

A step by step approach to qualitative data analysis, manually or automatically When we need to understand and report on people's opinions—such as customer feedback—we turn to qualitative data. Unlike numbers, qualitative data provides deeper insights into emotions, motivations, and experiences. However, analyzing this unstructured information is challenging. While tools like Excel, Tableau, and Power BI handle numerical data effortlessly, there are fewer tools for analysis still takes place manually. The good news? AI-powered tools are making the process faster and easier. In this guide, we'll walk you through the five key steps of qualitative data analysis, breaking down both manual and automated approaches: Gathering and structuring dataOrganizing a tools make qualitative research faster and easier. A structured five-step process ensures accurate insights. What Makes Qualitative Data Different?Qualitative Data Different?Qualitative data is typically generated through:Interview transcriptsSurveys with open-ended questionsContact center transcriptsReviews, emails, or complaintsAudio and video recordingsEmployee notesCompared to quantitative data, qualitative data is unstructured and provides more depth. It helps answer questions, formulate hypotheses, and build understanding. However, analyzing qualitative data is difficult. While businesses can use feedback analytics platforms to process qualitative data, many still rely on manual methods. More businesses are shifting toward fully automated analysis because it's cheaper, faster, and just as accurate. Depending on data privacy rules in relation to Gen AI, some businesses use Microsoft Co-Pilot or ChatGPT, while others opt for advanced AI-powered research tools. These solutions help automate qualitative data analysis, making insights more accessible and actionable.So, how do we actually analyze qualitative data? Let's break down the process step by step. But first, what is qualitative data analysis? What is qualitative data? businesses and researchers make sense of open-ended responses, interviews, and other unstructured data sources. In customer feedback analysis, qualitative data analysis is used to extract meaningful insights from reviews, complaints, chat messages, support interactions, and social media comments—helping businesses understand customer sentiment and improve decision-making. How is qualitative data analysis different from quantitative data analysis? Qualitative data analysis dives into the stories hidden in non-numerical data such as interviews, open-ended survey answers, or notes from observations. It uncovers the 'whys' and 'hows' giving a deep understanding of people's experiences and emotions. Quantitative data analysis, on the other hand, deals with numerical data, using statistics to measure differences, identify preferred options, and pinpoint root causes of issues. It steps back to address questions like "how many" or "what percentage" to offer broad insights we can apply to larger groups. "Not everything everything that can be counted, counts, and not everything that counts can be counted" - William Bruce Cameron (1963) This quote, often mistakenly attributed to Einstein, clearly states that while numerical data is valuable, not everything meaningful can be measured. Qualitative data analysis captures the depth of human experiences, emotions, and challenges that statistics alone cannot fully explain. In short, qualitative data analysis is like a microscope, giving us a broader perspective. Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis are important, working together to decode data for different objectives. Qualitative Data Analysis methods once all the data has been captured, there are a variety of analysis techniques available and the kind of data you've gathered. Common qualitative data analysis methods include: Content Analysis This is a popular approach to qualitative data analysis. Other qualitative analysis techniques may fit within the broad scope of content analysis is a part of the content analysis. Thematic analysis is a part of the content analysis is useful to quantify the relationship between all of the grouped content. The Columbia School of Public Health has a detailed breakdown of content analysis.Narrative Analysis focuses on the stories people tell and the language they use to make sense of them. It is particularly useful in qualitative research methods where customer stories are used to get a deep understanding of customers' perspectives on a specific issue. A narrative analysis might enable us to summarize the outcomes of a focused case study. Discourse analysis is a qualitative research method used to examine written and spoken language in relation to its social context. It goes beyond analyzing words and sentences, focusing on how language shapes meaning, social structures, and power dynamics. This method helps researchers understand how people construct reality through communication, revealing the deeper assumptions, values, and influences embedded in language. Discourse analysis is widely used in various fields, from social research to brand strategy, to uncover how people construct reality through communication, revealing the deeper assumptions, values, and influences embedded in language. language influences perception, identity, and decision-making. Thematic Analysis Thematic analysis is used to deduce the meaning behind the words people use. This is accomplished by discovering repeating themes in text. These meaningful themes reveal key insights into data and can be quantified, particularly when paired with sentiment analysis. Often, the outcome of thematic analysis is a code frame that captures themes in terms of codes, also called categories. So the process of thematic analysis is also referred to as "coding". A common use-case for thematic analysis is also referred to as "coding". about a subject. Grounded theory starts by formulating a theory around a single data case. This means that the theory is "grounded". Grounded theory analysis is based on actual data, and not entirely speculative. Then additional cases can be examined to see if they are relevant and can add to the original grounded theory. How to do Qualitative Data Analysis: 5 stepsNow we are going to show how you can do your own qualitative data analysis. We will guide you through this process step by step. As mentioned earlier, you will learn how to do qualitative data analysis manually, and also automatically using modern qualitative data analysis. process and research process, it's important to be super clear about the nature and scope of the question. Depending on if you are a business looking to understand customer sentiment, or an academic surveying a school, your approach to qualitative data analysis will be unique. Once you're clear, there's a sequence to follow. And, though there are differences in the manual and automatic approaches, the process steps are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data), and analyze the customer feedback - in order to improve customer experience. By analyzing the customer feedback the company derives insights about their business and their customers. You can follow these same steps regardless of the nature of your research. Let's get started. Step 1: Gather your qualitative data The first step of qualitative research is to do data collection. Put simply, data collection is gathering qualitative data for analysis. A common situation is when qualitative data is spread across various sources. Classic methods of gathering qualitative data for analysis. A common situation is when qualitative data is spread across various sources. Classic methods for gathering qualitative data is spread across various sources. running focus groups. This data is typically stored in documents, CRMs, databases and knowledge bases. It's important to examine which data is available and needs to be included in your research project, based on its scope. Using your existing qualitative feedbackAs it becomes easier for customers to engage across a range of channels, companies are gathering even more solicited and unsolicited qualitative feedback. Most organizations have now invested in voice of Customer Slack chats. These new channels provide companies with new ways of getting feedback, and also allow the collection of unstructured feedback data at scale. The great thing about this data is that it contains a wealth of valubale insights and that it's already there! When you have a new question about user behavior or your customers, you don't need to create a new research study or set up a focus group. You can find most answers in the data you already have. Most commonly, qualitative data stored in third-party solutions. Some businesses pull all data into a central database, such as Snowflake, Amazon Redshift, BigQuery or Databricks. You can export this data manually for a one-off project, but if you need to conduct the analysis more regularly, try to find an automated solution. For example, Voice of Customer or feedback analysis solutions often provide integrations into third-party tools and databases. Alternatively, APIs can be used to gather feedback. Utilize untapped qualitative data in social media channels like Twitter or Facebook. Online forums, review sites, and online communities such as Discourse or Reddit also contain valuable data about your customers, or research questions. If you are considering performing a qualitative benchmark analysis is a great place to start. Gathering feedback in competitor reviews on sites like Trustpilot, G2, Capterra, Better Business Bureau or on app stores is a great way to perform a competitor benchmark analysis. Customer feedback analysis software often has integrations into social media and reviews of the the product Airtable. You could pull reviews from G2 for your analysis. Step 2: Connect & organize all your qualitative data but there's a problem, the data is unstructured. Before feedback can be analyzed and assigned any value, it needs to be organized in a single place. Why is this important? Consistency! If all data is easily accessible in one place and analyzed in a consistent manner, you will have an easier time summarizing and making decisions based on this data. The manual approach to organizing your dataThe classic method of structuring qualitative data is to plot all the raw data you've gathered into a spreadsheet. Typically, research and support teams would share large Excel sheets and different business units would make sense of the qualitative feedback tends to be kept in separate silos. An alternative and a more robust solution is to store feedback tends to be kept in separate silos. like Snowflake or Amazon Redshift. Keep in mind that when you organize your data in this way, you are often preparing it to be imported into another software. If you go the route of a database, you would need to use an API to push the feedback into a third-party software. