

## Content analysis in tourism research



Raquel Camprubí<sup>a,\*</sup>, Lluís Coromina<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Business and Management Department, Faculty of Tourism, University of Girona, Pl. Ferrater Mora 1, 17071 Girona, Spain

<sup>b</sup> Economics Department, Faculty of Tourism, University of Girona, Pl. Ferrater Mora 1, 17071 Girona, Spain

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 22 February 2016

Received in revised form 3 March 2016

Accepted 5 March 2016

#### Keywords:

Content analysis

Research procedures

Objectivity

Systematisation

Reliability

### ABSTRACT

Considering the exponential increase of studies in the tourism field that use content analysis (CA) as a research method, this paper aims to determine how CA in tourism field is applied and to detect the critical issues regarding its application. In order to achieve these aims, a systematic content analysis of 164 articles from ten journals included in the Journal Citation Report was performed. Findings reveal trends and applications of the method, which can be improved, most notably the operational procedures, in order to make tourism studies using CA more transparent, effective and replicable. Recommendations are provided with a view to improving future research.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Content analysis (CA) is a common research method in social sciences (Berg, 2009; Krippendorff, 1990) and is commonly used to do research on various forms of human communication, including permutations of written documents, photographs, motion pictures or videotapes, and audiotapes (Berg, 2009).

In recent years, an increasing number of studies in the tourism field have used Content Analysis (CA). In this context, Hall and Valentin (2005) identified different uses of CA in the tourism field, such as the study of advertising and images, the examination of the context of texts written by tourists themselves or the identification of different understandings of conceptual issues in tourism.

Differently to Hall and Valentin (2005), this paper analyses systematically the trends and issues regarding the use of CA approach in the tourism field in 164 articles from ten relevant tourism academic journals included in the Journal of Citation Report (JCR). The interest in this paper focus on two major questions: (a) How CA is applied in tourism field?; and (b) Which are the critical issues regarding its application?

This study is important in order to identify common patterns and weaknesses of the use of CA approach in tourism field, providing firstly, a framework to identify the elements that should be reported to make tourism studies more transparent, effective, and replicable; and secondly, recommendations for best-practice of using CA in future tourism

research. Therefore, it is expected that this paper will be useful to improve related work in the tourism field.

The structure of the paper is as follows: The first section explains the current situation regarding the state of the art for CA research. This is followed by the methodology section, including an explanation of the sample and coding issues. Results are classified in six sections: (a) topical issues, (b) sampling methods, (c) objectivity, (d) systematisation, (e) reliability and (f) cited/influential authors. Finally discussion and conclusion provides the general trends of CA and recommendations for structuring the method in future applications.

### 2. Content analysis: an overview

Content Analysis can be defined as “an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communications” (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). According to Berg (2009) this method can be seen as a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings; and can be considered as a “phase of information-processing in which communications content is transformed, through objective and systematic application of categorization rules, into data that can be summarised and compared” (Paisley, 1969, p.133). Therefore, CA is based on objectivity, systematisation and quantification (Kassarjian, 1977).

First, objectivity refers to the process by which analytical categories are developed and used (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). The development of these categories should be done using explicit rules so that when two or more coders collect and analyse data (Holsti, 1968), the same results are obtained. This way the subjectivity bias is reduced allowing

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [raquel.camprubi@udg.edu](mailto:raquel.camprubi@udg.edu) (R. Camprubí), [lluis.coromina@udg.edu](mailto:lluis.coromina@udg.edu) (L. Coromina).

replication of the study by others (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991). Second, a systematic analysis means determining consistent criteria to include and exclude content or categories (Holsti, 1968). Therefore, the objectivity requirement eliminates the bias of the analysis because judges and a pre-test should be included in the study, avoiding the use of only materials that support the researcher's hypothesis (Kassarjian, 1977). In addition, systematisation also means that findings must have theoretical relevance and be generalizable (Holsti, 1968; Kassarjian, 1977). Third, one of the general debates is whether CA should be considered a qualitative or quantitative research method. Some authors consider that if the method involves counting, then it should be considered as a quantitative method (Berelson, 1952; Brotherton, 2015; Burns & Grove, 2005; Holsti, 1968; Krippendorff, 1990). Other authors state that CA looks for the meaning of text, and so maintains a qualitative textual approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Heise, 1992; Silverman, 2006). In fact, Berg (2009) mentions that authors generally disagree on this point and thus CA could be considered as a mixed research method, where both qualitative and quantitative approaches can be carried out.

