

Qualitative Methods for Marketplace Research

Analyzing Verbal Data

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Analyzing Verbal Data

Everything that comes out of the field as notes or interviews is transformed into what we call data *text*. Text analysis is the primary concern in qualitative research. Text can be approached analytically or critically; our concern is with analysis rather than criticism. There are two approaches to analyzing textual data in qualitative research. One approach is philosophical; data are analyzed according to the philosophy in which the data are collected. The other approach is thematic analysis and code development. The philosophical basis for approaching consumption as text begins this chapter's discussion. Then, thematic analysis and code development are presented to explain how marketplace texts are analyzed for patterns to generate themes, or units of meaning. Concept development analysis appropriate for deconstructing documents is also explained. In this chapter, we focus on the variety of techniques available for analyzing and making sense of text, including computer programs for qualitative data analysis.

Approaching Consumption as Text

For each qualitative model, the process of classification for analysis is slightly different. Ethnography and phenomenology identify *units of meaning*. Case studies and life histories use categorical aggregation to establish patterns of *categories*. Grounded theory uses *open coding* to identify categories and properties found in text.

Of the five models we've studied, phenomenology occurs most frequently in marketplace research. To understand a phenomenon, researchers use consumer testimony about their consumption experiences for analysis. Phenomenology yields statements of meaning and *meaning units* (groups of statements) that are used to understand consumption patterns, motivations, and expectations.

Textual analysis for all models is grounded in philosophical assumptions made about how data are collected and organized. Before discussing analysis itself, I will outline the philosophical grounding options for qualitative data [p. 203 ↓] analysis.

Of five assumptions identified by previous researchers,¹—empiricism, socioeconomic constructionism, subjectivism, interpretivism, and rationalism—three are most appropriate for text analysis within the framework of this book. Two extreme viewpoints, empiricism and rationalism, are omitted here because of their single-voiced reflection or creation of text. Instead, we will invoke analysis of text that is established through systemization, active reading, translation, or a combination of these.

Socioeconomic Constructivism

Socioeconomic constructivism is a strategy that assumes the world consists of a socially constructed and consensually validated common body of knowledge and that both the researcher and the text under investigation come from the same socially constructed world. To understand a particular social construction, ethnographic researchers immerse themselves in a culture and become one with that culture. Ethnographers *systemize text* so that when they interpret reality, it is from the perspective of one who shares that reality. In other words, the text can be translated into the primary experience of the researcher. Ethnographic data is analyzed for themes and patterned regularities. *This strategy assumes a social construction of reality.*

Marxism, which describes the transfer of knowledge from the social world to conscious thought, is often used to explore the structure and meaning within a material culture. Some individuals transfer a particular social group's world-view into cultural objects, such as films and songs. Charles Bukowski's screenplay for the film *Barfly* is an example of a portrayal of an alcoholic writing about an alcoholic's lifestyle. Marketing research seeking to document the patterns of social interactions that arise during consumption activities, or to analyze the social scripting of consumption through rituals and shared practices, are advised to consider ethnographic analysis.

Subjectivism

Subjectivism is akin to the phenomenological and existential philosophies of Sartre; we can characterize interpretive textual construction under these conditions as an *active reading*. Appropriate for cross-cultural research, subjectivism has an anthropological base. One consumer's experience of a consumption activity—flying on an airline—is an example. Using multiple consumers' recollections of a flying experience is another. *This strategy assumes an individual construction of reality.*

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An application of subjectivism to consumer behavior phenomena is in hedonic and emotional responses that involve the whole consciousness: senses, thoughts, feelings, and values. Such experiences differ from the daily business of life—often consumers can't express themselves, saying “I can't explain it; you had to be there to understand.”

Interpretivism

Interpretivism likewise assumes that the text under investigation is a product of social consensus; however, it also assumes that the researcher comes from a different primary culture or subculture. Here, the investigator acts as a *translator*, interpretively translating concepts from one context into those appropriate to another context. Included in this philosophical rubric are hermeneutics, semiotics, and structural criticism, which have recently been incorporated into consumer research studies. *This strategy assumes a linguistic construction of reality.*

Hermeneutics is a circular process by which an interpretation of the whole text guides the explanation of its parts, which, in turn, shape an understanding of the whole. It serves as a resolution of contradictions among and between elements and the larger whole of the text. *Semiotics*, the study of signs, focuses on a structure of binary oppositions as key to the recovery of meaning. *Structural criticism* looks at a symbolic system, including the consumption of everyday products, as text that can be interpreted using differences and contrasts. Using folk tales and mythical structures, fashion and

advertising commercials can be deconstructed to reveal their meaning. Structural criticism is valuable for its insight into consumption symbolism, consumer behavior imagery, and business-related signs.

