

Guidelines for Qualitative Case Research in Operations Management: A Banking Service Industry Perspective

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Abstract: This paper provides useful recommendations that may help researchers to effectively conduct their case studies in the banking service industry. This paper uses a qualitative multi-method research strategy, which combines different qualitative research methods. It contains two main sections, a systematic literature review and the authors' experience in the banking industry over the course of eight years of in-depth research in a Portuguese private bank. The results indicate that some sampling strategies are being neglected in the literature. The snowball sampling may become a useful strategy to build up samples from an initial small pool of informants and, thereby, mitigate the effect of banking data inaccessibility. Building upon Yin's (2003) guidelines, we recommend four sources of data collection, which fit well the banking industry research. Due to space limitations, we had to leave aside such important areas as data analysis, validity or ethics, but we hope this can instigate other researchers to conduct further research and, therefore, contribute to the management literature.

Keywords: private banking, service industry, multi-method research, case study, systematic literature review, sampling strategy

1. Introduction

Despite being considered an underutilized research strategy (Noor, 2008), the case study method has been an essential form of research in management and social sciences (Stake, 1978). Although case research has been criticized for lacking scientific rigor (see Yin, 2003), it is considered appropriate when dealing with a process or a complex real-life activity in great-depth (Noor, 2008). In operations management (OM), for example, the number of published scholarly articles using case research has been increasing progressively (McCutcheon and Meredith, 1993). Late nineties, Meredith (1998) argued that case and field research studies were rarely published in operations management journals, in spite of increased interest in reporting such types of studies and results. The author argued that case and field studies exhibit the same level of rigor and adhere to the same requirements of good research as rationalist studies, but achieve these goals by different means. Later on, Voss *et al.* (2002) draw guidelines and a roadmap for OM researchers wishing to design, develop and conduct case-based research. Barratt *et al.* (2011) started to review qualitative case studies in the field of OM and found that sufficient details in research design, data collection, and data analysis were missing. These authors also realized that there are studies that do not offer sampling logic or a description of the analysis through which research outcomes are drawn.

Case research is such a wide subject, and to provide relevant guidelines in such a few pages is a difficult task; therefore, we restricted this investigation to sampling strategy choices and sources of data collection selection. We made this option because the banking service industry is known for dealing with confidential information and it usually restricts the researchers' access to sensitive data. An adequate sampling strategy and sources of data collection are helpful in mitigating these constraints. To best of our knowledge there are not any methodological studies regarding case research in the banking service industry literature. Hence, we try to build knowledge upon relevant literature and, therefore, attempt to elevate the scientific rigor by assisting researchers on their decision-making process of choosing adequate sampling strategies and methods of data collection. This paper is organized as following: (1) literature review and concepts; (2) methodological options and systematic review process; (3) authors' experience (4) finally, the conclusion, limitations and suggestions for future research.