

Title: Web content analysis for Operations Management and Technology research in the international context.

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The web content analysis is being increasingly used as a research technique by many researchers in the Operations Management and Technology topic. Applications include those by Liu, Arnett, Capella and Beatty (1997) to Fortune 500 companies' websites, Costello and Tuchen (1998) to Australian insurance companies' websites, Steinfield, Adelaar and Liu (2005) to US-based retailers, Huizingh (2000) to US and Dutch websites, Coyle and Thorson (2001) to interactivity and Web marketing features and Singh, Zhao and Hu (2003) to analyse cultural adaptation on the Web in a study on American and Chinese websites. Additionally, Del Águila-Obra, Padilla-Meléndez and Serarols-Tarrés (2007) applied a Web content analysis to aggregator websites when studying value-chain changes and new business models in the news industry. And finally, Shang, Li, Wu and Hou (2011) applied Web content analysis to categorise social media services. In our understanding, developing an international survey conducted by web content analysis is useful in operations management or technology studies and it reduces, mainly, the global cost of the collection data stage, in exploratory studies.

The main steps in this research method, after the literature review, are the following: 1) the selection of companies/organizations and the webpages to visit. The researcher can use the main business directories in the sector, guidebooks, among others sources. 2) Selection of content items. Each website is visited and its content is evaluated based on a list of items, informed by previous research (Del Águila-Obra, Padilla-Meléndez & Serarols-Tarrés, 2007; Cormany & Baloglu, 2011; Shang, Li, Wu & Hou, 2011). Usually, items are measured on a nominal “present/not present” scale, eliminating the variability of qualitative assessments (Cormany & Baloglu 2011, 711). In addition, is needed to ensure that the content analysis was valid by thoroughly understanding the research objectives, previously reading a sub-set of relevant content (‘immersion in the message pool’ according to Neuendorf, 2002) and carefully selecting the content sample to be analysed (Thelwall, 2009). 3) The data are registered in a spread sheet for the analysis (i.e., descriptive statistics, multiple correspondence, cluster and discriminant analysis, among others).

The main limitations of the method is related to the validity of the results. To solve this, it is needed to cross-checked between multiple coders and to use a formal coding scheme (Macnamara, 2006; Neuendorf, 2002; Thelwall, 2009). The validity is further improved by the use of other sources of information (extensive online research and interview with company/organization managers) as a means of triangulation (Patton, 1990).

In this paper we explore the application of the research method in general and in particular to the case of the analysis of the Web and Social Media Usage by Museums.

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