Interpretive Analysis

Interpretivism plays a significant role in understanding consumers within the marketplace. Consumer behavior and communication researchers use interpretation in a variety of forms to make sense out of text. As stated earlier, these processes are based on linguistic construction and require some knowledge of narrative structure on the researcher's part to be successful. However, exposure to this method may entice researchers new to the field to undertake interpretive analysis as a means of understanding consumers and consumption.

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Hermeneutics

Anecdotes are sometimes the best vehicles of truth, and if striking and appropriate are often more impressive and powerful than argument.

—Tryon Edwards

Consumer stories are frequently collected for marketplace studies because of their power for understanding motivations and decision making. Formerly the responsibility of advertising and marketing practitioners, interpretive frameworks are now available to researchers for deriving insights from texts of consumer stories. The *hermeneutic framework*² provides a model for us to understand how consumers perceive products in relation to themselves. Consumer self-narratives reflect the personalized cultural meanings that constitute a person's sense of self-identity. In the hermeneutic model of meaning outlined in Figure 15.1, a person's life history is text. This perspective is used to contextualize the meaning of particular life events within a broader narrative of self-identity.

Interpreting consumer stories has two stages: (a) an initial reading to grasp a sense of the whole story and (b) additional readings to develop an understanding of the meanings within the text. Here, the researcher looks for patterns across different stories as well. Each reading of the text encompasses a broader range of considerations to arrive at a holistic interpretation. Hermeneutics assumes that a common frame of reference exists between the interpreter and the texts being interpreted. Here's where a researcher's personal experience and interest come into play, enabling a heightened degree of insight into the patterns of communication. A researcher-as-instrument metaphor captures the essence of this interpretivist approach.

There are five key aspects to the hermeneutic view, in which consumer narratives have these characteristics:

Plot lines that organize events and characters

Symbolic parallels among the meanings of different events and actions

Intertextual relationships where meanings of consumers' different stories become integrated into their personal histories

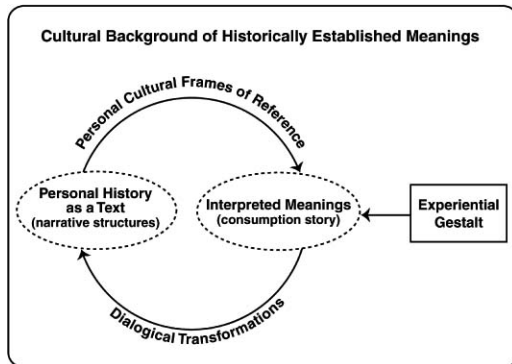
Existential themes about personal identity as reflected in consumption experiences

Draw from the cultural code of shared meanings and conventionalized viewpoints

A phenomenology of shopping experiences as told by three working women—Carol, Jan, and Cindy—all in their 30s, illustrates how consumer stories can be used to characterize this target audience in four steps.

Figure 15.1. A Hermeneutic Model of Meaning Construction

SOURCE: Thompson (1997, p. 440). Reprinted with permission.



Step 1

Plot analysis, a key element in interpreting consumer stories, results from the organization of movement of events in order toward some goal.³ Consumer narratives tend to move in a linear fashion from past to present to future; we are interested in this interrelationship. This consumer story illustrates how plot reveals Carol's emotion.

The new PT Cruiser was hot, and I love the design. But the rear door had no window, so I couldn't put my easel in the car. If it had the window, I'd have bought the car right off, you know. But I got a Chevy Blazer instead because it had room for my art equipment, and it drove OK. But the Cruiser was so terrific, it looked like one of those 40s gangster cars. I really wanted a different look. Retro, you know. All my friends have RVs or SUVs. I wanted something special, but like, what would I do with my easel? And the Cruiser was even cheaper than the Blazer. You got leather seats and all sorts of extras for \$22,000. The Blazer was a lot more money for just cloth seats and not even a CD player.

In the next story, *style* becomes a central feature in the future-driven narrative that revolves around carrying the artist's easel. As the story progresses, Carol [p. 207 ↓] buys the Blazer and encounters a variety of mechanical problems with the four-wheel drive. The story has a dissatisfying outcome.

