



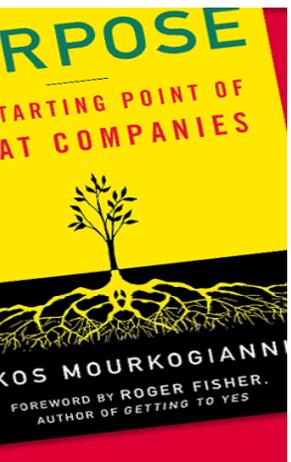
Aristotle University of
Thessaloniki

Seminar 2: Case Study Selection: Key Issues & Common Misconceptions...

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Purpose of the Seminar :

- To understand:
 - the criticality of case selection for CSR
 - the process of case study sampling for your PhD thesis
 - the premise that case study selection involves multiple decisions
 - the common misconceptions associated with case selection



What is Case Study Research?

- *a research strategy that investigates a phenomenon in its real-life context, relating it to theory and seeking to understand what the empirical phenomenon is a case of in theoretical terms*

(cf. Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki and Welch, 2010; Piekkari, Welch and Paavilainen, 2009).

What is Case Study Design? (structured approach...)

- ▣ "...a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions" (Yin, 2009, 26)
- ▣ a blueprint dealing with a) What questions to study b) What data are relevant c) What data to collect d) How to analyze the results
- ▣ Components:
 - 1) Research questions, 2) Theoretical propositions, if any,
 - 3) Unit(s) of analysis, 4) Logic of linking data to the propositions,
 - 5) Criteria for interpreting the findings

Importance of Case Study Research (CSR) in IB

Widespread adoption of Case Study Research (CSR) in IB:

- ▣ internationalisation process of the firm (Johanson and Valhne, 1977);
- ▣ international strategy (Porter, 1990);
- ▣ international growth (Penrose, 1960);
- ▣ entry modes in international markets such as exporting activities (Ellis and Pecotich, 2001);
- ▣ INVs (Coviello, 2006);
- ▣ MNCs (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1987);
- ▣ as well as comparative and cross-cultural phenomena.

Why CSR in IB/IM?

- Offer in-depth contextual insights by taking into account “environment characteristics, resource constraints, and cultural traits” (Thomas, 1996, p. 497)
- Deeper understanding of cultural phenomena, minimises cultural bias and ethnocentric assumptions compared with survey instruments
- See JIBS 2011 special issue on qualitative research

Why Sampling is critical for CSR?

- “case studies take as their subject one or more selected examples of a social entity” rendering the issues of sampling and sample size inherent to case study research.
- Kates (2007) points out that selection of case studies constitutes a challenge for case study researchers who *purposefully* choose information-rich case studies that promise to extend, reformulate or challenge theory by achieving theory-grounded explanations and identifying causalities.
- Dyers and Wilkins, (1991) Easton (1995) and Siggelkow (2007) have associated case selection with the development of coherent, credible and memorable stories from case research.
- Implications of sampling are reflected in the course of the case study project and quality of case study findings.

Why Sampling is critical for CSR?

- It is criterion for evaluating the quality of your case study research → important implications for your PhD thesis and journal publications!!!

3. *Selection of cases*

Good case study research usually do not select cases in order to gain representativity for some *a priori* defined population. Instead cases should be theoretically sampled (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), i.e. selected for theoretical reasons. For instance, cases may be chosen for literal replication purposes, i.e. too investigate whether findings from one case holds in another case. It may also be chosen for reasons to challenge or extend emergent theory by choosing cases where earlier findings would be expected to be challenged. Thus cases should be selected so to replicate, extend and/or challenge emergent theory

p.477

Reviewer Comments

The author(s) rely on a convenience sample of five firms to draw conclusions about factors that might induce heterogeneity... The selection of firms is haphazard, and significantly underrepresents the population to which the author(s) want to generalise their results... We would be hardpressed to accept the five firms studied as typical of these 15 or so industries.

... the one case study — however interesting — does not merit publication. Admittedly though it is an interesting case. Perhaps CA. MGT. REV. which does this sort of thing is a better outlet.

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Key Issues to Consider When Selecting Cases

(or questions I ask myself!)