Academic literature advocates a range of both benefits and limitations that have to be considered in CA. Benefits of CA are particularly focused on the research process in itself and the versatility of this method. In general terms, if CA is well done, it provides a replicable methodology (Durlau, Reger, & Pfarrer, 2007), which can be reproduced in future studies by other researchers, particularly when publications include a wider description of procedures and criteria used to conduct the research. Another benefit is its analytical flexibility (Durlau et al., 2007), and the fact that it can be used as inductive or deductive research approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Roberts, 1989). At the same time, different levels of analysis can be carried out using qualitative or quantitative approaches. These include longitudinal research designs (Durlau et al., 2007) which can analyse realities over time, assessing changes or detecting trends (Kondracki, Wellman, Fada, & Amundson, 2002), through the analysis of messages conveyed in magazines or newspapers, for example.

CA also has some limitations that must be considered. Hall and Valentin (2005) state that the application of the method depends on the skills and appropriate exercise of judgement on the part of the researcher and appropriate reflection on the research process. Therefore, this means that if rules are not completely clear and shared by the judges who intervene during the coding process, bias can reduce the reliability of the study. Kassarjian (1977) considers reliability as a serious constrain of CA and therefore makes recommendations focusing on category reliability and interjudge reliability. Regarding the data analysis, Kondracki et al. (2002) highlight the difficulties encountered when assessing causality. These authors argue that although it is possible to identify a relationship and correlation between variables, it cannot explain how these relationships came up. However, the use of the appropriate method, for instance regression analysis or path analysis can determine this causality.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Sample

The sample used for the analysis is composed of the following tourism academic journals: *Annals of Tourism Research*; *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*; *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*; *International Journal of Hospitality Management*; *International Journal of Tourism Research*; *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*; *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*; *Journal of Travel Research*; *Tourism Geographies*; and *Tourism Management*. These ten journals were selected because of their relevance in the field, and all of them are included in the Journal Citation Report (Table 1).

All of the selected journals were accessible electronically, and a search was conducted using the keyword “content analysis”. The articles' title, abstract, keywords and the methodological section were

**Table 1**  
Distribution of the sample.

Journal	Impact factor (2012)	Number of articles
<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	3.683	20
<i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i>	1.892	10
<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	1.266	4
<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	1.692	19
<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	0.861	22
<i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Tourism Research</i>	0.820	10
<i>Journal of Sustainable Tourism</i>	3.000	14
<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	1.899	13
<i>Tourism Geographies</i>	0.731	7
<i>Tourism Management</i>	2.571	45
Total		164

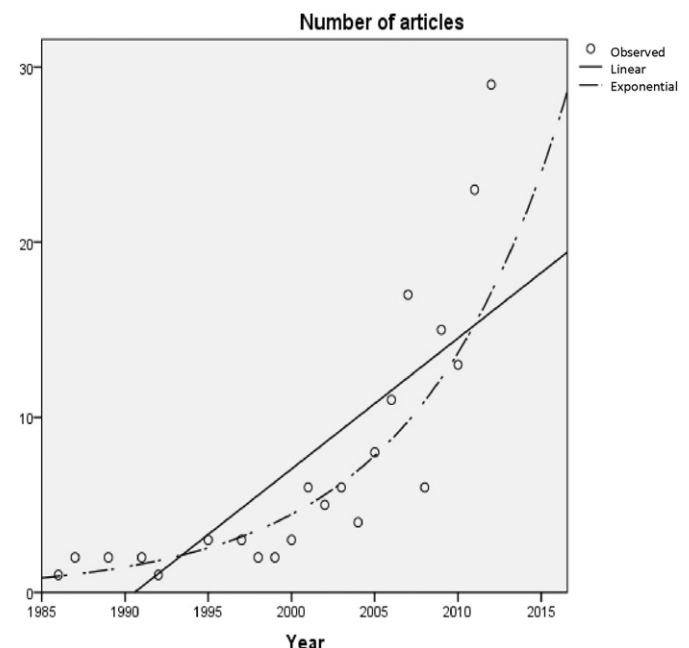
scrutinised in order to detect whether CA had been used as the main research method. Articles fulfilling such criteria were selected. For instance, if the keyword “content analysis” appeared in the search, but the method was not used as the main research method in the article, then it was excluded.

Following this criteria, 164 articles from 1986 to 2012 were considered for the analysis. The collection of articles started in that year 1986, where the first article was identified in the journals.

The results of this study are from the set of 164 articles included in the sample. Results can be considered representative of the topic of the study, especially, compared with similar studies in other fields which have used smaller samples. For instance, Kolbe and Burnett (1991) used a sample of 128 articles and Durlau et al. (2007) used 98 articles.

In order to determine statistically the trend of CA in the tourism field a relationship between year and CA published articles is carried out. Fig. 1 shows the distribution of the articles published by year. Dots in Fig. 1 are the observed information; the straight line represents the estimated linear regression model, while the curved line represents the estimated exponential regression model.

The growth of the number of articles by year is non-linear, it seems to be exponential. Therefore, an exponential regression model is carried out. Results from the exponential regression model show a significant



**Fig. 1.** Relationship between the number of articles published and the year.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013593>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013593>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)