The Blazer was just in the shop most of the time. The four-wheel drive kept going out, and it had to be replaced after just a few months. You know, you spend a bunch of bucks on something and you expect it to work for a while. I ended up borrowing friends' cars so the Blazer could be fixed, and it was a nightmare. I'm really angry. I gave up the chance to have a really beautiful car, and now I have a bucket of problems instead. I could kick myself for not going with my instincts. Sometimes, it doesn't pay to be rational. I'm selling the piece of junk just as soon as it runs for a month. I've told all my friends and they were bummed. I'll never buy a Chevy product again.

She symbolically vindicates herself by swearing off of Chevy cars and spreading the word about her dissatisfaction. She blames her decision on ignoring her instincts.

These narratives bring out two factors: going with the best price and compromising on visual appeal. Although they're separate events, they were symbolically related to a consumer who blames her decision not to go with her instinctive choice. Here, narrative movement functions like a metaphor by linking events into an ongoing story.

Step2

A second step in story analysis is *narrative framing*, the meanings through which an experience is understood as it is created among different consumption events. This next passage shows the way "eating out" is framed by a group of meanings related to the life of Jan.

After I've been working all day, the last thing I want to do is come home and cook dinner. Or stop at the store and get some food. My family sits around the table like birds in a nest waiting for me to bring the worms and stuff them down their throats. Well, I want to fly away. I don't want to decide what to cook and deal with the dishes and cleaning up and all. I just want to have someone else do all that stuff. Just let me sit down and order a glass of wine and relax. Boy, that's for me.

For Jan, dinner is a chore that she must do for other people after she's been working hard. She framed the event around her responsibilities to both her job and her family. Here, we ask, what meanings render an issue important in this narrative? Her story revealed that cooking was a focal consumption experience related to a personally significant group of meanings.

I used to watch my mom cook. She slaved over the stove and that was all she did. She had all day to do it. I have no time, and I'd rather not have to think about it. [p. 208 ↓] Someone else should do this forme. I have so many duties. To my boss and my kids and my sister. They try to make me feel appreciated by flattering me. Saying they really love what I fix whenever I fix it. My kids really need some time with me, so I guess spending the time at the dinner table is good. Junior High is a tough time for kids, you know. And they like to complain to someone about how much they hate their teachers. And if they have junk for lunch or stop at McDonald's, I like to make sure they get one healthy meal a day. So I should cook. I mean, it's not that bad, just not wonderful.

This anecdote illustrates the symbolic relationship between a specific framing of an experience (cooking) and a consumer's narrative of a personal history. If we look at binary themes, oppositions, we can learn more about meanings. For instance, contrasts in this woman's narrative include eating out versus eating at home, being a responsible parent versus ignoring her kids, being together versus being apart, nurturing versus being nurtured, and giving pleasure versus receiving pleasure. If we apply these meanings, a theme emerges. The meanings she attributes to cooking can be interpreted as a theme of doing for others, doing for self. She balances the trade-offs of not liking to cook with giving her kids a nutritious meal.

Step 3

In this step, we interpret consumption stories from a perspective of self-identity. This perspective suggests that personal identity is continuously adapted through a person's actions. Self-identity is characterized as a process of negotiation between stability

and change. This approach offers a means to articulate further the group of symbolic meanings brought out in the hermeneutic interpretation. In the next story, we see Cindy selecting a grocery store and its significance for her self-identity.

Well, they have a deli with imported cheese and meats, specially prepared foods, and a great wine selection. Of course, they're more expensive, but my friends and I think it's worth the price. Bristol Farms shoppers are more aware of what's good to eat and are willing to pay for quality. In the past, I had to make do with Safeway, but since I've been promoted, I can spend my money on things that matter.

This consumer's shopping transformation came about because her promotion enabled her to shop with people who “appreciate quality.” Thus, Cindy's shopping self-image is consistent with her professional image that is reflected in the price she pays for food. Her self-discovery takes place later in the story when a consumption-oriented theme emerges in which Cindy interprets her earlier life stages as a process of being comfortable with an outer-directed identity.

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I never used to care about where I shopped or what I was wearing. I did things pretty much for myself, you know. But now I realize that my friends are important, and I want to fit in. My real value is not what I think about myself but what other people think of me. After all, we're not alone in the world, and to be appreciated by friends is really important. Now, I buy the best clothes and eat the best food. My friends like me because I fit into the scene, I guess. But it's OK, 'cause that's also why I like them.

