

IN5000

THEMATIC ANALYSIS



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Thematic Analysis



“... a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set... [It] allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences.”

(Braun & Clarke, 2012)



A Method in Its Own Right

- Initially used as an ad hoc approach
- Similarities with other approaches – e.g. Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis
- Systematically defined by Braun & Clark (2006)
 - Unique and valuable method in its own right



Features of Thematic Analysis



- Accessible and flexible
- Accommodates different approaches
 - Inductive vs. deductive
 - Experiential vs. critical
 - Essentialist vs. constructivist
- Different types of data
 - Text, audio, video, pictures
- Choices





Thematic Analysis in System Design

- Accurate understanding of user contexts
- Support in
 - Developing implications for design
 - Prioritising systems requirement



Computer-assisted Thematic Analysis



- Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis
 - Atlas.ti
 - Nvivo
 - MaxQDA
 - Etc.

The screenshot displays the MAXQDA software interface. At the top, there is a menu bar with options: Start, Import, Codes, Variablen, **Analyse**, Mixed Methods, Visual Tools, Reports, Stats, and MAXDictio. Below the menu is a toolbar with icons for various functions like 'Aktivierung zurücksetzen', 'Lexikalische Suche', 'Komplexe Coding-Suche', 'Coding-Suche zurücksetzen', 'Gruppen vergleichen', 'Summary Grid', 'Summary Tabellen', 'Paraphrasen', 'Twitter', and 'Freies Memo'. The main workspace is divided into several panes:

- Liste der Dokumente:** A tree view showing a hierarchy of documents. Under 'Interviews', 'B01 Jan' is selected, showing 37 pages.
- Dokument-Browser: B01 Jan:** Displays a document viewer with a vertical timeline on the left and a text area on the right. The text area contains a paragraph about climate change and future energy alternatives, with several words highlighted in red and yellow.
- Liste der Codes:** A list of codes with their respective counts. 'WP - Größte Weltprobleme' has 7 codes, and 'Klima' has 4 codes.
- Liste der Codings:** Shows the application of codes to specific documents. 'Klima' is applied to 'B01 Jan' (pages 7-7).



Relevant Methodological Aspects



- Bear in mind any existing research questions
- Define codes as they are created
 - Clarify type of data that should be included
- Keep a log
- Use a synchronous collaborative platform for log development
 - E.g. OneDrive, GoogleDrive



The 6 Phases of Thematic Analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2012)

1. Familiarisation
2. Coding
3. Themes search
4. Themes review
5. Themes definition
6. Report



1 Familiarisation



- Immersion
- Reading and re-reading
- Memoing
 - Meant only for you or your research team members
- No coding



2 Coding



- Different levels
 - Large or small portions of data
- Optimally, all must be relevant for the research question
- Possible to have more than a code assigned to a data excerpt
 - Inclusive approach
- 2 stage (Lazard & Capdevila, 2015)
 - Initial codes
 - Developed codes



2 Coding: Codes



- Building **blocks** of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012)
- Labels capturing the **meaning** of a data excerpt (Lazard & Capdevila, 2015)
- Category to describe a general feature of the data, representing a range of data examples expressing a certain **commonality** (Gibson & Brown, 2009)



2 Coding: Code Nature

1/2



- Semantic level
 - Summary
 - Close to content and the participants' language and meaning
- Latent level
 - Interpretation
 - Close to researchers' conceptual and theoretical frameworks
 - Beyond the participants' meaning
- Most likely to have a mix between semantic and latent level codes



2 Coding: Code Nature

2/2



- Apriori vs Empirical (Gibson & Brown, 2009)
- Apriori → Deductive
 - Top-down
 - Theory-driven
- Empirical → Inductive
 - Bottom-up
 - Data-driven
- Often combined



2 Coding: Supporting Questions



Box 1 Helpful questions for developing codes

- **What?** What is this about? What phenomena are mentioned? Which aspects of the phenomena are mentioned (or not mentioned)?
- **Who?** Who appears in the text? What actors are involved? What roles do they play?
- **How?** How were the actions achieved? What strategies were used to achieve the goal?
- **When?** When did the situation described happen? How long did it go on for?
- **Where?** Where did it happen? What locations or places are mentioned?
- **Why?** What reasons are given for the situation /phenomenon taking place? What intentions are described here? What is the purpose?

(Lazard & Capdevila, 2015)



2 Coding: Example



Personally, I'm not sure. I think the climate is changing, sure, but I don't know why or how. People say you should trust the experts, but who's to say they don't have their own reasons for pushing this narrative? I'm not saying they're wrong, I'm just saying there's reasons not to 100% trust them. The facts keep changing – it used to be called global warming.