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)Traditionally within the manual analysis approach (but not always), qualitative data is imported into CAQDAS software for coding. In the early 2000s, researchers have been using CAQDAS software such as ATLAS.ti, NVivo and MAXQDA. Another popular option was IBM SPSS, which handled both quant and qual data. NVivos InterfaceThe benefits of using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software: Assists in the organizing of your dataHelp view different interpretations of the se solutions now offer some degree of AI assistance. The main thing to look out for is the ease of use and the ability to bring in your input into AI analysis. Organizing your qualitative data in a feedback repository Another solution to organizing your qualitative research data. There are a number of software solutions that act as a central repository for your qualitative research data. Here are a couple solutions that you could investigate: Dovetail: Dovetail: Dovetail: Dovetail: Dovetail is a research repository with a focus on video and audio transcriptions. You can tag your transcriptions. You can also upload your other qualitative data such as research reports, survey responses, support conversations (conversational analytics), and customer interviews. Dovetail acts as a single, searchable repository. And makes it easier to collaborate with similar functionality to Dovetail. It boasts a more sophisticated search engine, but it has a higher starting subscription cost. Organizing your qualitative data in a feedback analytics platform. A feedback analytics platform is a software that automates the process of sentiment and thematic analysis, as well as the reporting of the results to the business. Typically, it's managed by a central Voice of Customer or research team to ensure consistent analysis methodology. But others in the company can login to get quick answers or reviews. These platforms can directly tap into qualitative data sources (review sites, social media, survey responses, etc) through one-click integrations or custom connectors. The data collected is then organized and analyzed consistently within the feedback analytics platform. If you have data prepared in a spreadsheet, it can also be imported into feedback analytics platform. The matic is a feedback analytics platform that offers one of the largest libraries of integrations with qualitative data sources. Some of the integrations offered by ThematicStep 3: Coding your qualitative data is now organized in one place. Either within your spreadsheet, CAQDAS, feedback data is now organized in one place. step is to code this data to extract meaningful insights. Coding is the process of labelling and organizing your data by theme, i.e. to perform thematic analysis on this data. The main goal of coding is to find trends in the data and relationships between the themes. When coding manually, start by taking small samples of your customer feedback data, come up with a set of codes, or categories capturing themes, and label each piece of feedback, systematically, for patterns and meaning. Then you will take a larger sample of data, revising and refining the codes for greater accuracy and consistency as you go. If you use a tool like ChatGPT, you can automate the process of coming up with codes. But if your entire dataset does not fit into a context window, you'll need to manually batch analyze the remainder of the data, adjusting the prompts as you go. Make sure to read our guide on how to analyze feedback using ChatGPT. If you choose to use a feedback using the prompts as you go. Make sure to read our guide on how to analyze feedback using the prompts as you go. different categories of meaning ('theme', 'code', 'tag', 'category' etc) can be confusing as they are often used interchangeably. For clarity, this article will use the term 'code'. To code means to identify key words or phrases and assign them to a category of meaning. In a sentence such as "I really hate the customer service of this computer software company", the phrase "hate the customer service" would be coded as "poor customer service". How to manually code your qualitative data. Inductive coding is the opposite of this, you create codes based on the data itself. Codes arise directly from the data and you label them as you go. You need to weigh up the pros and cons of each coding method and select the most appropriate. Read through the feedback data to get a broad sense of what it reveals. Now it's time to start assigning your first set of codes to statements and sections of text.Keep repeating step 2, adding new codes and revising the code description as often as necessary. Once it has all been overlooked.Create a code frame to group your codes. The coding frame is the organizational structure of all your codes. And there are two commonly used types of coding frames, flat, or hierarchical code frame will make it easier for you to derive insights from your analysis. Based on the number of times a particular code occurs, you can now see the common themes in your feedback data. This is insightful! If 'bad customer service' is a common code, it's time to take action.We have a detailed guide dedicated to manually coding your qualitative data. Example of a hierarchical coding frameUsing software to speed up this process. Here are some examples.CAQDAS / NVivo - CAQDAS software has built-in functionality that allows you to code text within their software. You may find the interface the software. You can tag transcripts and other textual data within these solutions. As they are also repositories you may find it simpler to keep the coding in one platform. IBM SPSS - SPSS is a statistical analysis software that may make coding easier than in a spreadsheet. Ascribe - Ascribe's 'Coder' is a coding management system. Its user interface will make it easier for you to manage your codes. Most of these solutions have now introduced AI-assistance. But they weren't build with the idea of automated coding from the ground up, like thematic analysis software described in next section. Automating the qualitative coding process using thematic analysis software described in next section. analysis software, designed specifically for this task. Learn more: How to use Thematic Analysis AI to theme qualitative data. Automation makes it far simpler and faster to code the feedback and group it into themes. The AI can be used in various ways: looks across sentences and phrases to identify meaningful statements worth codinganalyze a sample of the data and decide on top-level categories or themes based on the implied context of the researchbe guided by the user about what they'd like to discover in the datacreate on the fly a taxonomy of themes identify sentiment and synthesize other scores from the feedbacklet you ask any question about feedback, e.g. what did customers say about our new trolleys? And much more! Some automated solutions detect repeating patterns and assign codes to them, others make you train the AI by providing examples. You could say that the AI learns the meaning of the feedback on its own. Thematic automates the coding of qualitative feedback with no training or pre-configuring required. There's no need to set up themes or categories in advance. Simply upload your data and wait a few minutes. You can also manually edit the codes to further refine their accuracy. Experiments conducted indicate that Thematic's automated solutions become powerful for deriving guality business or research insights. Thematic finds codes and sentiment within text automatically The key benefits of using an automated coding solution finds codes and sentiment within text automatically the key benefits of using an automated analysis can often be set up fast and there's the potential to uncover things that would never have been revealed if you had prescribed list of themes to look for. Because the model applies a consistent rule to the data, it captures phrases or statements that a human eye might have missed. Complete and consistent rule to the data, it captures phrases or statements that a human eye might have missed. analyze our data to find insights. This is where we start to answer our research questions. Keep in mind that step 4 and step 5 (tell the story) have some overlap. This is because creating visualizations is both part of analysis process and reporting. The task of uncovering insights is to scour through the codes that emerge from the data and draw meaningful correlations from them. It is also about making sure each insight is distinct and has enough data to support it. Part of the analysis is to establish how much each code relates to different demographics and customer profiles, and identify whether there's any relationship between these data points. If your code frame only has one level, you may find that your codes are too broad to be able to extract meaningful insights. This is where it is valuable to create sub-codes to your primary codes. This process is sometimes referred to as meta coding it. While time-consuming, this exercise will improve the quality of your analysis. Here is an example of what sub-codes could look like. You need to carefully read your qualitative data to create quality sub-codes. But as you can see, the depth of analysis is greatly improved. By calculating the frequency of these sub-codes you can get insight into which customer service problems you can immediately address. Correlate the frequency of codes to customer segmentation. And you may have your own respondents into subgroups. Segmentation is the practise of dividing customers or research respondents into subgroups. Segments can be based on:DemographicAgeInterestsBehaviorAnd any other data type that you care to segments. If one of your customer segments, it may be in your best interest to focus attention elsewhere. This is a useful insight! Visualizing coded qualitative dataThe most common way of visualizing coded data is by frequency. Here's an example of how we do it in ThematicBut frequency is not always a good gauge of importance. For example, if some people are happy with "deposit checks" feature and others unhappy, what's the overall importance of this theme in feedback? Should we prioritize working on it? This is where a driver analysis, aka impact, becomes important. ImpactIf you are collecting a metric alongside your qualitative dataset. this is a key visualization. Impact answers the question: "What's the impact of a code on my overall score?". Using Net Promoter Score (NPS) as an example, first you need to:Calculate overall NPSCalculate NPS in the subset of responses that do not contain that themeSubtract B from AThen you can use this simple formula to calculate code impact on NPS.Calculate the impact of a code on your scoreYou can then visualize this data using a bar chart. It will tell you which themes are dragging the score up or down, and you can even view this over time. If this sounds interesting, check out the demo videos showing how we do it in Thematic. You can also download our CX toolkit - it includes a template to recreate this.Trends over timeThis analysis can help you answer questions like: "Which codes are linked to decreases or increases in my score over time. Using Excel, calculate the correlation between the two sequences, which can be either positive (the more codes the higher the NPS, see picture below), or negative (the more codes the lower the NPS). Now you need to plot code frequency against the absolute value of code correlation with NPS. Here is the formula: Calculate which codes are linked to increases or decreases in my score The visualization could look like this: Visualizing trends over timeThese are two examples, but there are more. For a third manual formula, and to