Cindy's consumption goals are linked to her identity. She shops in the places that fit an acceptable portrait of self. Choosing to shop at Bristol Farms reflects her self-identity as socially acceptable. Hermeneutic interpretation seeks to understand the pattern of meanings consumers use to construct an enhanced sense of self-esteem.

Step 4

Deriving a broader understanding of cultural, societal, or historical processes (or a combination of these) from the analysis of these stories is the final stage. A sociohistoric perspective is especially relevant to marketing interests because of the role that mass media, advertising, and public relations have played in shaping public perceptions of identity and lifestyle options. These aspects of communication offer consumers representations against which they can assess their lives. By becoming familiar with historical texts, such as archival records, diaries, and oral histories, we can make the comparison with relevant market segments. The goal is to develop a good working knowledge of the major social and historical themes that shape the cultural situation of a particular market segment. That's what we have done with these women's stories.

By analyzing the text's metaphors, common expressions, and distinctions in light of the historical considerations, we can gain insight into cultural myths in consumer interpretations of their experiences. We assume that consumer meanings are grounded in a collective cultural memory, so we can use those meanings for practical applications. Appeals to mythic themes are especially useful for positioning products and creating resonant promotional messages. The Jolly Green Giant is an example of a mythical character used to position vegetables.

Other strategic implications of hermeneutic analysis include assessments of consumer opinions of product quality and services that contribute to an understanding of how providers of those products and services can better address benefits to this market segment. Instinct, care giving, and self-image drive the narratives of three consumers. How those elements are incorporated into advertisements is another story, but we have certainly done the groundwork for a new campaign to thirty-something professional women.

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Hermeneutics is more applicable to some types of marketplace research than others. A more conventional research paradigm is one where researchers have extensive knowledge of specific brand or product categories. To bring consumer stories to

life, hermeneutic researchers must possess the background knowledge needed to recognize the relationships between narrative structure and the rich texture of consumers' self-identities and cultural contexts.

Critical Analysis and Semiotics

Textual analysis based on literary criticism has specific applications for advertising research.⁴ Text, as we have said, can include pictures, sounds, movement, and so forth; virtually everything in the marketplace has been labeled “text,” including consumers, products, and advertisements. In an attempt to make sense out of text, deconstruction researchers set forth textual boundaries of apparent meaning. The boundaries are crossed by seeking out what the text excludes—the space that exists between what an author says and what is not said. *Deconstructive analysis*, a form of critical analysis, uncovers gaps, aberrations, or inconsistencies in meanings that reveal an author's blind spots. Such readings bring out messages that had not previously emerged from the text. De-construction lets us take a closer look at the way interpretation has become privileged as a white, male, educated, middle-class undertaking. Such readings reveal culturally suppressed voices—of minorities and women—and remind us of what is unheard.

Semiotics is a tool used to identify signs and symbols through textual codes. Deconstruction uses semiotics to uncover deeper meanings in advertisements by rooting out multiple meanings, multiple reader contexts, and reader invention of absent contexts. Because readers put the meanings into advertisements, advertisements cannot assume that one message will mean the same thing to all readers. Text analysis can lead to a fuller understanding of the multiplicity of consumer meanings in advertisements.

Deconstructing a :60 Commercial⁵

An example of the use of semiotics to deconstruct an advertisement is found in an analysis of the famous television commercial based on Orwell's *1984* that announced

Macintosh to the world during the 1984 Super Bowl without showing the product. In a study using potential computer buyers as audience, the commercial was shown, and 200 viewers were asked to describe the commercial and tell what it meant to them. Using a form of modified thought-listing, the viewers were also asked to identify the main characters of the commercial and [p. 211 ↓] tell what they thought the advertising message was. Their text was analyzed, and responses were coded by category determined by the message elements and oppositional structures. Words and phrases of identification and description were labeled as either intended or idiosyncratic meanings and themes.

A series of narratives emerged from the 1954-style text, including David and Goliath, feminism, and science fiction scenarios. In the commercial, a young woman was the David who attacked the IBM Goliath, destroying the power of the giant. Other viewers saw the woman as a mythic heroine; one viewer saw a sexist image and referred to her as a “Hooters chick.” Eighteen bipolar opposites were identified and viewers presented 137 concepts built on those oppositions.

