th edition. Stamfort, CT: Cengage Learning.
[15] Stemler, S. (2001). An overview of content analysis. Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 7(17). Available at: http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=17
[16] Singh, N. and D.W. Baack, Web Site Adaptation: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of U.S. and Mexican Web sites. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 2004; 9(4).
[17] Hofstede, G., Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival, New York: McGraw Hill; 1991.
[18] Callahan, E., Cultural Similarities and Differences in the Design of University Web Sites. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 2005; 11: 239-273.
[19] Bauer, C. and A. Scharl, Quantitative Evaluation of Web Site Content and Structure. Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy, 2000; 10: 31-43.

quantity of photos and external links. It is often known that human programmers find it quite challenging to analyse complete websites, mostly due to the fact that many websites have thousands of pages. As a result, researchers will benefit from the ability to parse entire websites rather than simply the home page as a unit of analysis by applying computer analysis content approaches[20]

QUALITATIVE APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENT INTERNATIONALISATION IN CURRICULUMS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education internationalisation fosters the exchange of best practices in academia and research through contacts across various educational systems and aids in the development of global citizens through student and scholar mobility.

Internationalisation of the curriculum is defined as the "incorporation of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study," according to Betty Leask, professor at La Trobe University.[21] Beginning with Takshashila, which drew thousands of students from around the globe to study in a wide range of subject areas at this institution, student mobility and international exchange occurred in ancient India. Later on, the University of Nalanda also drew a large number of academics from around the world.[22]

Website analysis in qualitative research can play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of internationalisation within higher education curricula. By examining how universities present their global initiatives, partnerships, and intercultural learning opportunities, researchers can gather insights into effective strategies for embedding international perspectives into educational practices.

Higher education institutions are in a position to strengthen international cooperation and highlight the significance of high-quality provision in transnational education and internationalisation efforts as the forces of globalisation continue to reduce the time and distance between students and educational providers during the knowledge era.[23][24] In order to achieve fair, accessible, and high-quality learning outcomes, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2015 urged governments, intergovernmental organisations, universities, faculty, and student stakeholders to work together globally (UNESCO, 2015).

[20] Neuendorf, K.A., The Content Analysis Guidebook, London: Sage Publications; 2002.
[21] https://scholars.latrobe.edu.au/bleask/publications
[22] Pashupati, K. and J.H. Lee, Web Banner Ads in Online Newspapers: A Cross-National Comparison of India and Korea. International Journal of Advertising, 2003; 22: 531-64
[23] Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2015
[24] de Wit, 2020; Knight, 2016

IMPLEMENTING TRIANGULATIONS

Heiser examined and evaluated five globally recognised frameworks for quality assurance: the International Institute of Online Education with UNESCO (IIOE), the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU), the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). To lessen prejudice, all frameworks were anonymised.[25] The frameworks were chosen based on geographic region, contextualised for implementation at the institutional level, available in English, created by stakeholders globally distributed across the region they represent, and inclusive of distance learning modalities. Furthermore, the COL framework was adopted by the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE), meaning that Commonwealth nations and African distance education providers are represented by it. This determined what quality means to support internationalization efforts for education, to distill international indicators and variables.[26]

IMPLEMENTING CONTENT ANALYSIS

Krippendorff (2018) asserts that in order to conceptualise meaning to inquiry objectively, content analysis necessitates uniting text-driven research designs. Content analysis was determined to be the best suitable approach for this study since it directly operationalises the context of the text through a network of stable correlations or contributing conditions in an analytical construct to guarantee reliability and minimise bias[27]

Evaluation is a tactic that can inform quality dimensions, and the OECD's Education at a Glance report (2021) is the reliable source of global education statistics used to assess and track the effectiveness of educational systems[28]. [29]In order to comprehend the intricate interaction between global evaluation metrics and international quality criteria, the report was divided into five sections. Indicators of the contextual aspects of educational systems and its actors fall under the first group. Indicators of the input into educational systems or the learning environment are under the second group. In order to promote cross-border education initiatives and activities, the third category focusses on internationalisation strategies and process indicators. Indicators of involvement and advancement inside educational institutions make up the fourth group. The production, results, and effect indicators of education systems are finally covered in the fifth category.

Nvivo12 was used to code and tabulate each category for analysis. In order to help internationalisation efforts for transnational remote education, anonymised data was then retrieved from the Nvivo program and imported into R Studio for additional interpretation. This allowed for the delineation of the quality aspects.

[25] Howe, K., & Eisenhardt, M. (1990). Standards for qualitative (and quantitative) research: A prolegomenon. Educational Researcher, 19(4), 2–9.
[26] Darojat et al., 2015; Esfijani, 2018; Martin et al., 2017

[27] B. BERELSON, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. Free Press, New York, 1952.
[28]https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=OECD%27s+Education+at+a+Glance+report+(2021)&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8
[29] Weare, C. and W.Y. Lin, Content Analysis of the World Wide Web: Opportunities and Challenges. Social Science Computer Review, 2000; 18(272).