Selection of Case Studies

1) What to Select

Misconception 1: The Empirical Unit is the Unit of Analysis

Misconception 2: The Unit of Analysis is Clear-cut

Misconception 3: The Unit of Analysis is the Same Across Cultures

2) How to Select

Misconception 4: Theoretical and Purposeful Sampling are the Same

Misconception 5: Sampling is a Single Decision

3) When to Select

Misconception 6: An Early Decision on Sampling is Best

4) How Many Cases to Include

Misconception 7: A Single or Multi-case Approach is an Either/Or Decision

Misconception 8: The More Cases, the Better

What to Select

- The definition of the Unit of Analysis is the answer to the question *what to select*
- Patton (2002) indicates that a key factor in selecting the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what unit it is that the researcher wants to be able to say something about at the end of the research.
- ‘Each unit of analysis implies a different kind of data collection, a different focus of analysis of the data, and a different level at which statements about findings and conclusions would be made’ (Patton 2002, p. 228).

The unit of analysis can be classified into 4 categories

- social units may be an individual or individuals, a role, a group, an organization, a community or social interactions (e.g, dyadic relationships);
- temporal units may be an episode or encounter, an event or a period of time;
- geographical units may be countries, towns or states;
- artefacts may be books, photos, news papers or technological objects.

What to select: Implications

- Defining the unit of analysis is not only important for the researcher in terms of conducting his/her research - It has great implication for the reader: Defining the unit of analysis assists the reader (reviewer) in clearly understanding our research.
- The unit of analysis shapes the focus of the case and the discussion of case study evidence. 1) It is also manifested in propositions of the study (see Coviello, 2006); 2) It facilitates theorizing in terms of developing theoretical concepts, categorization and classifications by juxtaposing the empirical world with theory (e.g. Tippmann et al., 2012).
- The unit of analysis can also generate future research directions

Example: Fernandez (2001) European Journal of Innovation Management

Methodology

This research design takes into account these two concerns (time and the overall nature) and uses what Yin (1984, p. 41) describes as a design of a “multiple embedded case”.

Embedded design means that several analysis units are analysed. Our research was aimed at three levels:

- (1) The organisation (department A).
- (2) A main innovation (immediate and personal patient assessment).
- (3) A number of minor innovations (some derived from the main innovation and others in parallel).

Reporting Findings

It has been difficult to find a pattern of development common to all the innovations. In some cases, a pattern with a linear sequence has defined the unfolding of the

On the other hand, radical innovations, especially administrative ones that have not yet been implemented, demanded more resources (especially human resources, as well as physical ones and more time) and also more changes in behaviours, values and status. These demands

As can be deduced from the research, all the routine innovations were implemented before the study ended, whereas only three radical innovations of the ten started were implemented. One of them – care quality

Example...

- An interesting distinction between the UNIT OF ANALYSIS & the EMPIRICAL UNIT (Tippman et al., 2012):

This research shows the strategic role that subsidiaries can play in driving global solution development, and suggests the value of pursuing this research agenda further. Our unit of analysis was the problem-solving process and our empirical interest in micro-level activities; further research could adopt a multilevel research design to examine the impact of MNC governance mechanisms (Foss, Husted, & Michailova, 2010). We sampled subsidiary managers rather than problem-solving networks, but it also seems worthwhile to investigate the influence of social networks on problem-solving efficiency and effectiveness in more detail. More explorative work is also required to uncover how subsidiary managers actually sell their ideas and local solutions to global managers, and the managerial competences that such actions require (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011).

Misconceptions

1. The empirical unit = the unit of analysis
2. The unit of analysis is clear-cut
3. The unit of analysis is the same across culture