The commercial message was only partially successful in transferring the metaphor of humanistic Apple Computer Company smashing its huge, technologically cold competitor. The narratives revealed a tendency toward eclectic and idiosyncratic meaning, particularly in the interpretation of certain message elements, such as Big Brother, the police, and the setting. Although over half of the viewers noted the product story, only one fifth of them had some sense of the conflict between friendly and unfriendly technology, which was the essence of the commercial's message. In spite of the variety of message interpretations, the commercial's artistry moved over 200,000 of the original viewers to purchase a Macintosh on the following Monday, its first day on the market.

Also employing semiotics, symbolic anthropology focuses not only on what consumers say and do but what their statements and actions mean symbolically. One approach is based on the concept of the “boundary”⁶ for consumer research. According to this technique, boundaries have important implications for consumer behavior. Whenever a person crosses a major boundary (or life stage), the crossing symbolizes a new life. Brands and product categories that are important to self-image, such as liquor, clothing,

and magazines, often change during border crossings. Beer advertising (“Miller time”) tries to attach to beer all the favorite meanings associated with leaving work. The task of a qualitative researcher in this technique is to think creatively about what the key boundaries are regarding the product, what these boundaries mean, and how these meanings can be applied to the product through advertising, product naming, and packaging. Meanings are identified through consumer interviews and stories collected in the field and site-specific locations.

Thematic Analysis⁷

Thematic analysis is a way of seeing by perceiving a pattern or theme in seemingly random information. It can be used with most qualitative methods and models *and it allows for translation from qualitative information into quantitative [p. 212 ↓] data*. Thematic analysis is a process of coding; a *theme* is a pattern found in the information to organize and interpret it. The benefit of this technique is its ability to facilitate the communication of findings and interpretations to others.

Like other techniques, this one has stages; they are previewed here. Sensing themes in data is foremost for mastering this technique. Recognizing what is codable is essential, and the skill is one that can be learned through training. Discipline is needed for developing themes or codes with consistency. Codes must be developed to process and analyze or capture the essence of observations. Lastly, researchers must interpret the information and themes in a way that contributes to the development of knowledge. It helps to have a theoretical grounding for this stage.

Coding Field Text

To undergo analysis, text must be broken down into manageable units; we call this *reduction*. Our first task is to read over all collected text to identify discernable patterns as they emerge naturally from it. The classification processes for collected data is often technique specific:

Field note text is classified by *sorting* observed occurrences.

Document text content relies on aesthetic or descriptive *classification* for analysis. Interview transcriptions yield *thematic categories*.

Physically reducing the amount of information collected during interviews means sorting, categorizing, prioritizing, and interrelating data according to emerging schemes of interpretation. Once you have read over the transcripts, the repetition of key words and phrases will alert you to possible ways to sort the data. If you're looking at a shopping *process*, chronology of events might provide suitable categories (e.g., recognizing a need, looking for retailers, in-store experience, etc.). If *meaning* is a primary concern, pay attention to feelings and emotions described by consumers (“I loved it,” “It made me laugh,” “It was thrilling”). Underline these phrases for sorting and categorizing purposes.

Ideally, the concepts used in an analysis grow naturally out of an interaction between what happens in the field and what theories have said about that activity. Our task is to make sense of the way consumers make sense out of their own actions, goals, and motives. To explain consumers' actions and feelings, researchers begin by creating ordered concepts.⁸ *First-order concepts* are member descriptions of how they explain their consumption experiences. *Second-order concepts* are fieldworker notions to explain the patterns found in first-order concepts. For instance, a man describes the way he purchases a tie: He looks at the colors, then feels the material, then holds one up to look at himself in the mirror [p. 213 ↓] with the tie (first-order concept). We interpret this report to mean that the shopper is very particular about design, texture, and appearance of the tie (second-order concept). Both are necessary to understand the tie selection phenomenon.

Order is invoked because we need some method of sorting these concepts to make sense out of our data. Classification is accomplished through a procedure of coding. Coding tools give us access to data content and are an integral part of interpreting the phenomenon under study. Learning how to code is the primary skill needed by marketplace researchers.

Analytic Coding

Identifying what is worth saving, how to divide it up, and how consumer discourse or behavior relates to other talk and behavior is our task. We begin by making several readings of the text, making marginal notes, and underlining repetitive or unique phrases. The first level of coding sorts out the obvious: actors, behaviors, settings, events, and activities. These simple, concrete, and topical categories let us begin the process of identifying more subtle categories.

