Case Study Research

Description, discovery, and theory testing

Empirical enquiry:
Investigating contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context

- Studying phenomenon in its natural context at one or a few sites
- Qualitative tools and techniques for data collection and analysis
- Not explicitly controlling or manipulating variables

Related Research Strategies

- Field study (~case study as subtype)
  - Researcher as observer
- Action research
  - Researcher as observer and participant
- Application descriptions
  - Example or pure teaching cases

Selected 'Loebbecke' Cases (1)

- Building the Virtual Corporation at Gerling, 1997.

Selected 'Loebbecke' Cases (2)

- Betting on Information Technology at the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, 1995.
- Staying at the Top with Otis Elevator - Sustaining a Competitive Advantage Through IT, 1992.

Case Study Research

Strengths

- Capturing of 'reality': Context and detail
- Enabling to relate context to processes and outcomes
- Aiming to understand 'how' and 'why'
- Phenomenon: Dynamic, not yet settled

Weaknesses

- Possibly establishing relationships between variables, but not establishing causality
- Cannot generalize findings statistically, although analytic generalization possible
- No control over independent variables: Limiting internal validity of conclusions

Selected 'Loebbecke' Cases

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Case Research Design

Single Case
- Case needing to be unique
- Investigating phenomenon in depth
- Getting close to phenomenon
- Providing rich description
- Revealing deep structure

Multiple Cases
- Enabling analysis of data across cases
- Number of cases depending on how much new information likely to emerge from further cases (Eisenhardt: 4 to 10)

Case Study Research Methods

Qualitative
- Including context and people affected
- Data collection - Interviews, field notes, documents, archives
- Time-consuming and voluminous
- Data analysis not easy

Quantitative & Qualitative
- Richer picture
- Data possibly collected all at once or sequentially

Doing Case Study Research

- Ask appropriate question: Important, interesting and able to be answered
- Do comprehensive literature analysis and careful research design work first
- Select appropriate unit of analysis and estimate number of cases
- Maintain case study database - from start

Successful Case Study Research Requires …

- Research relevant to industry and practitioners
- Understanding importance of pragmatism
- Initiative, persistence, and optimism
- Rigor in design and data collection
- Intense curiosity about ‘phenomenon on context’

…. Questions, Comments, Complaints?

Thank you very much for your attention!

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