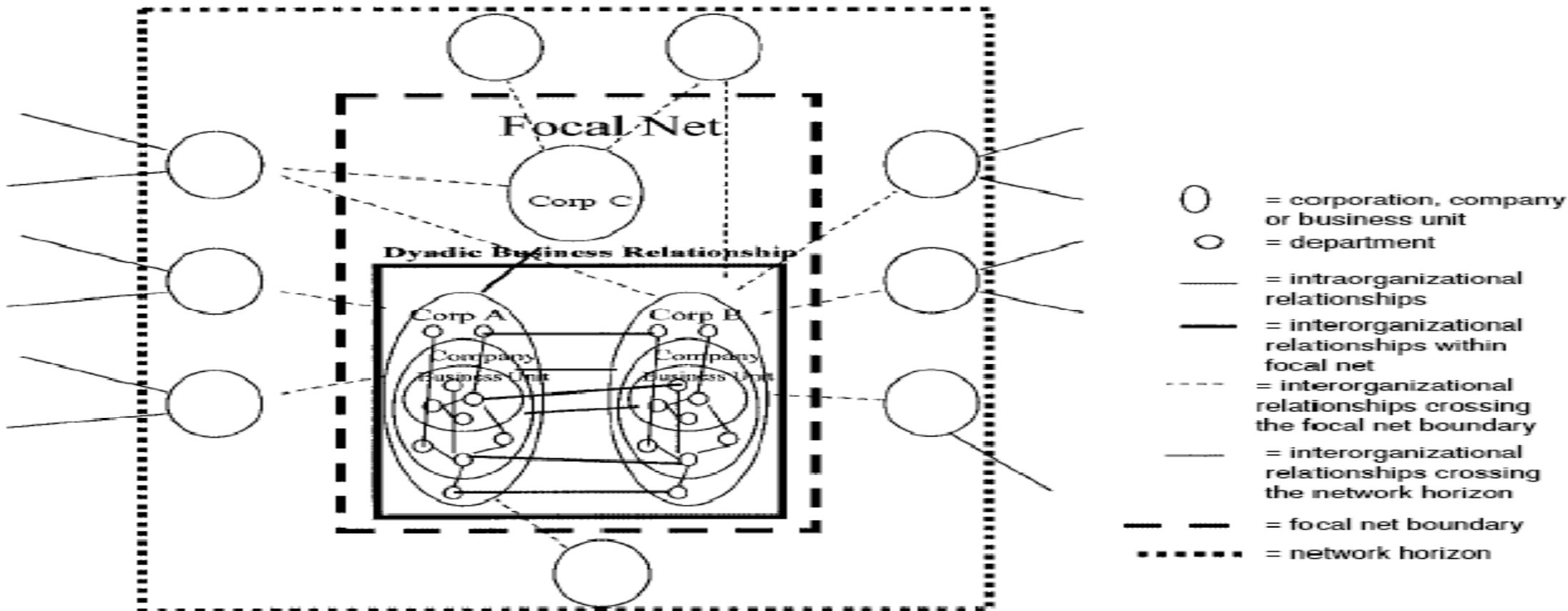
1. Unit of analysis vs. empirical unit

merger between the Finnish Merita and the Swedish Nordbanken. Our analysis focuses on the power implications on the Finnish side of the post-merger organization, which had to adapt to, cope with and develop means to resist the use of Swedish as the 'official corporate language'. However, we base our analysis on information gathered on both Finnish and Swedish sides.

A total of 53 interviews targeting the top decision-makers in these banking organizations were conducted in the latter part of 2001 and the beginning of 2002.

Vaara et al, Journal of Management Studies, 2005 42 (3), 595-623

2. Unit of analysis is not clear cut



Alajoutsijarvi, Moller and Rosenbroijer (1999)

3. The Unit of Analysis is not the Same Across Cultures

- Consistency and operational equivalence of concepts is assumed by researcher
- However, there are suggestions in the literature that conceptual terminology is particularly sensitive to cultural norms and values
- Terms like 'guanxi' (China), 'jeitinho' (Brazil), 'uram batyam' (Hungary) → Are they substantially different?
- How can we make meaningful cross-cultural comparisons?
- Need to uncover the dimensions that lie behind the concepts (Child, 2000).

3. The Unit of Analysis is not the Same Across Cultures (cont)

- Concept of entrepreneurship – culturally defined
- The American public views entrepreneurship as a time tested way to realize the American dreams. Is the American entrepreneurial archetype universal?
- Traits and the meaning of entrepreneurship vary across cultures. Thomas and Mueller, 2000, JIBS, 31 (2), 287-301.
- “Risk taking heroes to safe seeking professionals” , Hytti, (2005), JOCM, 18(6), 594-611.
- Other similar concepts: trust (Zaheer and Zaheer, 2006)

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(or questions I ask myself!)

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Misconception 8: The More Cases, the Better

How to Select

- The application of sampling strategy/ies is the answer to the question *how to select*
- Patton (2002, p. 243) provides a detailed account of 18 different types of sampling – two forms of random purposeful sampling and 16 forms of purposeful sampling – that may be employed in case study research, recommending that the selection of cases involve purposeful not random selection.
- Case dropping: 1) Sun et al., 2010, p. 1165 → they start with 3 cases but continue with 2 as they need successful JV projects and 2) Yu and Zaheer 2010, p. 483 → they drop a case for comparison reasons

Misconceptions

4. Theoretical and Purposeful Sampling is the Same
5. Sampling is a single decision

4. Theoretical and Purposeful Sampling is the Same

- **Purposeful sampling:** An umbrella concept that includes different sampling strategies that best serve the purpose of the case study investigation. It involves the selection of information-rich cases for an in-depth study from which the researcher can learn a great deal about the purpose of the study and investigated phenomena of the study (Patton, 2002).
- **Theoretical Sampling:** Theoretical sampling includes sampling on the basis of emerging concepts in order to explore the dimensional range or varied conditions along which the properties of concepts vary. The rationale of theoretical sampling is to select cases that are likely to replicate or extend the emergent theory, or to fill theoretical categories.