Digging for meaning requires characterizing concepts, beliefs, themes, cultural practices, or relationships. This is best accomplished by keeping an eye out for implied or implicit:

- Participant dramatizations
- Puzzling or conflicted situations
- Recurring elements
- Action-evoking conditions
- Key expressions
- Consumption rituals

Your understanding of the culture and the phenomenon is needed at this point to tease out the categories from the mass of data. It's important to describe each coding category, especially when more than one person is doing the analysis. Qualitative coding allows us to tag segments of interest, not to achieve coder reliability as is typical in quantitative analysis.

The following is a coding example from a study on consumers who were forced to repurchase their possessions after losing them in a fire.

Category A. Concern about selecting retail locations (service, price, delivery)

Examples Consumer concerned about a store that doesn't understand their plight

Consumer concerned about getting cheated

Consumer concerned about buying now and getting the item after their new house is built

Consumer concerned about a salesman taking advantage of them

Category B. Shopping behavior

Examples Seeking help from professionals

Comparing prices

Shopping where fire victim discounts were offered

Purchasing upgrades of electronics and appliances

Taking trips with insurance housing funds

Category C. Brand decision influencers

Examples Consumer seeks advice from architect

Consumer's neighbor recommends a brand

Consumer asks a neighbor

Consumer consults *Consumer Reports* magazine

Consumer uses Internet comparisons

Identified as one of the most influential descriptions of coding, the *constant comparative method*⁹ is based on grounded theory and has explicit directions. A brief three-step explanation illustrates its advantages for analyzing marketplace text.

Discourse Analysis

If it is not true, it is a happy invention.

—G. Bruno, 1585

The coding of interviews is a necessary step for discourse analysis. Texts derived during formally structured interviews can be coded for fast identification of elements such as description (W), definition (D), interpretation (I), **themes [p. 215 ↓]** (appear in bold), and oppositions (appear underlined). The excerpt that follows is from a study conducted by a performing arts venue to understand declining attendance rates.

What comes to mind when you think of performance arts?

Uhhh, well, I think about **paying money** and going someplace where people are doing something active, like singing and dancing.

Singing and dancing?

Yeah, you know... opera, ballet, that stuff. And maybe theater.

Tell me about your first experience with a performance.

Ha (laughs). My girlfriend dragged me to a ballet in L.A. It turned out to be very long and boring... hardly anyone was there. She got free tickets. Even free was too high a price for that deal! (laughs again)

Boring?

A woman in tights, slow music, darkness. No upbeat moments.

Was performance part of your childhood experience?

Only what I **learned** about in music appreciation at school...you know, like

Swan Lake. Like short, choppy steps. I was never very curious about dance except the kind I do myself.

Tell me about the places you and your family went for entertainment.

Bowling.

Were there any times when you went to see a circus or concert?

Maybe a circus. Yeah, we went to stuff like the Ice Follies, amusement parks, stuff like that.

Describe an ideal performance.

The ideal performance. A play. A musical play. A free musical play.

Why a musical?

Because I like the singing. I like to be down in front so I can hear the different voices and see the people's faces, the actor's faces, that is. It's a **happy time**. Like, especially if I know the songs and all.

If you got free tickets to see any performance in New York City, what would you choose?

A Broadway musical. They cost more than I can **afford**. So I'd take free tickets to be on Broadway. It's a happening place. I think people go there because it's so exciting to be with all the **rich** people. And all the lights and sounds.

A quick overview of this transcript tells us that *money is a prime consideration* for this person's choice of performance. The *cost theme* prevails. He *contrasts* [p. 216 ↓] boring ballet with exciting musicals, free with ticket prices, and slow monotony with upbeat enjoyment. Three definitions characterize performance for him, and he describes the action that takes place during performance from his perspective. We learn that he has no appreciation for ballet and that he delights in musicals. Only two interpretive statements emerge: one acknowledging that he'd attend performance if it

was free and the other that he did not have much performance experience as a child, and what he did have was not pleasant.

Notice the effective use of probes. The interviewer facilitated definition and description by repeating the respondent's words to expand or clarify his statements. By comparing this transcript with other transcripts of responses to the same questions, we may see a pattern emerge as themes become apparent. Discourse analysis is popular with practitioners to use with a series of interviews rather than in an extended field study.

Concept Development Analysis¹⁰

Concept development analysis is used to help develop or reposition product and service concepts word by word, line by line. This tool of analysis determines the range of reactions an audience has to a specific stimulus, addressing the following issue: What are the possible responses people have to the stimulus?