learn why word clouds are not an insightful form of analysis, read our visualizations article. Using a text analytics solution to automate analysis, read our visualizations article. faster and easier to identify what's driving negative or positive results. And to pick up emerging trends and find all manner of rich insights in the data. Another benefit of AI-driven text analytics software is its built-in capability for sentiment analysis, which provides the emotive context behind your feedback and other qualitative textual data therein. The matic provides text analytics that goes further by allowing users to apply their expertise on business context to edit or augment the AI-generated outputs. Since the move away from manual research is generally about reducing the human element, adding human input to the technology might sound counter-intuitive. However, there are 3 main reasons why it's important:1) To bring in the business nuance that AI cannot learn from the data itself. For example, are there specific teams responsible for acting on feedback? It's worth organizing themes so that each team can easily see what they can impact.2) To iron out any errors in the analysis. Even the best AI will still be wrong occasionally.3) To build trust in the analysis. In Thematic, we show why AI has chosen each theme, so that you can verify its approach. The result is a higher accuracy of analysis. This is sometimes referred to as augmented intelligence or human in the loop. Experience the power of AI Try Thematic Step 5: Report on your data: Tell the storyThe last step of analyzing your qualitative data is to report on it, to tell the story. At this point, the codes are fully developed and the insights is vital for stakeholders to discuss and debate before they can devise a meaningful course of action. Creating graphs and reporting in Powerpoint Typically, qualitative researchers take the tried and tested approach of distilling their report into a narrative for presentation in Powerpoint. Using visualization software for reporting With data transformation and APIs, the analyzed data can be shared with data visualisation software, such as Power BI or Tableau, Google Studio or Looker. Power BI and Tableau are among the most preferred options. Visualizing your insights into graphs into graphs This removes the time consuming work of constructing charts to visually identify patterns and creates more time to focus on building a compelling narrative that highlights the insights, in bite-size chunks, for executive teams to review. Using a feedback analytics platform with visualization tools means you don't have to use a separate product for visualizations. You can export graphs into Powerpoints straight from the platforms. Two examples of visualizations within ThematicChallenges. Each unique QDA method has its unique hurdles. Let's take a look at the challenges researchers and analysts might face, depending on the chosen method. Time and Effort (Narrative Analysis): Narrative analysis, which focuses on personal stories, demands patience. Sifting theories, demands patience analysis, which focuses on personal stories, demands patience analysis, which focuses on personal stories, demands patience. from data, faces the challenges of personal biases. Staying objective while interpreting data is crucial, ensuring conclusions are rooted in the data itself. Complexity (Thematic Analysis): Thematic analysis involves identifying themes within data, a process that can be intricate. Categorizing and understanding themes can be complex, especially when each piece of data varies in context and structure. Thematic Analysis software can simplify this process. Generalizing Findings from a single narrative to a broader context requires careful consideration. Managing Data (Thematic Analysis): Thematic analysis involves organizing and managing vast amounts of unstructured data, like interview transcripts. Managing this can be a hefty task, requiring effective data management strategies. Skill Level (Grounded Theory): Grounded theory analysts with these skills poses a challenge, requiring investment in building expertise. Benefits of Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is like a versatile toolkit, offering a tailored approach to understanding your data. The benefits it offers are as diverse as the methods. Let's explore why choosing the right method matters. Tailored Methods for Specific Needs: QDA isn't one-size-fits-all. Depending on your research objectives and the type of data at hand, different methods offer unique benefits. If you want to explain a score, thematic analysis reveals insightful patternsFlexibility with Thematic Analysis: thematic analysis is like a chameleon in the toolkit of QDA. It adapts well to different types of data and research objectives, making it a top choice for any qualitative analysis. Deeper Understanding, Better Products: QDA helps you dive into people's thoughts and feelings. This deep understanding helps you build products and services that services are services to be a service of the service of the services that services truly matches what people want, ensuring satisfied customersFinding the Unexpected: Qualitative data often reveals surprises that we miss in quantitative data. QDA offers us new ideas and perspectives, for insights we might otherwise miss. Building Effective Strategies: Insights from QDA are like strategic guides. They help businesses in crafting plans that match people's desires. Creating Genuine Connections: Understanding people's experiences lets businesses connect on a real level. This genuine connection helps build trust and loyalty, priceless for any business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences lets business. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative Data Analysis to Improve Dasher Experiences. Case Study: How DoorDash Used Qualitative platform, leveraged qualitative data analysis to better understand its delivery drivers, known as Dashers. By analyzing thousands of feedback points, DoorDash identified key concerns, such as work flexibility and app usability. Using Thematic's AI-driven insights, the company prioritized improvements, including a new reward system for top Dashers and app adjustments to enhance the delivery experience. These changes led to higher driver satisfaction and improved retention, demonstrating how qualitative data analysis can drive impactful business decisions. Authored by Alyona Medelyan (PhD in Natural Language Processing & Machine Learning), this is a complete guide on the analysis of qualitative data. Learn the key approaches to analysis, how to set up a coding frame, how to code data accurately, and much more. Download your free copy today! Conclusion: Seek automation with human oversightAI technology is here to stay, and it's powerful enough to automate most of qualitative data analysis. So, as a researcher, you need to learn not just the basics of how to do this task manually, but also how to harness AI to complete this task quicker. For projects that involve small datasets or one-offs, use ChatGPT or a similar solution. For example, if the objective is simply to quantify a simple question like "Do customers prefer X concepts to Y?". And if the findings are being extracted from a small set of focus groups and interviews, sometimes it's easier to just read them. However, as new generations come into the workplace, it's technology-driven solutions that feel more comfortable and practical. Especially, once you have huge volumes of data and you need a deeper understanding of the data. For example, the 'why' behind customers' preference for X or Y. Being able to do this fast to help your business move quickly is critical. The ability to collect a free flow of qualitative feedback from one system in one go. And time-intensive processes like focus groups, or coding, that used to take weeks, can now be completed in a matter of hours or days. But aside from the ever-present business case to speed things up and keep costs down, there are also powerful research imperatives for automated analysis of qualitative data: namely, accuracy and consistency. Finding insights hidden in feedback requires consistency that can skew research findings and steering clear of cognitive bias. Some say without manual data analysis researchers won't get an accurate "feel" for the insights. However, the larger data sets are, the harder it is to sort through the feedback that has be set and organize feedback that has be s been pulled from different places. And, the more difficult it is to stay on course, the greater the risk of drawing incorrect, or incomplete, conclusions grows. Though the process steps for qualitative data analysis have remained pretty much unchanged since psychologist Paul Felix Lazarsfeld paved the path a hundred years ago, the impact digital technology has had on types of qualitative feedback data and the approach to the analysis are profound. If you want to try an automated feedback analysis solution on your own qualitative data, you can get started with Thematic.Or you may interested in some of our free guide: How To Leverage AI To Improve CX. For you insights & CX professionals solution on your own qualitative data, you can get started with Thematic.Or you may interested in some of our free guide: How To Leverage AI To Improve CX. For you insights & CX professionals are profound. reading.Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)The time required for qualitative data analysis varies depending on the dataset size, research objectives, and method used. Manual analysis—which involves reading, coding, and categorizing data—can take weeks or even months, especially for large datasets. Automated tools, such as AI-powered feedback analysis platforms, can process and categorize data within hours or days, significantly reducing workload. However, even with automation, human oversight is needed to ensure the insights are accurate and contextually relevant. The more structured and well-prepared the data is, the faster the analysis process will be. One of the biggest mistakes in qualitative data analysis is bias in coding, where researchers apply subjective interpretations instead of objective categorizations. Another common error is overgeneralizing findings, where insights from a small dataset are incorrectly assumed to apply to a larger audience. Poorly structured data, lack of clear research objectives, and ignoring data validation can also skew results. To avoid these issues, researchers should use clear coding frameworks, cross-check findings with multiple sources, and maintain transparency in their interpretation process. AI tools can help reduce bias but should be used alongside human expertise. Yes! Many researchers use a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis for a more comprehensive understanding of data. While quantitative data provides measurable statistics—such as percentages or trends—qualitative data helps explain the underlying reasons behind those numbers. For example, survey results may show that 50% of customers dislike a product feature, but qualitative analysis of open-ended responses reveals the specific reasons why. This integration is commonly used in customer experience research, healthcare studies, and social sciences to validate findings and make data-driven decisions. Many industries rely on qualitative data analysis to gain deeper insights into customer behavior, decisionmaking, and user experiences. In marketing and brand strategy, it helps businesses understand customer perceptions. In healthcare, it assists in analyzing patient, and social interactions. Technology and product development teams use it to refine user experience (UX) based on real customer feedback. Essentially, any field that deals with human interactions and decision-making can benefit from qualitative data analysis. Feedback AnalysisSentiment AnalysisSentiment Analysis and benefit from qualitative data analysis. help unite insights professionals around common challenges. Join the newsletter to receive the latest updates in your inbox. Qualitative data refers to non-numeric information such as interview transcripts, notes, video and audio recordings, images and text documents. Qualitative data analysis can be divided into the following five categories: 1. Content analysis. This refers to the process of categorizing verbal or behavioural data to classify, summarize and tabulate the data. 2. Narrative analysis. This method involves the reformulation of stories presented by respondents. In other words, narrative analysis. is the revision of primary qualitative data by researcher. 