Barcelona Field Studies Centre

Qualitative Research in Geography using Coding Analysis

Coding is an analytical process in which data, in both quantitative form (such as questionnaires results) or qualitative (such as newspaper articles or interview transcripts) is categorised to help analysis.
The coding process involves searching the text for similar themes, ideas, concepts and key words and then marking those passages with a code colour. This makes it easier to make comparisons and to identify any patterns that can be investigated further.

All text that is coded with the same colour should be about the same topic, theme, concept etc..
If a theme is identified from the data that does not quite fit the codes already existing then a new code should be created.

As you read through the text, the number of codes you have will grow as more topics or themes become apparent. Your list of codes will help you to identify the issues contained in the text and to see links between these issues and patterns of opinions and information expressed.

A coding example using a Guardian newspaper article about tourist conflict in Barcelona is shown on page 2. The analysis and interpretation is based on two codes:

- data and case study evidence;
- viewpoints, meanings and representations.

Reporting Qualitative Findings

It is best to start with a brief explanation of how your data was coded, as well as how and why you selected the data source for presentation.
You should show the data coding in the presentation of your results so that the reader is able to view the different categories of coding used.
Quantifying your coding and presenting the results in a bar chart or other graphical technique can be a good way of demonstrating the relative importance of different ideas or concepts in the data.
When presenting your findings, you should include actual examples of comments that reflect the concept (e.g. protest) being coded.

Thanks to Dr. Simon Oakes for providing this coding example.

Facts (finding data and case study evidence in the text)	Original text (either transcript of primary data interview; or secondary data newspaper article)	Interpretation (finding differing viewpoints, meanings and representations in the text)
	Mass tourism can kill a city – just ask Barcelona's residents (Guardian newspaper, September 2014)	The newspaper writer is using very strong /emotive language – in order to showing how seriously a lot of people view this urban issue
Useful data here on tourist numbers	Barcelona , a city of 2 million inhabitants, hosted 7.5 million tourists last year. The	
More data on tourist numbers	city council, run by the Catalan right, has said that it wants to increase this to 10 million visitors per year. These mind-boggling figures have led to open conflict this summer. In tourism hotspots of the city, the scale of visitor numbers is affecting not only residents' quality of life, but their very ability to live in the area.	
Good evidence of protest	This summer, in La Barceloneta, the city's historic seafaring neighbourhood, there have been protests and, in one case, tensions with naked tourists who didn't realise that they were in a city, not a theme park. In the past few months there	
More evidence of protest	have also been demonstrations against businesses involved in the illegal rental of apartments, an activity that the city council has only begun to combat recently.	
	The economic crisis and the collapse of the construction boom in Spain have led to deindustrialisation across the country. An over-reliance on the service sector has	
Useful factual context and information	led to the exploitation of tourism by the city. Without a doubt, it's a sector that creates jobs (it makes up 15% of the city's GDP), but these jobs are often badly paid	
	with slave-like working conditions. One resident said: 'as great local restaurants are replaced by businesses that want as many customers as possible to come once, on that weekend trip, where people spend for the weekend and leave the mess behind. I don't see things changing any time soon. BCN is still an amazing place to visit. It's just not what it used to be. And it's getting worse. And that's a shame.'	This local perspective blames big businesses ('who only care about money') for negative changes in place identity. This local perspective also implies tourists are ruining place identity. There is hostility to the way Barcelona is connected with other places.