CASE STUDY

Improving Student Satisfaction

When a Swiss business school decided to understand their students' perceptions and find improvement areas that can be addressed, they decided to run an NPS survey. This case study describes how Thematic helped to make sense of student responses and to find specific insights in this data.

Measuring student satisfaction using Net Promoter Score

Net Promoter Score has been a popular measure of customer experience for the past 10 years. Customers are asked a simple 10-scale question: How likely are they to recommend the company to a friend or family, as well as one or more related open-ended questions. NPS is popular because it is simple and has been shown to have a direct relation to customer loyalty and revenue.

NPS can also measure student satisfaction and universities around the world are currently adopting this measure. A business school at a highly reputable university in Switzerland recently ran an NPS survey of their undergraduate and graduate students, both local and international. They used a classical NPS framework:

They asked:
- On a scale of from 1 to 10, how likely are you to recommend studying here to a family or friend?

In addition each student provided an answer to two open-ended questions:
- Why did you give us that score?
- What can we do to improve?

250 students responded to the survey, resulting in a total of 500 comments.

Challenges in analysing student responses

There are a number of ways open-ended responses are analysed traditionally in qualitative research. Here are some of the issues they have:

Traditional approaches	Issues
Manual coding	• Time-consuming and expensive • Focus on high-level, because capturing specific recurrent themes is difficult • Likely to miss important themes if a pre-defined code frame is used
Reading manually	• Time-consuming and expensive • Difficult to cut through the noise • Prone to bias
Word clouds	• It's difficult to understand what single words mean • Interpretation of importance is prone to bias • Context of words is lost

Knowing this, the business school decided to search for an automated solution. Their goal was to understand key themes in student feedback consistently and without bias. Ideally, they wanted to find a solution that they could use continuously, to measure the effect of actions taken on their NPS over time.

Why Thematic?

Before applying Thematic, the business school had already evaluated a number of existing solutions, including HP Idol, Lexalytics, Datacracker, Etuma and a number of other tools. Accuracy was paramount. So, in order to find the best solution, they created a benchmark: Key themes were identified by four different students who study at this school and represented a baseline of truth.

Thematic was the only automated solution that could accurately determine all themes in student feedback. In addition, Thematic delivered visualisations which showed more specific information for each theme, their context, and measured the importance for different student groups.

Thematic delivers actionable insights about student's needs

Using Thematic, it was possible to successfully determine a number of insights.

Insight 1. Important differences in key drivers across students

- **Overall:** *Quality of education* was the most important reason behind the NPS score. In fact, it was a third more important than any other reason students listed.
- **Promoters:** *A Good alumni network* is among the top 10 reasons and twice as important than for all respondents.
- **Detractors:** *School administration* was 75% more important than overall. Also: Only 2% listed *Good teachers* as a reason, compared to 20% overall.
- **French students:** The number one driver was *Beautiful campus*. 40% of French students mentioned it, compared to 20% overall. This is a useful insight for marketing the school to international students in general.
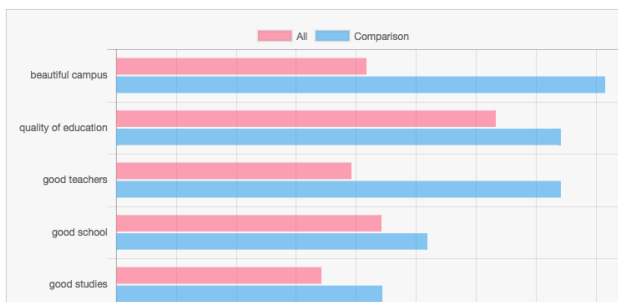
### Insight 2. Improvements to *Dates of exams* among the top 5

The business school did not expect to find Dates of exams among improvement suggestions. Thematic has shown that it was among the top 5 key mentioned improvements. Thematic provided an instant overview of what specifically should be improved:

- Communicate the exam dates much earlier
- Spread the exam dates evenly

Insight 3: How to increase student satisfaction

The business school's aim of improving NPS requires turning Passives into Promoters and Detractors into Passives. Thematic has shown that Detractors care most about the number of admitted students, which they believe an entrance examination may help with:
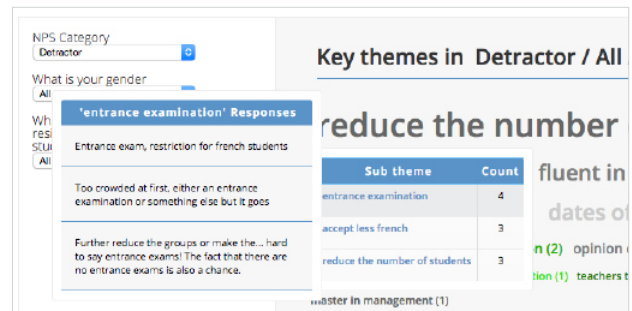
Thematic also showed that Passives care most about the program, and about the first-year bachelor courses specifically, suggesting more practical courses and teaching of some courses in English.
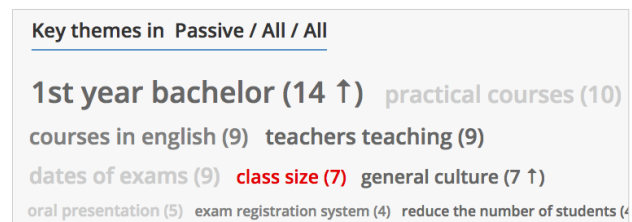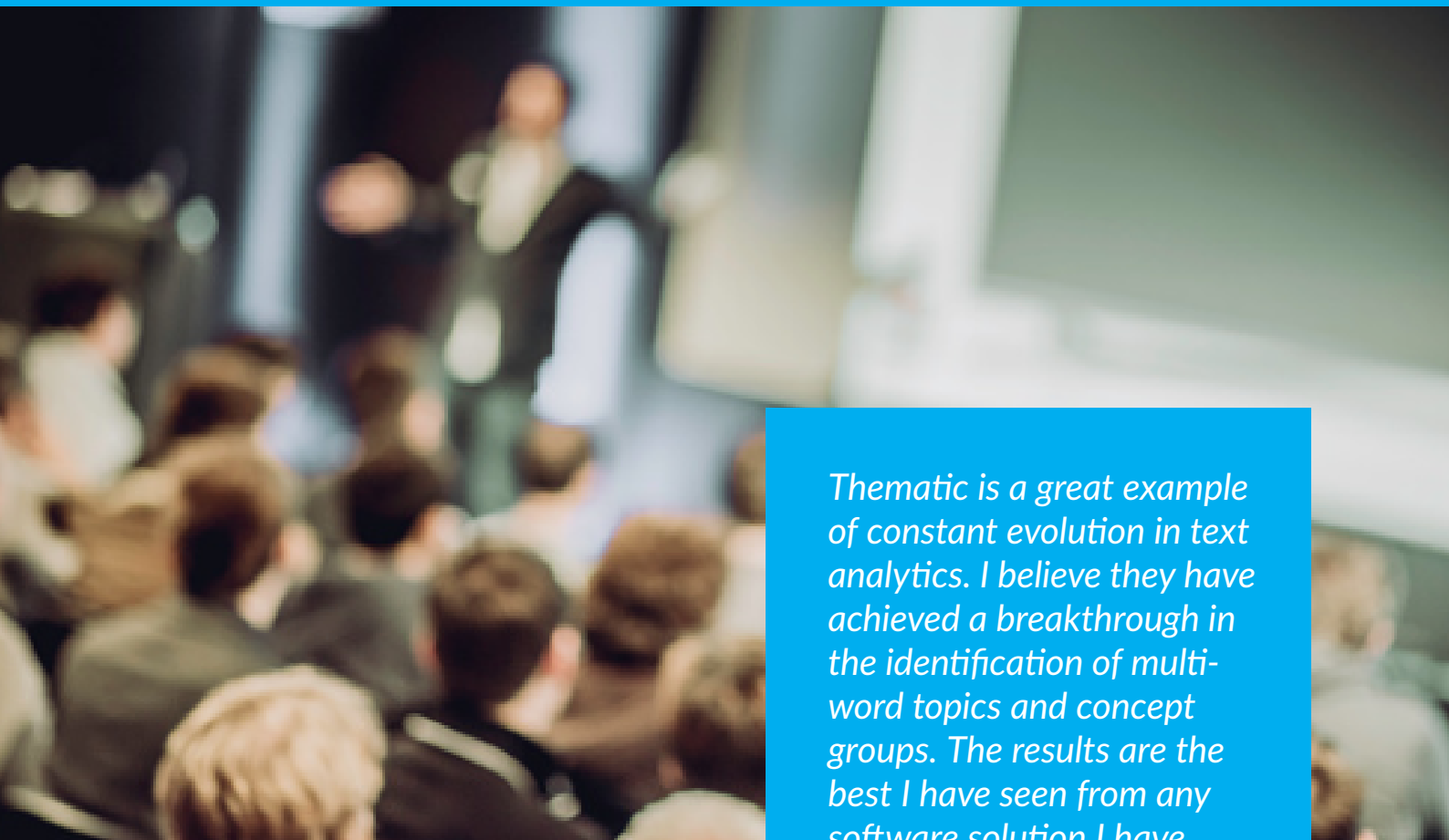
> *Thematic is a great example of constant evolution in text analytics. I believe they have achieved a breakthrough in the identification of multi-word topics and concept groups. The results are the best I have seen from any software solution I have tested, by a clear margin. They can find surprising insights in customer feedback that no other software could identify!*

Maurice FitzGerald
Former Head of CX at Hewlett Packard

Summary

The Swiss business school found Thematic's solution effective: It provided an automated way of turning hundreds of student voices into a clear understanding of what matters to different groups and find specific improvement suggestions. Some of these suggestions, like the *Dates of exams*, were truly novel and actionable.

Try Thematic on your data

In only 30 minutes, we'll show you how Thematic works on your data and give you advice on how to improve your customer feedback analysis.

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