3. Discourse analysis. A method of analysis of naturally occurring talk and all types of written text. 4. Framework analysis. This is more advanced method that consists of several stages such as familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, coding, charting, mapping and interpretation. 5. Grounded theory. This method of qualitative data analysis starts with an analysis of a single case to formulate a theory. Then, additional cases are examined to see if they contribute to the theory. Coding can be explained as categorization of data. A 'code' can be a word or a short phrase that represents a theme or an idea. All codes need to be assigned meaningful titles. A wide range of non-quantifiable elements such as events, behaviours, activities, meaningful titles. A wide range of non-quantifiable elements at theme or an idea. make sense of it. Axial coding. Interconnecting and linking the categories of codes. Selective coding the story through connecting the story through connecting the story through connecting and linking the story through connecting the story through folders, filing cabinets, wallets etc. to gather together materials that are examples of similar themes or analytic ideas. Manual method of coding in qualitative data analysis is rightly considered as labour-intensive, time-consuming and outdated. In computer based coding, on the other hand, physical files and cabinets are replaced with computer based coding. directories and files. When choosing software for qualitative data analysis you need to considerations. Moreover, it is important to get confirmation from your dissertation supervisor prior to application of any specific qualitative data analysis software. The following table contains examples of research titles, elements to be coded and identification of relevant codes: Research title Elements to be coded and identification of relevant codes: Research title Elements to be coded and identification of relevant codes Born or bred: revising The Great Man theory of leadership in the 21st century Leadership practice Born leaders Made leaders Leadership effectiveness A study into advantages and disadvantages of various entry strategies to Chinese market Market entry strategies Wholly-owned subsidiaries Joint-ventures Franchising Exporting Licensing Impacts of CSR programs and initiative on brand image: a case study of Coca-Cola Company UK. Activities, phenomenon Philanthropy Supporting charitable courses Ethical behaviour Brand awareness Brand value An investigation into the ways of customer relationships. Unlike quantitative data coding Step 2: Identifying themes, patterns and relationships. Unlike quantitative data coding Step 2: Identifying themes, patterns and relationships. methods, in qualitative data analysis there are no universally applicable techniques that can be applied to generate findings. Analytical and critical thinking skills of researcher plays significant role in data analysis in qualitative studies. techniques that you can use to identify common themes, patterns and relationships within responses of sample group members in relation to codes that have been specified in the previous stage. Specifically, the most popular and effective methods of qualitative data interpretation include the following: Word and phrase repetitions - scanning primary data for words and phrases most commonly used by respondents, as well as, words and phrases used with unusual emotions; Primary and secondary data comparisons - comparing the findings of literature review and discussing differences between them; Search for missing information - discussions about which aspects of the issue was not mentioned by respondents, although you expected them to be mentioned; Metaphors and differences. Step 3: Summarizing the data. At this last stage you need to link research findings to hypotheses or research aim and objectives. When writing data analysis chapter, you can use noteworthy quotations. It is important to note that the process of qualitative data analysis described above issues of the second data analysis described data analysis data anal general and different types of qualitative studies may require slightly different methods of data analysis. My e-book, The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Dissertation in Business Studies: a step by step approach contains a detailed, yet simple explanation of qualitative data analysis methods. The e-book explains all stages of the research process starting from the selection of the research area to writing personal reflection. Important elements of dissertations such as research philosophy, research approach, research approach to qualitative data analysis, manually or automatically When we need to understand and report on people's opinions—such as customer feedback—we turn to qualitative data provides deeper insights into emotions, and experiences. However, analyzing this unstructured information is challenging. While tools like Excel, Tableau, and Power BI handle numerical dataetive data provides deeper insights into emotions, motivations, and experiences. effortlessly, there are fewer tools for analyzing qualitative data. Even with Generative AI, much of the qualitative data analysis still takes place manually. The good news? AI-powered tools are making the process faster and easier. In this guide, we'll walk you through the five key steps of qualitative data analysis, breaking down both manual and automated approaches: Gathering and collecting dataCoding the dataAnalyzing qualitative dataReporting insights beyond numbers. AI tools make qualitative research faster and easier. A structured five-step process ensures accurate insights. What Makes Qualitative Data Different?Qualitative data is typically generated through:Interview transcriptsReviews, emails, or complaintsAudio and video recordingsEmployee notesCompared to quantitative data, qualitative data is unstructured and provides more depth It helps answer questions, formulate hypotheses, and build understanding. However, analyzing qualitative data is difficult. While businesses can use feedback analytics platforms to process qualitative data, many still rely on manual methods. More businesses are shifting toward fully automated analysis because it's cheaper, faster, and just as accurate.Depending on data privacy rules in relation to Gen AI, some businesses use Microsoft Co-Pilot or ChatGPT, while others opt for advanced AI-powered research tools. These solutions help automate qualitative data analysis, making insights more accessible and actionable.So, how do we actually analyze qualitative data? Let's break down the process step by step. But first, what is qualitative data analysis? What is Qualitative data analysis? Qualitative data analysis? and interpreting non-numerical data to uncover patterns, themes, and insights. It helps businesses and researchers make sense of open-ended responses, interviews, and other unstructured data sources. In customer feedback analysis, qualitative data analysis is used to extract meaningful insights from reviews, complaints, chat messages, support interactions, and social media comments—helping businesses understand customer sentiment and improve decision-making. How is qualitative data analysis different from quantitative data analysis different from quantitative data analysis different from quantitative data analysis. analysis?Qualitative Data Analysis dives into the stories hidden in non-numerical data such as interviews, open-ended survey answers, or notes from observations. It uncovers the 'whys' and 'hows' giving a deep understanding of people's experiences and emotions. Quantitative data analysis, on the other hand, deals with numerical data, using statistics to measure differences, identify preferred options, and pinpoint root causes of issues. It steps back to address questions like "how many" or "what percentage" to offer broad insights we can apply to larger groups. "Not everything that cau be counted, counts, and not everything that counts cau be counted." - William Bruce Cameron (1963) This quote, often mistakenly attributed to Einstein, clearly states that while numerical data is valuable, not everything meaningful can be measured. Qualitative data analysis captures the depth of human experiences, emotions, and challenges that statistics alone cannot fully explain. In short, qualitative data analysis is like a microscope, helping us understand specific detail. Quantitative data analysis are important, working together to decode data for different objectives. Qualitative Data Analysis methodsOnce all the data has been captured, there are a variety of analysis techniques available and the choice is determined by your specific research objectives and the kind of data you've gathered. Common qualitative data analysis techniques may fit within the broad scope of content analysis. Thematic analysis is a part of the content analysis. Content analysis is useful to quantify the relationship between all of the grouped content. The Columbia School of Public Health has a detailed breakdown of content analysis. Narrative AnalysisNarrative Analysis is useful to quantify the relationship between all of the grouped content. The Columbia School of Public Health has a detailed breakdown of content analysis. analysis focuses on the stories people tell and the language they use to make sense of them. It is particularly useful in qualitative research methods where customers of a focused case study. Discourse Analysis Discourse Analysis is a gualitative research method used to examine written and spoken language in relation to its social structures, and power dynamics. This method helps researchers understand how people construct reality through communication, revealing the deeper assumptions, values, and influences embedded in language. Discourse analysis is widely used in various fields, from social research to brand strategy, to uncover how language influences perception, identity, and decision-making. The matic analysis is used to deduce the meaning behind the words people use. This is accomplished