General Applications Of Website Analysis In Internationalisation

In response to growing globalisation, there are few ways to assess whether colleges have successful international programs or policies. When developing an internationalisation strategy, higher education institutions are encouraged to include stakeholders such as industry, alumni groups, international organisations, and regulatory bodies. It is common to observe that educational institution websites place a high priority on internationalisation through both textual and visual material. Beelen and Jones (2015) stress that curriculum internationalisation is directly impacted by inclusive digital communication. Incorporating practices like accessibility, inclusivity, and multilingualism aids in the development and implementation of an internationalisation culture, which is currently thought to be accomplished more successfully because to the extensive use of technology and international outreach initiatives.

Shortcomings Of Website Analysis To Conduct Qualitative Research

Researchers may run into issues with sampling when working online (Andrews et al., 2003; Howard, Rainie, & Jones, 2001). By providing access to email lists created from other online polls that were performed using the web survey service, several modern web survey services give users access to specific populations. Based on information from earlier surveys, some provide access to certain demographics. However, there is no assurance that respondents to earlier polls gave correct demographic or characteristic data if the data were self-reported.

Furthermore, conclusions were derived solely from the content of the websites without human confirmation; as a result, they might be impacted by additional elements like technical problems and the degree of information transparency, which could result in a poor assessment. It could be beneficial to conduct additional evaluation in order to corroborate the results and conduct complementary research using different methods, like observations.

Some researchers use chat rooms, discussion forums, and community bulletin boards to reach potential participants by inviting them to complete a survey. Online community members, on the other hand, frequently view this behaviour as impolite or disrespectful (Hudson & Bruckman, 2004)[30] or as "spam" (Andrews et al., 2003). Promoting community corporation and consent is crucial for this.[31]

[30] Hudson, J.M. and Bruckman, A., 2004. "Go away": Participant objections to being studied and the ethics of chatroom research. *The information society*, *20*(2), pp.127-139.

[31] Koehler, W., An Analysis of Web Page and Web Site Constancy and Performance. Journal of the American Society for Information Science, 1999; 50(2): 162-180.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHILE CONDUCTING WEB-BASED RESEARCH

These days, one of the most popular ways to gather data worldwide is through online research (Maronick, 2009). According to Buchanan and Hvizdak (2009), internet research incorporating online or web surveys was the most frequently suggested and approved approach by 750 university Human Research Ethics Boards surveyed. In addition to online and web surveys, a variety of novel methods are being developed, including spatial mapping, data collecting via virtual observation in interactive environments including blogs, websites, chat rooms, and social media platforms, and more (Warrell & Jacobsen, 2014). Nowadays, it's normal practice to attract potential participants and obtain access through social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Although these online platforms give researchers the chance to quickly reach a huge number of individuals, there are serious ethical issues with their use. Similar to other human-centric research, website-based research is guided by ethical values such as beneficence, justice, and respect for autonomy (Kitchin, 2007). Because autonomy places a strong emphasis on people's rights to privacy and dignity, researchers must safeguard participants' private information and make sure their involvement is voluntary (Flicker, Haans, & Skinner, 2004). This entails protecting users' private information online and preventing disclosures that can jeopardise their anonymity (Gelinas et al., 2017). Informed consent is how the Declaration of Helsinki operationalises autonomy (World Medical Association, 2017).

Fairness, equality, and transparency in the treatment of study subjects are guaranteed by justice (Kitchin, 2007). In order to prevent taking advantage of vulnerable groups, researchers must be transparent about their identities, procedures, and study objectives (World Medical Association, 2006). For example, justice requires truthfulness in online hiring and truthful disclosure of risks and rewards (Gelinas et al., 2017).

In order to be considered beneficent, people must minimise harm and maximise benefits (Kitchin, 2007). Risks associated with website-based research include the inadvertent release of participant identities or private information, which could result in humiliation, damage to one's reputation, or legal problems (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Strong data protection procedures must be put in place by researchers to mitigate these hazards.

The dynamic nature of internet-based research presents new issues even though it still adheres to standard ethical principles.

These include getting informed permission in virtual environments, maintaining confidentiality, and guaranteeing anonymity. Risks may increase with more researcher-participant engagement, requiring customised ethical solutions. The type of engagement and the usage of publicly available online resources frequently determine whether website-based research qualifies as human-subject research[32]. Ethics boards usually do not examine non-intrusive research that uses

[32] Panel on Research Ethics, 2014

publicly available data, although there are still disagreements about what online areas are private and public.[33]

One such instance is the Facebook data mining issue, in which researchers' attempts failed to protect user anonymity (Zimmer, 2010). This event underlines how challenging it is to safeguard privacy in digital settings and how ongoing ethical vigilance in website-based research.

CONCLUSION

There is a vast amount of user-generated content since Web 2.0 technologies enable users to produce their own material, primarily on social networking sites. Such data can be subjected to content analysis through website analysis to determine user attitudes, preferences, and behaviours as well as social and communicational trends and patterns. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, we discovered that using the different methods of qualitative research analysis on Web-based content is a reasonably simple technique that enables researchers to conduct and compile data whenever they choose without requiring drawn-out ethics approval processes. The approach offers a wealth of opportunities to examine user preferences, styles, or patterns without requiring the researcher to interact with the users. To ascertain the influence of the value obtained from transnational student participation at the higher education institution and on socioeconomic benefits within local communities and cultures, more research is required to evaluate and measure quality parameters. Last but not least, the worldwide epidemic has acted as a creative disruptor and motivator for universities and potential students to think of novel teaching strategies and prospects.

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