

Content analysis notes (for revision)



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Content Analysis Warning: The information below is only for revision purposes to get a better understanding on the description and application of content analysis. Not to be referenced (hence no references are provided) in any coursework as information is taken from a number of other sites with some being of questionable viewpoints. This is really for exam revision

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts.

Researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Texts can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theater, informal conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative language.

Texts in a single study may also represent a variety of different types of occurrences, such as Palmquist's 1990 study of two composition classes, in which he analyzed student and teacher interviews, writing journals, classroom discussions and lectures, and out-of-class interaction sheets. To conduct a content analysis on any such text, the text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels--word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme--and then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis. Uses of Content Analysis

Perhaps due to the fact that it can be applied to examine any piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication, content analysis is currently used in a dizzying array of fields, ranging from marketing and media studies, to literature and rhetoric, ethnography and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science, and many other fields of inquiry. Additionally, content analysis reflects a close relationship with socio- and psycholinguistics, and is playing an integral role in the development of artificial intelligence.

The following list (adapted from Berelson, 1952) offers more possibilities for the uses of content analysis:

- Reveal international differences in communication content
- Detect the existence of propaganda
- Identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution
- Describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications
- Determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups

Content Analysis: Examples

The Palmquist, Carley and Dale study, a summary of " Applications of Computer-Aided Text Analysis: Analyzing Literary and Non-Literary Texts" (1997) is an example of two studies that have been conducted using both conceptual and relational analysis. The Problematic Text for Content Analysis shows the differences in results obtained by a conceptual and a relational approach to a study. Description Content analysis or textual analysis is a methodology in the social sciences for studying the content of communication.

Earl Babbie defines it as " the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings and laws. " According to Dr. Farooq Joubish, content analysis is considered a scholarly methodology in the humanities by which texts are studied as to authorship, authenticity, or meaning. This latter subject include philology, hermeneutics, and semiotics. Harold Lasswell formulated the core questions of content analysis: " Who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect?. Ole Holsti offers a broad definition of content analysis as " any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages. " Kimberly A. Neuendorf offers a six-part definition of content analysis: " Content analysis is a summarising, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity, intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalisability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented. Bernard Berelson defined Content Analysis as " a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications". Content analysis is a research tool focused on the actual content and internal features of media. It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner.

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really any occurrence of communicative language. To conduct a content analysis on a text, the text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels--word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme--and then examined using one of content analysis' basic methods: conceptual analysis or relational analysis.

The results are then used to make inferences about the messages within the text(s), the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. For example, Content Analysis can indicate pertinent features such as comprehensiveness of coverage or the intentions, biases, prejudices, and oversights of authors, publishers, as well as all other persons responsible for the content of material. Content analysis is a product of the electronic age.

Though content analysis was regularly performed in the 1940s, it became a more credible and frequently used research method since the mid-1950's, as researchers started to focus on concepts rather than simply words, and on semantic relationships rather than just presence (de Sola Pool, 1959). The process of a content analysis According to Dr. Klaus Krippendorff (1980 and 2004), six questions must be addressed in every content analysis: 1. Which data are analysed? 2. How are they defined? 3. What is the population from which they are drawn? 4.

What is the context relative to which the data are analysed? 5. What are the boundaries of the analysis? 6. What is the target of the inferences? The assumption is that words and phrases mentioned most often are those reflecting important concerns in every communication. Therefore,

quantitative content analysis starts with word frequencies, space measurements (column centimeters/inches in the case of newspapers), time counts (for radio and television time) and keyword frequencies. However, content analysis extends far beyond plain word counts, e. . with Keyword In Context routines words can be analysed in their specific context to be disambiguated. Synonyms and homonyms can be isolated in accordance to linguistic properties of a language. Qualitatively, content analysis can involve any kind of analysis where communication content (speech, written text, interviews, images ...) is categorised and classified. In its beginnings, using the first newspapers at the end of 19th century, analysis was done manually by measuring the number of lines and amount of space given a subject.

With the rise of common computing facilities like PCs, computer-based methods of analysis are growing in popularity. Answers to open ended questions, newspaper articles, political party manifestoes, medical records or systematic observations in experiments can all be subject to systematic analysis of textual data. By having contents of communication available in form of machine readable texts, the input is analysed for frequencies and coded into categories for building up inferences.

Robert Philip Weber (1990) notes: " To make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent: Different people should code the same text in the same way" (p. 12). The validity, inter-coder reliability and intra-coder reliability are subject to intense methodological research efforts over long years (see Krippendorff, 2004). One more distinction is between the manifest contents (of communication) and its latent meaning. " Manifest" describes what (an

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author or peaker) definitely has written, while latent meaning describes what an author intended to say/write. Normally, content analysis can only be applied on manifest content; that is, the words, sentences, or texts themselves, rather than their meanings. Dermot McKeone (1995) has highlighted the difference between prescriptive analysis and open analysis. In prescriptive analysis, the context is a closely defined set of communication parameters (e. g. specific messages, subject matter); open analysis identifies the dominant messages and subject matter within the text.

A further step in analysis is the distinction between dictionary-based (quantitative) approaches and qualitative approaches. Dictionary-based approaches set up a list of categories derived from the frequency list of words and control the distribution of words and their respective categories over the texts. While methods in quantitative content analysis in this way transform observations of found categories into quantitative statistical data, the qualitative content analysis focuses more on the intentionality and its implications.