by discovering repeating themes in text. These meaningful themes reveal key insights into data and can be quantified, particularly when paired with sentiment analysis. Often, the outcome of thematic analysis is a code frame that captures themes in terms of codes, also called categories. So the process of thematic analysis is also referred to as "coding". A common use-case for thematic analysis in companies is analysis of customer feedback. Grounded theory is a useful approach when little is known about a subject. "grounded". Grounded theory analysis is based on actual data, and not entirely speculative. Then additional cases can be examined to see if they are relevant and can add to the original grounded theory. How to do Qualitative Data Analysis: 5 stepsNow we are going to show how you can do your own qualitative data analysis. We will quide you through this process step by step. As mentioned earlier, you will learn how to do qualitative data analysis manually, and also automatically using modern qualitative data and thematic analysis software. To get best value from the analysis process, it's important to be super clear about the nature and scope of the question that's being researched. This will help you select the research collection channels that are most likely to help you answer your question. Depending on if you are a business looking to understand customer sentiment, or an academic surveying a school, your approach to qualitative data analysis will be unique. Once you're clear, there's a sequence to follow. And, though there are differences in the manual and automatic approaches, the process steps are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data), and analyze the customer feedback data), and analyze the customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly the same. The use case for our step-by-step guide is a company looking to collect data (customer feedback data) are mostly to collect data (cust insights about their business and their customers. You can follow these same steps regardless of the nature of your research is to do data collection. Put simply, data collection is gathering all of your data for analysis. A common situation is when qualitative data is spread across various sources. Classic methods of gathering qualitative dataMost companies use traditional methods for gathering qualitative data: conducting interviews with research participants, running surveys, and running focus groups. This data is typically stored in documents, CRMs, databases and knowledge bases. It's important to examine which data is available and needs to be included in your research project, based on its scope. Using your existing qualitative feedbackAs it becomes easier for customers to engage across a range of channels, companies are gathering even more solicited qualitative feedback. Customer programs, support ticketing systems, chatbot and support conversations, emails and even customer Slack chats. These new channels provide companies with new ways of getting feedback, and also allow the collection of unstructured feedback data at scale. The great thing about this data is that it contains a wealth of valubale insights and that it's already there! When you have a new question about user behavior or your customers, you don't need to create a new research study or set up a focus group. You can find most answers in the data you already have. Most commonly, qualitative data stored in third-party solutions. Some businesses pull all data into a central database, such as Snowflake, Amazon Redshift, BigQuery or Databricks. You can export this data manually for a one-off project, but if you need to conduct the analysis more regularly, try to find an automated solution. For example, Voice of Customer or feedback analysis more regularly, try to find an automated solution. used to gather feedback. Utilize untapped qualitative data channels There are many online qualitative data sources you may not have considered. For example, you can find useful qualitative data in social media channels like Twitter or Facebook. Online forums, review sites, and online communities such as Discourse or Reddit also contain valuable data about your customers, or research questions. If you are considering performing a qualitative benchmark analysis is a great way to perform a competitor benchmark analysis. Customer feedback analysis software often has integrations into social media and reviews of the product Airtable. You could pull reviews from G2 for your analysis. Step 2: Connect & organize all your qualitative dataNow you all have this qualitative data but there's a problem, the data is unstructured. Before feedback can be analyzed and assigned any value, it needs to be organized in a single place. Why is this important? Consistency! If all data is easily accessible in one place and analyzed in a consistent manner, you will have an easier time summarizing and making decisions based on this data. The manual approach to organizing your dataThe classic method of structuring gualitative data is to plot all the raw data you've gathered into a spreadsheet. Typically, research and support teams would share large Excel sheets and different business units would make sense of the gualitative feedback data on their own. Each team collects and organizes the data in a way that best suits them, which means the feedback tends to be kept in separate silos. An alternative and a more robust solution is to store feedback tends to be imported into another software. If you go the route of a database, you would need to use an API to push the feedback into a third-party software (CAQDAS) Traditionally within the manual analysis approach (but not always), qualitative data is imported into CAQDAS software for coding. In the early 2000s, researchers have been using CAQDAS software such as ATLAS.ti, NVivo and MAXQDA. Another popular option was IBM SPSS, which handled both qualitative data analysis software: Assists in the organizing of your dataHelp view different interpretations of the dataAllows you to share your data with others for collaborationMost of these solutions now offer some degree of AI assistance. The main thing to look out for is the ease of use and the ability to bring in your qualitative data is to upload it into a feedback repository where it can be unified with your other data, and easily searchable and taggable. There are a number of software solutions that you could investigate: Dovetail: Dovetail transcriptions. You can tag your transcriptions within the platform for theme analysis. You can also upload your other qualitative data such as research reports, survey responses, support conversational analytics), and customer interviews. Dovetail acts as a single, searchable repository. And makes it easier to collaborate with other people around your qualitative research. EnjoyHQ: EnjoyHQ is another research repository with similar functionality to Dovetail. It boasts a more sophisticated search engine, but it has a higher starting subscription cost. Organizing your qualitative data in a feedback analytics platformIf you have a lot of qualitative customer or employee feedback, you will benefit from a feedback analytics platform. A feedback analytics platform is a software that automates the process of sentiment and thematic analysis, as well as the reporting of the results to the business. Typically, it's managed by a central Voice of Customer or research team to ensure consistent analysis methodology. But others in the company can login to get quick answers or reviews. These platforms can directly tap into qualitative data sources (review sites, social media, survey responses, etc) through one-click integrations or custom connectors. The data collected is then organized and analyzed consistently within the platform. If you have data prepared in a spreadsheet, it can also be imported into feedback analytics platforms. Once all this rich data has been organized within the feedback analytics platform, it is ready to be coded and themed, within the same platform. Thematic is a feedback analytics platform, it is ready to be coded and themed, within the feedback analytics platform that offers one of the integrations. offered by ThematicStep 3: Coding your qualitative dataYour feedback analytics platform. The next step is to code this data to extract meaningful insights. Coding is the process of labelling and organizing your data by theme, i.e. to perform thematic analysis on this data. The main goal of coding is to find trends in the data and relationships between the themes. When coding manually, start by taking small samples of your customer feedback data, come up with a set of codes, or categories capturing themes, and label each piece of feedback, systematically, for patterns and meaning. Then you will take a larger sample of data, revising and refining the codes for greater accuracy and consistency as you go. If you use a tool like ChatGPT, you can automate the process of coming up with codes. But if your entire dataset does not fit into a context window, you'll need to manually batch analyze the remainder of the data, adjusting the prompts as you go. Make sure to read our guide on how to analyze feedback using ChatGPT. If you choose to use a feedback analytics platform, much of this process will be automated for you. The terms to describe different categories of meaning ('theme', 'code', 'tag', 'category' etc) can be confusing as they are often used interchangeably. For clarity, this article will use the term 'code'. To code means to identify key words or phrases and assign them to a category of meaning. In a sentence such as "I really hate the customer service". How to manually a category of meaning. In a sentence such as "I really hate the customer service". How to manually a category of meaning. In a sentence such as "I really hate the customer service". How to manually a category of meaning. code your qualitative dataDecide whether you will use deductive coding is when you create a list of predefined codes, and then assign them to the qualitative data. Inductive coding is the opposite of this, you create a list of predefined codes arise directly from the data and you label them as you go. You need to weigh up the pros and cons of each coding method and select the most appropriate. Read through the feedback data to get a broad sense of what it reveals. Now it's time to start assigning your first set of codes to statements and sections of text. Keep repeating step 2, adding new codes and revising the code description as often as necessary. Once it has all been coded, go through everything again, to be sure there are no inconsistencies and that nothing has been overlooked. Create a code frame to group your codes. And there are two commonly used types of coding frames, flat, or hierarchical code frame will make it easier for you to derive insights from your analysis. Based on the number of times a particular code occurs, you can now see the common code, it's time to take action. We have a detailed guide dedicated to manually coding your qualitative data. Example of a hierarchical coding frameUsing software to speed up manual coding of qualitative dataAn Excel spreadsheet is still a popular method for coding. But various software has built-in functionality that allows you to code text within their software. You may find the interface