A sample of 18 to 20 phone interviews provides a good representation of the range of possible responses. Interview respondents are asked to look over, read, touch, feel, or hear the entire stimulus (an advertisement, product, direct mail piece, Web site, etc.) as a whole. Then, respondents discuss the stimulus, section by section. Normally, each set of stimulus material is divided into five sections. Respondents are then asked to go through each of the five sections by sentence, by word, or by part of visual material or sound. No questions are asked; rather, respondents are requested to talk about the stimulus and what comes to mind. Interviewers probe respondents to get a full language picture of what is going on in their minds about the stimulus.

Analysis consists of using psychiatric probing and semiotic techniques to analyze computer-readable text. Analysis determines what thought process respondents go through in reaction to the stimulus. Three forms of analysis are used:

Semantic analysis analyzes what ideas respondents have using computer retrieval programs that identify key words and phrases to determine what ideas co-occur in response to a stimulus. This form

determines how respondents construct combinations of words to form ideas about the stimulus.

Syntactic analysis analyzes the order and grammar of the ideas that respondents create in thinking about the stimulus. It also tells us the degree to which they are intellectually interested, involved, or behaviorally motivated by the stimulus. The computer analyzes the subject, verb, and direct object of responses.

Pragmatic analysis analyzes the context or matrix (language response to the whole) in which the stimulus event occurs. The computer performs a contextual analysis to determine the kinds of situations the respondent places the product, service, or idea into.

Concept development analysis can be used to determine what changes can be made to the text, how motivating the message is, and what further development of the concept or the product needs to be made. The results provide the client with a full meaning of the message that the respondent got from the stimulus. The analyst then compares the client's intended message with the message received to determine how they compare, how believable they are, how motivated respondents are, and into what context the respondent places the stimulus. Here's an example:

After five years of flat sales, a lawn mower manufacturer learned from concept development analysis that mower users disliked the rigorous starting process of kicking over the engine and wanted a easy and quick-starting machine. Marketers recommended rephrasing the company's advertising slogan to, "Guaranteed to start on the fist pull or we'll fix it for free." As a result, sales increased 30% the first year and 50% the second year of using the new slogan.

Coding Disclosure

Pronouns are an indication of how much disclosure is contained in transcript data. Use of "I" and "we" indicate an in-group or personal discourse. "You" is familiar but projects

distance on to the report—an out-group. “Your,” “he,” and “she” are unfamiliar, also part of an out-group. “They” is the ultimate out-out-group, indicating large distances between the speaker and the involvement. We use the presence of in-group pronouns to separate description from disclosure during analysis.

During transcription analysis, disclosure levels are coded in several ways. Self-reference is one way. Self-references appear in text when subjects refer to themselves, tell something about themselves, or refer to some effect they experience. One difficulty for researchers is assessing the level of clarity of subject statements. For instance, “I feel silly when I wear jeans that are out of style” is speaker explicit; “You feel silly when you wear jeans that are out of style” indicates [p. 218 ↓] some distance between the speaker and the concept. But speakers using “you” may still be referring to themselves.

There are three principle areas of difficulty for judging disclosure levels.¹¹ First, statements beginning with “I think” or “I know” may be evaluated either as a person expressing something about himself or herself or about someone else. Making this distinction is often problematic for researchers. Second, the use of reflective self-reference refers to usage where “you” may mean “I” and “people” may mean “me.” Lastly, when a speaker omits who is experiencing the difficulty in statements such as “This is a difficult decision,” deleted self-reference occurs. All three situations tend to obscure self-reference, causing some frustration for transcript analyzers.

Last

Qualitative data and transcript analysis can be enhanced with computer programs; however, no computer program will analyze your data. Computers don't analyze, people do. The main uses of computer software in qualitative studies are to collect and archive data in automatic and unobtrusive ways; do editing, coding, and storage tasks; keep available information in different logical fields; link data to form categories and networks of information; build theories and test hypotheses; and prepare reports. Software marketed by Sage for qualitative analysis is listed here.

ATLAS.ti is a powerful software package for the visual qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, and audio text. An online support group is provided.

HyperRESEARCH enables you to code and retrieve, build theories, and conduct analyses of your data as text, graphics, audio, and video sources.

WinMAX is a straightforward, powerful tool for the analysis of text. It supports a grounded theory orientation code and retrieves analysis, combining both qualitative and quantitative procedures. Online demo and tutorial are available.

