



Call for Papers  
SIM Affiliate Conference  
WORKSHOP & SPECIAL ISSUE OF MERCATI E COMPETITIVITA'  
**Emerging trends in qualitative research**  
**A focus on social media research**  
University of Pisa  
19 May 2017

More than ever, qualitative research is going through a period of rapid change and confronting new challenges. Anyone interested in the current state and development of qualitative data analysis will find a field which is constantly expanding and, at the same time, growing less structured.

In particular, we can see the evolving and changing environment in three different aspects: data sources, data collection and data analysis.

Traditional sources of data—interviews, focus groups, transcripts and observation protocols—are now complemented by visual, virtual, textual and other types of data deriving from social media. As billions of people post updates to platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram every day, these platforms are opening up opportunities to draw upon vast qualitative data streams.

As a consequence, new data collection tools, web crawling and data mining techniques have emerged in recent years. For example, qualitative software programs have been integrated with tools to capture social media content for qualitative analysis (e.g., Ncapture for Nvivo). Kozinets (2010, 2015) presented the concept of 'netnography' as a new approach that combines archival and online communication work, participation and observation with new forms of digital and network data collection and analysis.

Regarding data analysis, mixed or multi-method approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative techniques are growing in importance (Creswell and Piano Clark, 2011). In particular, mixed methods research approaches—'in which the researcher gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems' (Creswell, 2014, p. 2)—have clear potential value in social media research. Qualitative data are often useful for triangulating and augmenting quantitative results, and in a social media context, they can go beyond tracking follower counts or hashtag use to create a more complete picture of a specific community.

Given the overwhelming amount of data deriving from social media, attention is increasingly turning towards automated content analysis instead of pure qualitative content analysis (e.g., employing human coders to manually code textual data), because it permits large-scale analyses and enhances the reliability, replicability, transparency and efficiency of the results (Humphreys, 2011; Mehl and Gill, 2008; Morris, 1994).

These and many other examples suggest to us that there is a need to reflect on and discuss the use of qualitative techniques in order to facilitate further exploration through the qualitative lens. In particular, we hope to look at the latest emerging methods for analysing qualitative data, with a particular focus on social media data.

This workshop invites contributions that address the role of qualitative methods in responding to, challenging and contributing to data. This call for papers solicits theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions which draw on different research streams and disciplines, including marketing, consumer behaviour, social media, etc. Methodologically, we welcome pure qualitative, multi-method and mixed-methods research approaches.

### Topics of interest include, among others:

- How qualitative techniques are evolving
- Textual data coding
- Automated vs. human coding in content analysis
- Mixed and multi-method research designs
- Innovative research methods for collecting qualitative data (e.g., social media)
- The role of technologies for social media content studies
- Methods and tools for analysing qualitative data
- Mixed and multi-method analysis in social media research
- Virtual communities analysis
- Netnographic studies
- Measuring social media content

### Keynote speaker

**Ashlee Humpreys** - Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University

### Submissions and Special Issue

Scholars who wish to present a paper at the workshop are invited to submit an extended abstract of 750-1000 words to [annamaria.tuan@unipi.it](mailto:annamaria.tuan@unipi.it) no later than **3 of March 2017**. Authors will be notified of the outcome of the selection process by **19 March 2017**.

*Mercati e Competitività* will announce a call for papers for a special issue on this topic. With this workshop the Scientific Committee intends to stimulate interest in the special issue, spark intellectual exchange on the topic and provide feedback to prospective authors who may consider submitting to the special issue.

### Programme

The academic programme will start in the morning at 10:00 AM and will end in the afternoon at 4:30 PM. In the first part of the workshop, Professor Ashlee Humpreys, who has conducted seminal research in this field, will introduce the subject. Then, the best papers amongst the ones proposed to the Scientific Committee will be selected for discussion for about 30 minutes with the rest of the participants.

Some marketing managers, who deal with market research, will join the Workshop in order to provide also the practitioner point of view (more information will be available in due time).

### Registration

There are no conference fees for members of SIMktg. Participants should register no later than **30 April 2017** by sending an email to [annamaria.tuan@unipi.it](mailto:annamaria.tuan@unipi.it)

### Scientific Committee

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### Other Information

For any information please contact: [annamaria.tuan@unipi.it](mailto:annamaria.tuan@unipi.it)

Workshop Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/trendsinqualitativeresearch>