the software offers easier for managing codes than a spreadsheet. Dovetail/EnjoyHQ - You can tag transcripts and other textual data within these solutions. As they are also repositories you may find it simpler to keep the coding easier than in a spreadsheet. Ascribe - Ascribe's 'Coder' is a coding management system. Its user interface will make it easier for you to manage your codes. Most of these solutions have now introduced AI-assistance. But they weren't build with the idea of automated coding from the ground up, like thematic analysis software described in next section. Automating the qualitative coding process using thematic analysis softwareAdvances in AI have now made it possible to read, code and structure qualitative data automatically. This type of automated coding is offered by thematic analysis software, designed specifically for this task. Learn more: How to use Thematic Analysis AI to theme qualitative data.Automation makes it far simpler and faster to code the feedback and group it into themes. The AI can be used in various ways:looks across sentences and phrases to identify meaningful statements worth codinganalyze a sample of the data and decide on top-level categories or themes. user about what they'd like to discover in the datacreate on the fly a taxonomy of themes identify sentiment and synthesize other scores from the feedbacklet you ask any question about feedback. e.g. what did customers say about our new trollevs? And much more! Some automated solutions detect repeating patterns and assign codes to them, others make you train the AI by providing examples. You could say that the AI learns the meaning of the feedback on its own. Thematic automates the coding of qualitative feedback with no training or pre-configuring required. There's no need to set up themes or categories in advance. Simply upload your data and wait a few minutes. You can also manually edit the codes to further refine their accuracy. Experiments conducted indicate that Thematic's automated coding is just as accurate as manual coding. Paired with sentiment analysis and advanced text analytics - these automated solutions become powerful for deriving quality business or research insights. Thematic finds codes and sentiment within text automaticallyThe key benefits of using an automated coding solutionAutomated analysis can often be set up fast and there's the potential to uncover things that would never have been revealed if you had given the software a prescribed list of themes to look for. Because the model applies a consistent rule to the data, it captures phrases or statements that a human eye might have missed. Complete and consistent analysis of customer feedback enables more meaningful findings. Leading us into step 4. Step 4: Analyze your data: Find meaningful insightsNow we are going to analyze our data to find insights. This is where we start to answer our research questions. Keep in mind that step 4 and step 5 (tell the story) have some overlap. This is because creating visualizations is both part of analysis process and reporting. The task of uncovering insights is to scour through the codes that emerge from the data and draw meaningful correlations from them. It is also about making sure each insight is distinct and has enough data to support it.Part of the analysis is to establish how much each code relates to different demographics and customer profiles, and identify whether there's any relationship between these data points. If your code frame only has one level, you may find that your codes are too broad to be able to extract meaningful insights. This is where it is valuable to create sub-

codes to your primary codes. This process is sometimes referred to as meta coding.Note: If you take an inductive coding approach, you can create sub-codes as you are reading through your feedback data and coding it. While time-consuming, this exercise will improve the quality of your analysis. Here is an example of what sub-codes could look like. You need to carefully read your qualitative data to create quality sub-codes. But as you can see, the depth of analysis is greatly improved. By calculating the frequency of these sub-codes you can get insight into which customer service problems you can immediately address. Correlate the frequency of codes to customer segments Many businesses use customer segmentation. And you may have your own respondents into subgroups. Segments that you can apply to your qualitative analysis. Segmentation is the practise of dividing customers or research respondents into subgroups. Segmentation is the practice of dividing customers or research respondents into subgroups. Segmentation is the practice of dividing customers or research respondents into subgroups. Segments that you can apply to your qualitative analysis. useful to see the occurrence of codes within your segments. If one of your customer segments is considered unimportant to your best interest to focus attention elsewhere. This is a useful insight! Visualizing coded qualitative dataThe most common way of visualizing coded data is by frequency. Here's an example of how we do it in Thematic, which can be replicated in PowerBI, Tableau or Looker. Themes and sub-themes displayed by volume within Thematic, which can be replicated in PowerBI, Tableau or Looker. Themes and sub-themes displayed by volume within Thematic, which can be replicated in PowerBI, Tableau or Looker. Themes and sub-themes displayed by volume within Thematic, which can be replicated in PowerBI, Tableau or Looker. Themes and sub-themes displayed by volume within Thematic, which can be replicated in PowerBI, Tableau or Looker. Themes and sub-themes displayed by volume within Thematic, which can be replicated in PowerBI, Tableau or Looker. what's the overall importance of this theme in feedback? Should we prioritize working on it? This is where a driver analysis, aka impact, becomes important. Impact answers the question: "What's the impact of a code on my overall score?". Using Net Promoter Score (NPS) as an example, first you need to:Calculate overall NPSCalculate overall NPSCalculate the impact of a code on your scoreYou can then visualize this data using a bar chart. It will tell you which themes are dragging the score up or down, and you can even view this over time. If this sounds interesting, check out the demo videos showing how we do it in Thematic. You can also download our CX toolkit - it includes a template to recreate this. Trends over timeThis analysis can help you answer questions like: "Which codes are linked to decreases or increases in my score over time?"We need to compare two sequences, which can be either positive (the more codes the higher the NPS).Now you need to plot code frequency against the absolute value of code correlation with NPS. Here is the formula: Calculate which codes are linked to increases or decreases in my scoreThe visualization could look like this: Visualizing trends over timeThese are two examples, but there are more. For a third manual formula, and to learn why word clouds are not an insightful form of analysis, read our visualizations article. Using a text analytics solution to automate analysis Automated text analytics solutions enable codes and sub-codes to be pulled out of the data automatically. This makes it far faster and easier to identify what's driving negative or positive results. And to pick up emerging trends and find all manner of rich insights in the data. Another benefit of AI-driven text analytics software is its built-in capability for sentiment analysis, which provides text analytics that goes further by allowing users to apply their expertise on business context to edit or augment the AI-generated outputs. Since the move away from manual research is generally about reducing the human element, adding human input to the technology might sound counter-intuitive. However, there are 3 main reasons why it's important:1) To bring in the business nuance that AI cannot learn from the data itself. For example, are there specific teams responsible for acting on feedback? It's worth organizing themes so that each team can easily see what they can impact.2) To iron out any errors in the analysis. In Thematic, we show why AI has chosen each theme, so that you can verify its approach. The result is a higher accuracy of analysis. This is sometimes referred to as augmented intelligence or human in the loop. Experience the power of AI Try Thematic Step 5: Report on it, to tell the story. At this point, the codes are fully developed and the focus is on communicating the narrative to the audience. A coherent outline of the qualitative research, the findings and the insights is vital for stakeholders to discuss and debate before they can devise a meaningful course of action. Creating graphs and report into a series of charts, tables and other visuals which are woven into a narrative for presentation software, such as Power BI or Tableau, Google Studio or Looker. Power BI and Tableau are among the most preferred options. Visualizing your insights in a feedback analytics platformFeedback analytics platforms, like Thematic, incorporate visualisation tools that intuitively turn key data and insights into graphs. This removes the time consuming work of constructing charts to visually identify patterns and creates more time to focus on building a compelling narrative that highlights the insights, in bite-size chunks, for executive teams to review. Using a feedback analytics platform with visualizations. You can export graphs into Powerpoints straight from the platforms. Two examples of visualizations within ThematicChallenges of Qualitative Data AnalysisWhile qualitative data analysis offers rich insights, it comes with challenges researchers and analysis might face, depending on the chosen method. Time and Effort (Narrative Analysis): Narrative analysis, which focuses on personal stories, demands patience. Sifting through lengthy narratives to find meaningful insights can be time-consuming, requires dedicated effort. Being Objective (Grounded Theory): Grounded theory, building theories from data, faces the challenges of personal biases. Staying objective while interpreting data is crucial, ensuring conclusions are rooted in the data itself.Complexity (Thematic Analysis): Thematic analysis involves identifying themes within data, a process that can be intricate. Categorizing and understanding themes can be complex, especially when each piece of data varies in context and structure. (Narrative Analysis): Narrative analysis, dealing with individual stories, makes drawing broad challenging. Extending findings from a single narrative to a broader context requires careful consideration. Managing Data (Thematic Analysis): Thematic analysis involves organizing and managing vast amounts of unstructured data, like interview transcripts. Managing this can be a hefty task, requiring effective data management strategies. Skill Level (Grounded Theory): Grounded Th AnalysisQualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is like a versatile toolkit, offering a tailored approach to understanding your data. The benefits it offers are as diverse as the methods. Let's explore why choosing the right method matters. Tailored Methods for Specific Needs: QDA isn't one-size-fits-all. Depending on your research objectives and the type of data at