Purposeful Sampling...

- “Purposeful Sampling provides the roof for most sampling strategies, from which the researcher will select the most suitable one for his or her case study. My research is a single deep case study, the case was selected mostly with opportunistic sampling (Patton, 1990). When working with a case study company, the data is easily accessible. Informants were also more willing to participate in my research as they saw the relevance of my study to their everyday lives...”

Aalto student, Finland

Examples... Theoretical Sampling

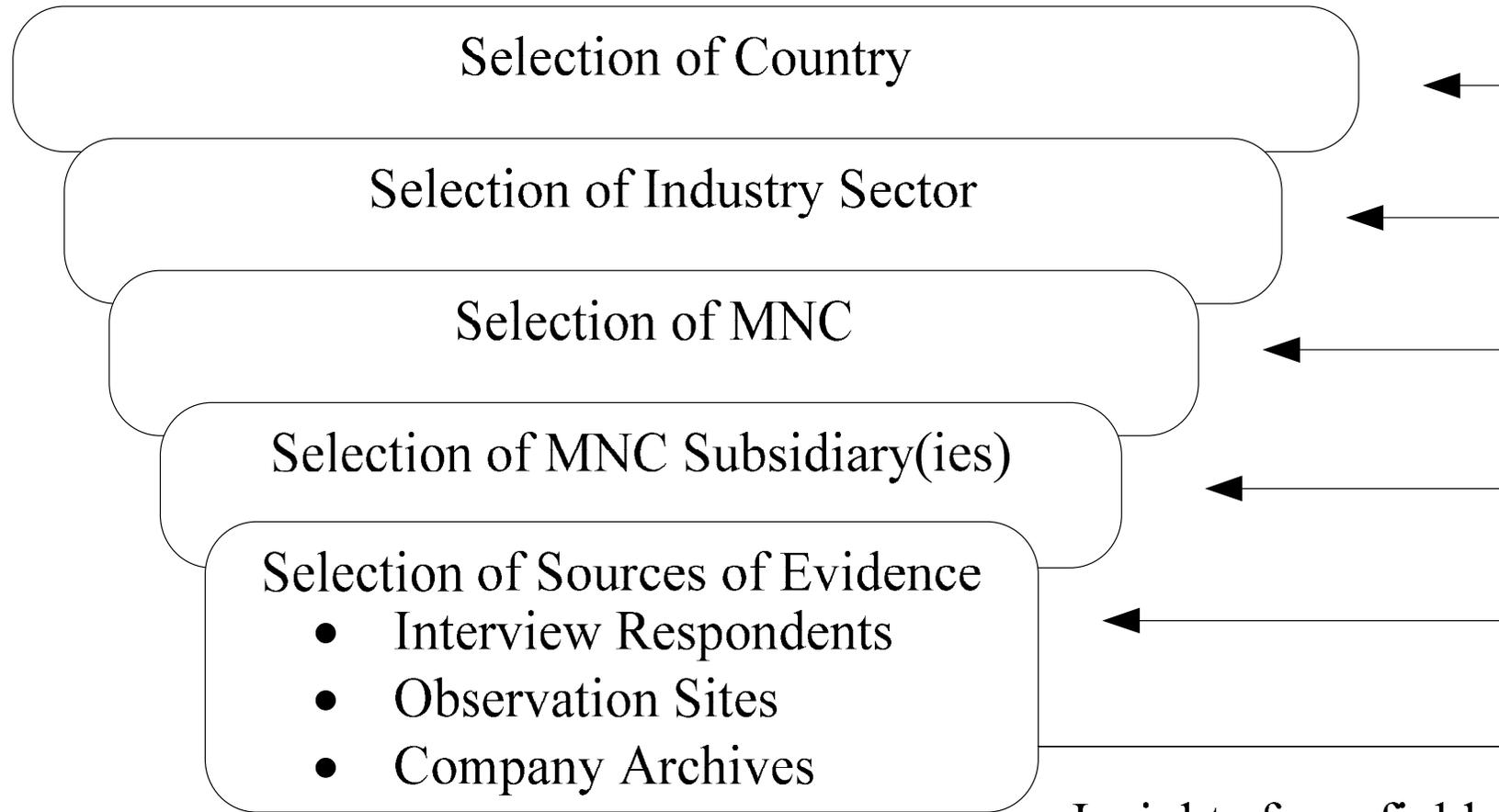
context. To address these limitations, multiple cases based on theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were selected. An attempt was made to select varied cases to gain a deeper understanding of the study's concepts and to assess contingent factors. In addition, through theoretical sampling, the applicability and robustness of the findings was further enhanced (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). The companies included in this study cover a broad

