

Second lesson : Documentary research

would you write some ideas of documentary research?

Text: An Introduction to Documentary Research

Introduction

Over the years, social scientists have used documentary research to understand series of events that have occurred or happened in the past. Here, they explore available recovered or existing documents and material to get information and gain insight into a research question or particular topic.

In this article, we would define the concept of documentary research, the various types of documentary research.

What is Documentary Research?

In simple terms, documentary research is a form of research that uses records to get accurate information about a particular subject. It is a systematic investigation and analysis of existing records or documents. These documents can be in written forms, visual/audio materials, photographs, videos books, etc.

Documentary research is a valuable approach used in exploring historical events, cultural phenomena, and societal trends to get deep insight into a topic, subject or research question.

Documentary research is somewhat similar to content analysis, which also entails studying existing information/documents.

One of the most vital considerations when using documentary research is the quality of the material being utilized, hence the danger of falling into the single-story phenomenon.

To forestall this, the documents being reviewed must be assessed thoroughly before it is used. (see John Scott, A Matter of Record, 1990). The criteria for authenticity involves checking the documents thoroughly to ensure their genuineness.

List of Documentary Research Methods

Social Research Studies: This form of documentary research is commonly used in social research studies. For instance, Karl Max used documentary research extensively for his research and the documents he used include The Royal Commission, Inland revenue reports, and Her Majesty Inspectors of Factory reports, to mention a few. Emile Durkheim one of the founders of sociology authored a book on suicide and his work was recognized as the first modern example of consistent use of documents for social research.

Archival Inquiry: This is a field of sociology explored in documentary research. It entails using primary source documents stored in archives. This form of research is

popular amongst historians and the archival documents are referred to as references in their research.

Content Analysis: This method involves the examination and interpretation of content in documents like articles, books, and speeches in order to find a connection, verify events, and identify patterns or trends.

Historical Analysis: This is the study and analysis of occurrences that took place in the past, but were documented in records like newspapers, government records, and diaries to understand past events accurately and use the information to understand the present.

Textual Analysis: This form of analysis is focused on printed texts, in a bid to understand pictures, symbols, and language in order to understand events or occurrences that happened in the lives of the subject.

Oral Tradition: Oral history involves gathering information via oral summations of people who had direct experience of the events or subject being researched. These interviews are recorded and transcribed, and then analyzed as documents.

Ethnographic Research: This form of research involves documenting the daily experiences of people in their natural environment, in order to understand how interactions in their personal space affect or impact their experiences.

Comparative Analysis: Comparative analysis entails comparing documents from multiple sources to understand context, and periods and uncover any similarities or differences. The goal is to understand cultural or political variations.

Cross-Sectional Analysis: Cross-sectional analysis involves reviewing documents from multiple perspectives to understand changes, trends, or developments over a specific period.

Aesthetic Interpretation: This is analyzing visual documents, like paintings, photographs, and footage from videos. This is often used as a supplement to text to authenticate discoveries uncovered in text documents.¹

Question:

Try to complete the table using the text above.

Types	advantages	disadvantages
Social Research Studies		
Archival Inquiry		
Content Analysis		
Historical Analysis		
Textual Analysis		
Oral Tradition		
Ethnographic Research		
Comparative Analysis		

¹ <https://www.formpl.us/blog/documentary-research-definition-types-applications-examples>.

Cross-Sectional Analysis		
Aesthetic Interpretation		

Here are some references to help you enhancing your knowledge in documentary research topic:

Documentary Research in the Social Sciences by Malcolm Tight Publication Date: 2019

Documentary Research by Gary McCulloch Publication Date: 2004

An Introduction to Documentary Research

A brief introduction to documentary research from the American Educational Research Association.

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Hill, M. R. (1993). *Archival strategies and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

McCulloch, G. (2004). *Documentary research in education, history and the social sciences*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Nichols, B. (2001). *Introduction to documentary*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Scott, J. P. (Ed.). (2006). *Documentary research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.