hand, different methods offer unique benefits. If you want emotive customer stories, narrative analysis reveals insightful patternsFlexibility with Thematic Analysis: thematic analysis is like a chameleon in the toolkit of QDA. It adapts well to different types of data and research objectives, making it a top choice for any qualitative analysis. Deeper Understanding, Better Products: QDA helps you dive into people's thoughts and feelings. This deep understanding helps you dive into people's thoughts and feelings. reveals surprises that we miss in quantitative data. QDA offers us new ideas and perspectives, for insights we might otherwise miss. Building Effective Strategic guides. They help businesses in crafting plans that match people's desires. Creating Genuine Connections: Understanding people's experiences lets businesses connect on a real level. This genuine connection helps build trust and loyalty, priceless for any business. Case Study: How DoorDash, a leading food delivery platform, leveraged qualitative data analysis to better understand its delivery drivers, known as Dashers. By analyzing thousands of feedback points, DoorDash identified key concerns, such as work flexibility and app usability. Using Thematic's AI-driven insights, the company prioritized improvements, including a new reward system for top Dashers and app adjustments to enhance the delivery experience. These changes led to higher driver satisfaction and improved retention, demonstrating how qualitative data analysis can drive impactful business decisions. Authored by Alyona Medelyan (PhD in Natural Language Processing & Machine Learning), this is a complete guide on the analysis of qualitative data. Learn the key approaches to analysis, how to set up a coding frame, how to code data accurately, and much more. Download your free copy today! Conclusion: Seek automation with human oversightAI technology is here to stay, and it's powerful enough to automate most of qualitative data analysis. So, as a researcher, you need to learn not just the basics of how to do this task manually, but also how to harness AI to complete this task quicker. For projects that involve small datasets or one-offs, use ChatGPT or a similar solution. For example, if the objective is simply to quantify a simple question like "Do customers prefer X concepts to Y?". And if the findings are being extracted from a small set of focus groups and interviews, sometimes it's easier to just read them. However, as new generations come into the workplace, it's technology-driven solutions that feel more comfortable and practical. Especially, once you have huge volumes of data and you need a deeper understanding of the data. For example, the 'why' behind customers' preference for X or Y. Being able to do this fast to help your business move quickly is critical. The ability to collect a free flow of qualitative feedback data and customer metrics means AI can cost-effectively scan, crunch, score and analyze a ton of feedback from one system in one go. And time-intensive processes like focus groups, or coding, that used to take weeks, can now be completed in a matter of hours or days. But aside from the every present business case to speed things up and keep costs down, there are also powerful research imperatives for automated analysis of qualitative data: namely, accuracy and consistency, especially in coding. Not to mention catching all the 'unknown unknowns' that can skew research findings and steering clear of cognitive bias. Some say without manual data analysis researchers won't get an accurate "feel" for the insights. However, the larger data sets are, the harder it is to stay on course, the greater the risk of drawing incorrect, or incomplete, conclusions grows. Though the process steps for qualitative data analysis have remained pretty much unchanged since psychologist Paul Felix Lazarsfeld paved the path a hundred years ago, the impact digital technology has had on types of qualitative feedback data and the approach to the analysis are profound. If you want to try an automated feedback analysis solution on your own qualitative data, you can get started with Thematic.Or you may interested in some of our free guide: How To Leverage AI To Improve CX. For you insights & CX professionals reading. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) The time required for qualitative data analysis varies depending. on the dataset size, research objectives, and method used. Manual analysis—which involves reading, coding, and categorizing data—can take weeks or even months, especially for large datasets. Automated tools, such as AI-powered feedback analysis platforms, can process and categorize data within hours or days, significantly reducing workload. However, even with automation, human oversight is needed to ensure the insights are accurate and contextually relevant. The more structured and well-prepared the data is, the faster the analysis process will be. One of the biggest mistakes in qualitative data analysis is bias in coding, where researchers apply subjective interpretations instead of objective categorizations. Another common error is overgeneralizing findings, where insights from a small dataset are incorrectly assumed to apply to a larger audience. Poorly structured data, lack of clear research objectives, and ignoring data validation can also skew results. To avoid these issues, researchers should use clear coding frameworks, cross-check findings with multiple sources, and maintain transparency in their interpretation process. AI tools can help reduce bias but should be used alongside human expertise. Yes! Many researchers use a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis for a more comprehensive understanding of data. data provides measurable statistics—such as percentages or trends—qualitative data helps explain the underlying reasons behind those numbers. For example, survey results may show that 50% of customers dislike a product feature, but qualitative data helps explain the underlying reasons behind those numbers. in customer experience research, healthcare studies, and social sciences to validate findings and make data-driven decisions. Many industries rely on qualitative data analysis to gain deeper insights into customer perceptions. In healthcare, it assists in analyzing patient feedback and improving care. Education and social sciences use qualitative research to study human behavior, learning patterns, and social interactions. Technology and product development teams use it to refine user experience (UX) based on real customer feedback. Essentially, any field that deals with human interactions and decision-making can benefit from qualitative data analysis. Feedback AnalysisSentiment AnalysisSentiment AnalysisAI & Tech Tyler manages our community of CX, insights & analytics professionals. Tyler's goal is to help unite insights professionals. Tyler's goal is to help unite insights professionals. numbers tell us "what" and "how much," qualitative data reveals the crucial "why" and "how." But let's face it - turning mountains of text, images, and observations into meaningful insights can be daunting. This guide dives deep into the art and science of how to analyze qualitative data. We'll explore cutting-edge techniques, free AI qualitative data analysis software, and strategies to make your analysis more rigorous and insightful. Expect practical, actionable advice on qualitative data is nonnumerical information that describes qualities or characteristics. It includes text, images, audio, and video. This data type captures complex human experiences, behaviors, and opinions that numbers alone can't express. A qualitative data example can include interview transcripts, open-ended survey responses, field notes from observations, social media posts and customer reviewsImportance of qualitative data is vital for several reasons: It provides a deep, nuanced understanding of complex phenomena. It allows for unexpected discoveries and new research directions. It puts people's experiences and perspectives at the forefront. It enhances quantitative findings with depth and detail. What is data analysis in qualitative research? Data analysis in qua focus groups, or observations. This analysis moves beyond simple description. It seeks to understand the underlying meanings, contexts, and relationships within the data. The goal is to create a coherent narrative data analysis and generates new knowledge. How is qualitative data analysis different from quantitative data analysis and relationships within the data. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis uses numerical data. Approach: Qualitative analysis is inductive analysis is inductive analysis is inductive analysis is inductive analysis is deductive analysis uses numerical data (text, images), while quantitative analysis is inductive analysis uses numerical data (text, images). samples. Quantitative studies typically need larger samples for statistical validity. Depth vs. breadth: Qualitative analysis provides in-depth insights across many cases. Subjective; Qualitative analysis involves more subjective interpretation. Quantitative analysis aims for objective, statistical measures. What are the 3 main components of qualitative data analysis? The three main components of qualitative data analysis are: Data reduced data into visual formats like matrices, charts, or networks. Conclusion drawing/verification: Interpreting the displayed data and verifying the conclusions. These components aren't linear steps. Instead, they form an iterative process where researchers move back and forth between them throughout the analysis. How do you write a qualitative analysis? Step 1: Organize your dataStart with bringing all your qualitative research data in one place. A repository can be of immense help here. Transcribe interviews, compile field notes, and gather all relevant materials. Immerse yourself in the data. Read through everything multiple times. Step 2: Code & identify themesIdentify and label key concepts, themes, or patterns. Group related codes into broader themes or categories. Try to connect themes to tell a coherent story that answers your research and existing literature. Als discuss, identify and try to eliminate potential biases or limitations in your analysis. Summarize main insights and their implications. What are the 5 qualitative data analysis methods? Thematic Analysis Systematically categorizing and counting the occurrence of specific elements in text. Grounded Theory Developing theory from data through iterative coding and analysis. Discourse Analysis Examining language use and meaning in social contexts. Narrative Analysis. What are the 4 data collection methods in qualitative research?When it comes to collecting qualitative data, researchers primarily rely on four methods.Interviews: One-on-one conversations to explore collective opinions and experiences.Observations: Watching and recording behaviors in natural settings.Document Analysis: Examining existing texts, images, or artifacts.Researchers often use multiple methods to gain a comprehensive data analysis isn't measured in traditional numerical terms. Instead, its qualitative data based on several criteria. Trustworthiness is key, encompassing the credibility, transferability, and confirmability, and confirmability, and confirmability, and