Ethnograph for Windows is designed to make the analysis of data collected during qualitative research easier, more efficient, and more effective. It creates and manages data file projects, easily codes data files, and expands search output display. Use it to analyze text from focus groups, interviews, diaries, transcripts, and so forth.

NUD#IST 4 opens a complete range of analytical possibilities, including the exploration processes by combining text searches and indexing.

SphinxSurvey helps you design, administer, process, and analyze surveys.

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You may also consult a qualitative software discussion group: mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk. For a list of other software products available and a discussion of their effectiveness, consult this Web site for software sources and online articles comparing analysis software: <http://www.ualberta.ca/7Ejrnorris/qda.html>.

Summary

Stretching Exercises

Recommended Readings About Data Analysis and Report Writing

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Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hirschman, E. C. (Ed.). (1989). *Interpretive consumer research*. Provo, UT: Association of Consumer Research.

Lindlof, T. R. (1995). *Qualitative communication research methods* (Chapter 7). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richards, L. (1999). *Using Nvivo (Nud#ist) in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data*. London: Sage.

Case in Point: Sparkle Dog Foo—A Concept Development Analysis

Client: Sparkle Dog Food

Problem: Female shoppers are skeptical of the product's claims.

RQ: *How do we revise the product claims to appeal to our target market?*

Method: Concept development analysis

Twenty individual telephone interviews were transcribed and processed through a series of computer programs.

Claim: *A revolutionary new kind of dog food that makes your dog more comfortable and easier to live with*

Analysis: Women associate the word “revolutionary” with an advertising ploy. They think it must have added medicine or chemicals to do the job it claims. Women miss the idea of their dog being “easier to live with and more comfortable.” Many think that their dog is already easy to live with and that the claim offers nothing new.

Claim: *Dogs love the taste.*

Analysis: Women think this is advertising and not very valuable. Women want their dog to love the taste, but they say that all dog foods claim to have a taste dogs love. This statement detracts from rather than adds to the concept.

Claim: *Sparkle helps your dog's teeth and coat sparkle, and even your dog's eyes will sparkle.*

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Analysis: The overuse of the word “sparkle” causes this claim to end on a weak, skeptical note. Women are skeptical about what is in the product; they don't want additives that can hurt their dogs, and the idea of chemicals is not something they want.

Recommendation: The ordering of ideas in the concept should be changed to reflect the logic and thought process of the woman shopper. The ordering should be as follows:

It has no fillers, just the protein necessary for being healthy and energetic.

This food is more digestible than food with filler, so your dog gets no gas pains and is more comfortable.

It has better absorption, so your dog gets more out of its food with less waste, which means stools are firmer and smaller.

Blocks: Things that demotivate women from product trial:

Advertising claim

Unhealthy food

Added chemicals

Overuse of the word “sparkle” **Gaps:** Things that are missing from the concept:

New dog food is dry and better than current dry foods.

New dog food has no added fillers.

The food is good because of what is not in it, not because chemicals are added.

Results: New concept slogan was recommended and is being tested for credibility among female dog owners.

Notes

1. See Hirschman, E., & Holbrook, M. (1992). *Postmodern consumer research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

2. From Thompson, C. (1997). Interpreting consumers: A hermeneutical framework for deriving marketing insights from the texts of consumers' consumption stories. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34, 438-455.

3. To learn more about plot analysis, see Stern, B. (1995). Consumer myths: Frye's taxonomy and the structural analysis of consumption text. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 165-185.
4. Presented by Barbara Stern as part of a special session on qualitative methods at the annual conference of the American Academy of Advertising, 1995.
5. See Sayre, S., & Moriarty, S. E. (1993). Technology and art: Apostmodern reading of Orwell as advertising. In Braden, R., Baca, J., & Beauchamp, D. (Eds.), [p. 222 ↓] *Art, science and visual literacy: Selected readings*. International Visual Literacy Association.
6. See Durgee, J. (1986, Winter). Richer findings from qualitative research. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 36-44.
7. From Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
8. From Van Maanen, J. (1979). The fact of fiction in organizational ethnography. In J. Van Maanen (Ed.), *Qualitative methodology* [Special issue]. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 535-550.
9. See Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
10. A method called Q'cept has been developed by Charles Cleveland for Communication Development Company, West Des Moines, Iowa.
11. From Chelune, G. J. (Ed.). (1979). *Self-disclosure: Origins, patterns and implications of openness in interpersonal relationships*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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