Source: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



2 Coding: Example

Initial Codes

- Focus on semantic level
 - Summary
 - Close to content and the participants' language and meaning

1/2



2 Coding: Example

Initial Codes

2/2



Interview Extract

Personally, I'm not sure. I think the climate is changing, sure, but I don't know why or how. People say you should trust the experts, but who's to say they don't have their own reasons for pushing this narrative? I'm not saying they're wrong, I'm just saying there's reasons not to 100% trust them. The facts keep changing – it used to be called global warming.

Coding

- Uncertainty
- Changes
- Other people's advice
- Possible hidden interests
- Motivated distrust
- Change in language

Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



2 Coding: Example

Developed Codes

- Focus at latent level
 - Interpretation
 - Close to researchers' conceptual and theoretical frameworks
 - Beyond the participants' meaning

1/3



2 Coding: Example

Developed Codes

2/3



Interview Extract

Personally, I'm not sure. I think the climate is changing, sure, but I don't know why or how. People say you should trust the experts, but who's to say they don't have their own reasons for pushing this narrative? I'm not saying they're wrong, I'm just saying there's reasons not to 100% trust them. The facts keep changing – it used to be called global warming.

Coding

- Uncertainty
- Changes
- Other people's advice
- Possible hidden interests
- Motivated distrust
- Change in language

Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



2 Coding: Example

Developed Codes

3/3



Interview Extract

Personally, I'm not sure. I think the climate is changing, sure, but I don't know why or how. People say you should trust the experts, but who's to say they don't have their own reasons for pushing this narrative? I'm not saying they're wrong, I'm just saying there's reasons not to 100% trust them. The facts keep changing – it used to be called global warming.

Coding

- *Hesitation*
- *Instability*
- *Resentment towards experts*
- *Possible hidden interests*
- *Motivated distrust*
- *Change terminology*

Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



3 Searching for Themes: Themes



- Representation of some level of *patterned* response or meaning (Braun & Clark, 2012)
- Lazard & Capdevila (2015):
 - Recurrent ideas, topics and statements that are meaningful together
 - Emergent from the relationship between codes



3 Searching for Themes: Example 1/2



Interview Extract

Personally, I'm not sure. I think the climate is changing, sure, but I don't know why or how. People say you should trust the experts, but who's to say they don't have their own reasons for pushing this narrative? I'm not saying they're wrong, I'm just saying there's reasons not to 100% trust them. The facts keep changing – it used to be called global warming.

Coding

- Hesitation
- Instability
- Resentment towards experts
- Possible hidden interests
- Motivated distrust
- Change terminology

Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



3 Searching for Themes: Example 2/2



Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hesitation</i> • <i>Instability</i> • Alternative explanations 	Uncertainty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Possible hidden interests</i> • <i>Resentment towards experts</i> • Fear of government control • <i>Changing terminology</i> 	Motivated distrust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect facts • Misunderstanding of science • Biased media sources 	Misinformation

Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



4 Reviewing Themes

- Make sure themes are useful and accurate
- Reflect upon the codes composing each theme
- Quality themes
 - Singular focus
 - Not repetitive
 - Directly related to the research question

3



4 Reviewing Themes: Example 1/2



Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hesitation</i> • <i>Instability</i> • Alternative explanations 	Uncertainty
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Possible hidden interests</i> • <i>Resentment towards experts</i> • Fear of government control • <i>Changing terminology</i> 	Motivated distrust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect facts • Misunderstanding of science • Biased media sources 	Misinformation

Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



4 Reviewing Themes: Example 2/2



Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitation • Instability • Alternative explanations • Fear of government control 	Conspiracy thinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible hidden interests • Resentment towards experts • Changing terminology 	Motivated distrust of experts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect facts • Misunderstanding of science • Biased media sources 	Misinformation

Adapted from: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>



5 Defining Themes



- Representation of a unique feature
- Clearly description of the types of data excerpt contemplated by the theme

Motivated distrust of experts

This theme refers to patterns in the data showing that informants would have their reasons to be sceptical towards experts. Here **experts** refer to professionals working in a particular topic, who have received formal training for it...



6 Producing the Report



- Develop your themes analytically
- Provide thick descriptions
- Illustrate with data excerpts
- Contextualise findings in the relevant literature
- Discuss the findings → *not necessarily in a Discussion section*



QUESTIONS?

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