confirmability, and confirmability, and confirmability, and confirmability of the findings. - acknowledging and examining the researcher's own biases and influences. Employing techniques like member checking and triangulation all contribute to the strength of qualitative data analysis. Benefits of qualitative data analysis are numerous. It uncovers rich, nuanced understanding of complex phenomena and allows for unexpected discoveries and new research directions. By capturing the 'why' behind behaviors and opinions, qualitative data analysis can also lead to new theoretical frameworks or hypotheses and enhances quantitative findings with depth and detail. It's particularly adept at capturing cultural nuances that might be missed in qualitative data analysis. Managing and making sense of large volumes of rich, complex data can lead to data overload. Maintaining consistent coding across large datasets or between multiple coders can be difficult. There's a delicate balance to strike between providing enough context and maintaining focus on analysis. Recognizing and mitigating researcher biases in data interpretation is an ongoing challenge. The learning curve for qualitative data analysis software can be steep and time-consuming. Ethical considerations, particularly around protecting participant anonymity while presenting rich, detailed data, require careful navigation. Integrating different types of data from various sources can be complex. Time management is crucial, as researchers must balance the depth of analysis with project timelines and resources. Finally, communicating complex qualitative insights in clear, compelling ways can be challenging.Best Software to Analyze Qualitative DataLooppanelG2 rating: 4.6/5Pricing: Starts at \$30 monthly.Looppanel is an AI-powered research assistant and repository platform that can make it 5x faster to get to insights, by automating all the manual, tedious parts of your job. Here's how Looppanel's features can help with qualitative data analysis: Automatic Transcription: Quickly turn speech into accurate text; it works across 8 languages and even heavy accents, with over 90% accuracy. AI Note-Taking: The research assistant can join you on calls and take notes, as well as automatically sort your notes based on your interview questions. Automatic Tagging: Easily tag and organize your data with free AI tools.Insight Generation: Create shareable insights that fit right into your other tools.Repository Search: Run Google-like searches within your projects and calls to find a data snippet/quote in secondsSmart Summary: Ask the AI a question on your research, and it will give you an answer, using extracts from your data as citations. Looppanel's focus on automating research tasks makes it perfect for researchers who want to save time and work smarter. ChatGPTG2 rating: 4.7/5Pricing: Free version available, with the Plus version costing \$20 monthly. ChatGPTG2 rating: 4.7/5Pricing: Free version available, with the Plus version costing \$20 monthly. ChatGPTG2 rating: 4.7/5Pricing: Free version available, with the Plus version costing \$20 monthly. 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ChatGPTG2 rating: 4.7/5Pricing: including:Document analysis: It can easily extract and analyze text from various file formats.Summarization: GPT can condense lengthy documents.Sentiment analysis: Although not Chat-GPT's specialty, it can still perform basic sentiment analysis on text data.ChatGPT's versatility makes it valuable for researchers who need quick insights from diverse text sources. How to use ChatGPT can be a handy sidekick in your qualitative analysis, if you do the following: Use it to summarize long documents or transcriptsAsk it to identify key themes in your dataUse it for basic sentiment analysisHave it generate potential codes based on your research questionsUse it to brainstorm interpretations of your findingsAtlas.tiG2 rating: 4.7/5Pricing: CustomAtlas.ti is a powerful platform built for detailed qualitative and mixed-methods research, offering a lot of capabilities for running both quantitative and qualitative research. It's key data analysis features include: Multi-format Support: Analyze text, PDFs, images, audio, video, and geo data all within one platform. AI-Powered Coding: Uses AI to suggest codes and summarize documents. Collaboration: Create and summarize documents. Create and summarize documents. Create and summarize documents. Create and summarize documents. Create network views and other visualizations to showcase relationships in your data.NvivoG2 rating: 4.1/5Pricing: CustomNVivo is another powerful platform for qualitative and mixed-methods research. It's analysis features include:Data Import and Organization: Easily manage different data types, including text, audio, and video.AI-Powered Coding: Speeds up the coding process with machine learning. Visualization Tools: Create charts, graphs, and diagrams to represent your findings. Collaboration Features: Suitable for team-based research needs. FAQsCan Excel do qualitative data analysis?Excel can be a handy tool for qualitative data analysis, especially if you're just starting out or working on a smaller project. While it's not specialized qualitative data analysis software, you can use it to organize your data, maybe putting different themes in different columns. It's good for basic coding, where you label bits of text with keywords. You can use its filter feature to focus on specific themes. Excel can also create simple charts to visualize your findings. But for place simple charts to visualize your findings. But for place simple charts to visualize your findings. But for place simple charts to visualize your findings. But for place simple charts to visualize your findings. But for place simple charts to visualize your findings. But for place simple charts to visualize your findings. But for place simple charts to visualize your findings. dig deeper into your data. How do you show gualitative analysis? Showing gualitative data analysis is about telling the story of your data. In gualitative data analysis methods, we use guotes from interviews or documents to back up our points. Create charts or mind maps to show how different ideas connect, which is a common practice in data analysis in AI for qualitative research. Group your findings into themes that make sense. Then, write it all up in a way that flows, explaining what you found and why it matters. What is the best way to analyze qualitative data? There's no one-size-fits-all approach to how to analyze qualitative data, but there are some tried-and-true steps. Start by getting your data in order. Then, read through it a few times to get familiar with it. As you go, start marking important bits with codes - this is a fundamental qualitative data analysis method. Group similar codes into bigger picture of your research. Remember, it's okay to go back and forth between these steps as you dig deeper into your data. AI qualitative data analysis software can be a big help in this process, especially for managing large amounts of data. In qualitative research might sit down with people for in-depth chats or run group discussions, which are key qualitative data analysis methods. They often use surveys with open-ended questions that let people express themselves freely. Sometimes, they'll observe people in their natural environment, taking notes on what they see. They might also dig into existing documents or artifacts that relate to their topic. The goal is to gather rich, detailed information that helps them understand the full picture, which is not a purpose of reflexivity during gualitative data analysis? Reflexivity in gualitative data analysis isn't about proving you're completely objective. That's not the goal. Instead, it's about being honest about who you are as a researcher. It's recognizing that your own experiences and views might influence how you see the data. By being upfront about this, you actually make your research more trustworthy. It's also a way to dig deeper into your data, seeing things you might have missed at first glance. This self-awareness is a crucial part of qualitative data analysis methods. What is a qualitative data analysis example? A simple example is analyzing customer feedback, read through responses, create codes like "ease of use" or "design," and group similar codes into themes. You'd then identify patterns and support findings with specific quotes. This process helps transform raw feedback into actionable insights. How to analyze qualitative data from a survey? First, gather all your responses in one place. Read through them to get a feel for what people are saying. Then, start labeling responses with codes - short descriptions of what each bit is about. This coding process is a fundamental qualitative data analysis method. Group similar codes into bigger themes. Look for patterns in these themes. Look for patterns in these themes. Are certain ideas coming up a lot? Do different groups of people have different views? Use actual quotes from your survey to back up what you're seeing. Think about how your findings relate to your original research questions. Which one is better, NVivo or Atlas.ti?NVivo is known for being user-friendly and great for team projects. Atlas.ti shines when it comes to visual mapping of concepts and handling geographic data. Both can handle a variety of data types and have powerful tools for gualitative data analysis. The best way to decide is to try out both if you can. While these are powerful tools, the core of qualitative data analysis still relies on your analytical skills and understanding of qualitative data analysis, but it can definitely make your life easier, especially for bigger projects. Think of it like using a power tool versus a hand tool - you can get the job done either way, but the power tool might save you time and effort. For smaller projects or if you're just starting out, you might be fine with simpler tools or even free qualitative data analysis software. But if you're dealing with lots of data, or if you need to collaborate with a team, or if you want to do more complex analysis, then specialized qualitative data analysis software like NVivo can be a big help. It's all about finding the right tool for your specific research needs and the qualitative data analysisFirst, you import all your data - interviews, documents, videos, whatever you've got. Then you start creating "nodes," which are like folders for different themes or ideas in your data. As you read through all this organized data, find connections between different themes, and even create visual maps of how everything relates. How much does NVivo cost?NVivo's pricing isn't one-size-fits-all. They offer different plans for individuals, teams, and large organizations, but they don't publish their prices openly. Contact the team here for a custom quote. What are the four steps of gualitative data analysis? While gualitative data analysis is often iterative, it generally follows these four main steps: 1. Data Collection: Gathering raw data through interviews, observations, or documents. 2. Data Preparation: Organizing and transcribing the collected data. 3. Data Coding: Identifying and labeling important concepts or themes in the data.4. Interpretation: Drawing meaning from the coded data and developing insights.