Call for Papers
Special Issue Mercati & Competitività

Emerging trends in qualitative research
A focus on social media research

More than ever, qualitative research is going through a period of rapid change and confronting new challenges. Anyone interested in the current state and development of qualitative data analysis will find a field which is constantly expanding and, at the same time, growing less structured.

In particular, we can see the evolving and changing environment in three different aspects: data sources, data collection and data analysis.

Traditional sources of data—interviews, focus groups, transcripts and observation protocols—are now complemented by visual, virtual, textual and other types of data deriving from social media. As billions of people post updates to platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram every day, these platforms are opening up opportunities to draw upon vast qualitative data streams.

As a consequence, new data collection tools, web crawling and data mining techniques have emerged in recent years. For example, qualitative software programs have been integrated with tools to capture social media content for qualitative analysis (e.g. Ncapture for Nvivo). Kozinets (2010, 2015) presented the concept of 'netnography' as a new approach that combines archival and online communication work, participation and observation with new forms of digital and network data collection and analysis.

Regarding data analysis, mixed or multi-method approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative techniques are growing in importance (Creswell and Piano Clark, 2011). In particular, mixed methods research approaches—'in which the researcher gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two and then draws interpretations based on the

combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems' (Creswell, 2014, p. 2)—have clear potential value in social media research. Qualitative data are often useful for triangulating and augmenting quantitative results, and in a social media context, they can go beyond tracking follower counts or hashtag use to create a more complete picture of a specific community.

Given the overwhelming amount of data deriving from social media, attention is increasingly turning towards automated content analysis instead of pure qualitative content analysis (e.g., employing human coders to manually code textual data), because it permits large-scale analyses and enhances the reliability, replicability, transparency and efficiency of the results (Humphreys, 2010a; Humphreys 2010b; Humphreys, 2017; Morris, 1994).

These and many other examples suggest to us that there is a need to reflect on and discuss the use of qualitative techniques in order to facilitate further exploration through the qualitative lens. In particular, we hope to look at the latest emerging methods for analysing qualitative data, with a particular focus on social media data.

This call for papers invites contributions that address the role of qualitative methods in responding to, challenging and contributing to data. This call for papers solicits theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions which draw on different research streams and disciplines, including marketing, consumer behaviour, social media, etc. Methodologically, we welcome pure qualitative, multi-method and mixed-methods research approaches.

Topics of interest include, among others:

- How qualitative techniques are evolving
- Textual data coding
- Automated vs. human coding in content analysis
- Mixed and multi-method research designs
- Innovative research methods for collecting qualitative data (e.g., social media)
- The role of technologies for social media content studies
- Methods and tools for analysing qualitative data
- Mixed and multi-method analysis in social media research
- Virtual communities analysis
- Netnographic studies
- Measuring social media content

References

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Humphreys, A. (2010a). Megamarketing: The creation of markets as a social process. *Journal of Marketing*, 74(2), 1-19.

Humphreys, A. (2010b). Semiotic structure and the legitimation of consumption practices: The case of casino gambling. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *37*(3), 490-510.

Humphreys, A. & Wang R. J. (2017). Automated Text Analysis for Consumer Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, forthcoming.

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online. *Sage publications.*

Kozinets, R. V. (2015). Netnography. John Wiley & Sons, Inc..

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Submission Deadlines

Abstract submission deadline: **July 21st, 2017**

Authors should submit a structured abstract of 500 words to the Guest Editors of this MC Special Issue at the following e-mail: annamaria.tuan@unipi.it.

Full paper submission deadline: **January 10th, 2018**

Submissions will undergo a double blind, peer review process. Full paper manuscripts must follow the submission guidelines of MC

(http://ojs.francoangeli.it/_ojs/index.php/mc/about/submissions).

Guest Editors

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