Wagner and Johnson, IMM, 2004

5. Sampling is a Single Decision

Multi-level sampling process involves the selection of different sampling strategies at different levels.

Level 1
↓
Level 2
↓
Level 3
↓
Level 4
↓
Level 5



Classification of the unit of analysis occurs at levels 1 through 4.

Insights from fieldwork are fed back into the sampling process.

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When to Select

- Pre-specification of the case(s) ensures that there is the required fit between research questions and empirical evidence (Yin, 2009). Case study sampling is completed before entering the field.
- There are case study researchers who acknowledge this emergent nature of the case study process and highlight the difficulty in identifying the unit of analysis and boundaries of the case study. Process of casing ... (temporality; dynamism)
- Examples: The case emerges ... and falls in the category... (e.g. Meyer & Altenborg, 2008/ Tsui & Mollering, 2010)

Misconception

6. An early decision of sampling is Best

An example of the process of casing...

This case study of a merger failure is unique in the sense that it reports from a failure to merge, which emerged as we were studying a merger process. The failed merger therefore falls into the category of accidental sampling (Pettigrew, 1990), and represents an extreme case of disintegration. There was

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How Many Cases to Include

- A multi-case approach appears to be appropriate (see Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles and Huberman, 1994) for advancement of propositions and replication.
- Alternatively, if the case study researcher is concerned with the development of *idiographic explanations* and *deep contextualization* of case study evidence, a single case study approach may be adopted (see Dyer and Wilkins 1991; Easton 1995; Halinen and Törnroos 2005; Ragin and Becker 1992; Siggelkow 2007).

Misconceptions

7. A Single or Multi-case Approach is an Either/Or Decision
8. The More Cases, the Better

7. A Single or a Multi-Case Approach is an either/or decision

Single case design	Multiple case design
Deep insights: greater depth	Replication logic: greater breadth
Emphasis on thick descriptions – better stories	Emphasis on comparison – better constructs
Can be highly context specific, focus on the uniqueness of the case	More opportunity for generalizability and external validity
Emphasis on within-case analysis	Emphasis on cross-case analysis
High level of flexibility	Less flexibility
More likely to be interpretivist approach, using inductive, iterative processes	More likely to adopt positivist approach to some aspects e.g., following a structured process and seeking for construct validation
Theorising concentrates on developing an understanding of the empirical setting and/or tracing causal processes in specific context	May be concerned with development of testable hypothesis and generalizable theory across settings
More opportunity to use theoretical, conceptually driven sequential and constant comparative methods of sampling	More likely to use purposeful sampling strategies where cases and informants are predetermined
Less resources are required but requires extensive access to single case evidence	Highly resource intensive
Risk of case study selected not representing phenomenon	May need to modify design where the parallel cases selected may turn out not to provide replication
Dual mode case design	
Integration of single and multiple case study designs e.g. combination of a single longitudinal case study with multiple (retrospective or snapshot) case studies	

8. The More Cases the Better

Yin (2009, p. 53) states that 'even if you can study only a "two-case" case study, your chances of doing a good case design will be better than doing a single case and the external generalizations of the findings will be increased'.

Dyer and Wilkins (1991) and Siggelkow (2007) propose that the purpose of case study research is to generate deep contextualized insights of the investigated phenomena. According to their view (Dyer and Wilkins 1991; Siggelkow 2007), this purpose is best served by a single case study design which constitutes the optimum form of case study research.

To Sum Up

- Pursuing a case study project involves dealing with the following issues:

What to Select

How to Select Cases

When to Select

How Many Cases to Include



Thank you very much for
your attention! Any
Questions?

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