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## Methodology of Business Research: Case Study

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- **INTRODUCTION:**

Case Study research is descriptive research that involves describing and interpreting events, conditions, circumstances or situations that are occurring in the present. Case Study is an in depth examination of complex events or series of events and is based on i) comprehensive understanding of the events ii) extensive description of the events and iii) analysis of the events taken as a whole and in context. It seeks to engage the with and report the complexities of social activity in order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to their social settings. It excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already know through previous research. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Darwin's theory evolution was based, in essence, on case study research, not experimentation, for instance. In education, this is one of the most widely used qualitative approaches of research.

- **OBJECTIVES:**

Following are the **objectives** of case study are

- 1) To study case study.
- 2) To study characteristics, purposes and principles of case study.
- 3) To study components of a case study design.
- 4) To study the types of case studies & sources of data collection for case studies.
- 5) To study the advantages, limitations of case study.

- **DEFINITION:**

According to Yin (1991:23) has defined case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”. Kromrey (1986:320) holds that “case study involves studying individual cases, often in their natural environment and for a long period of time”.

Thus, a kind of research design which usually involves the qualitative method of selecting the source of data. It presents the holistic account that offers insights into the case under study. When attention is focused on the development of the case, it is called ‘case history’.



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- **CHARACTERISTICS:**

Following are the **Five Characteristics** of case study are

- 1) It studies whole units in their totality and not some selected aspects or variables of these units.
- 2) It employs several methods in data collection to prevent errors and distortions.
- 3) It often studies a single unit: one unit is one study.
- 4) It perceives the respondent as a knowledgeable person, not just as a source of data.
- 5) It studies a typical case.

- **PRINCIPLES:**

Following are the **Three Principles** of case study are

- 1) **Use multiple sources :**

Use of one source of data collection does not give adequate evidence for generalization. But getting information from several sources (like interviewing, observing, analyzing documents) is regarded as the major strength of the case study approach, because it also contributes to improving the reliability and validity of the findings.

- 2) **Maintain a chain of evidence :**

The evidence from which conclusions are drawn in the case study has not only to be stated and specific case cited like criminological investigation in a crime case in the court but it is also to be preserved for some time so that the evaluators should be able to verify the source and evidence.

- 3) **Record data :**

The data may be recorded either in the form of sketchy notes in observation and interviews or it may be tape-re-corded in minute details. If a few notes are taken at the time of interview or observation, full notes may be written later on as soon as possible.

- **PURPOSES:**

Following are the **Ten Purposes** of case study are

- 1) The purpose of a case study is a detailed examination of a specific activity, event, institution, or persons.
- 2) The hypotheses or the research questions are stated broadly at the beginning of the study. A study's questions are directed towards 'how' and 'why' considerations and enunciating and defining these are the first task of the researcher. The study's propositions could be derived from these 'how' and 'why' questions. These propositions could help in developing a theoretical focus. However, all case studies may not have propositions.
- 3) For instance, an exploratory case study may give only a purpose statement or criteria that could guide the research process.
- 4) The unit of analysis defines what the case study is focusing on, whether an individual, a group, an institution, a city, a society, a nation and so on.
- 5) Linkages between the data and propositions and the criteria for interpreting the



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findings are usually the least developed aspects of case studies.

- 6) To use it as a preliminary to major investigation as it may bring to light variables, processes and relationships that deserve more intensive investigation. In this sense, it may even be a source of hypotheses for future research.
- 7) To probe the phenomenon deeply and analyse it intensively with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which the unit belongs.
- 8) To get anecdotal evidence that illustrates more general findings.
- 9) To refute a universal generalization. A single case can represent a significant contribution to theory building and assist in focusing the direction of future investigations in the area.
- 10) To use it as a unique, typical and interesting case in its own right.

- **TYPES:**

- 1) **Historical case studies:**

These studies trace the development of an organization system over time. The study of an adult criminal right from his childhood through adolescence and youth is an example of this type of case study. This type depends more on interviews, recording and documents.

- 2) **Observational case studies:**

There focus on observing a drunkard, a teacher, a student, a union leader, some activity, event, or a specific group of people. However, the researchers in this type of study are rarely total participants or total observers.

- 3) **Oral history case studies:**

There are usually first person narratives that the researcher collects using extensive interviewing of a single individual.

- 4) **Situational case studies:**

This from studies particular events. The views of all participants in the event are sought.

- 5) **Clinical case studies:**

This approach aims at understanding in depth a particular individual such as a patient in the hospital, a prisoner in the jail, a woman in a rescue home, a problem child in a school, etc. These studies involve detailed interviews, observation, going through records and reports , and so on.

- 6) **Multi-case studies:**

It is a collection of case studies or a form of replication, i.e. multiple experiments.

- **SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION:**

Two main sources of primary data collection are interviews and observation, while the secondary data are collected through a variety of sources like reports, records, newspapers, magazines, books, files, diaries, etc. The secondary sources may not be accurate or may be biased. But they specify events and issues in greater detail than interviews can. In collecting data from different sources, the investigators must have the following skills:



1. Be able to formulate precise and relevant questions to expected responses prompt the investigation to dig deeper.
2. Be a good listener, i.e., he should pay attention to all clues, moods and words used.
3. Be flexible and adaptive because data collection does not always proceed exactly as planned. Even the focus of inquiry can change a little.
4. Be tried to grasp responses in the context of the respondent's perspective. Sometimes, the responses may be at variance with one another and lead to the need for more evidence.
5. He should not have any bias in recording information or in analyzing it.

- **COMPONENTS FOR DESIGN:**

Following are the **five components** of a case study design.

1. Study questions.
2. Study propositions if any are being used or theoretical framework.
3. Identification of the units of analysis.
4. The logical linking of the data to the propositions or theory.
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings.

- **ADVANTAGES:**

Following are the **nine advantages** of a case study design.

1. It makes in-depth study possible.
2. It is flexible with respect to using methods for collecting data. like questionnaire, interview, observation, etc.
3. It could be used for studying any dimension of the topic is it could study one specific aspect and may not include other aspects.
4. It can be conducted in practically any kind of social setting.
5. Case studies are inexpensive.
6. It provides a critical test of a theory to corroborate, challenge or extend it.
7. It helps in studying a unique case which is useful not only in clinical psychology but also in sociology for the study of deviant groups, problem individuals, and so on.
8. It helps in studying the phenomenon that occurs in a situation where it has not been studied before, e.g. studying the problem and rehabilitation of the sufferers of cyclones in the coastal areas (sociology of disaster), management of irrigation canals for the farmers, environment disasters, etc.

- **LIMITATION:**

Following are the **eight limitation** of a case study design

- 1) The small sample size prevents the researcher from generalizing to larger populations.
- 2) The case study method has been criticized for use of a small number of cases, can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings.
- 3) The intense exposure to study of the case biases the findings.
- 4) It has also been criticized as being useful only as an exploratory tool.
- 5) They are often not easy to cross-check.



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- 6) Data may not be bias is be statistically reliable or valid.
  - 7) Controlling for bias is problematic.
  - 8) Case studies may be time-consuming, give the requirement for “comprehensive understanding” of the activity under review.  
Yet researchers continue to use the case study research method with success in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems.

- **CONCLUSION:**

A case typically refers to a person, a learner, a teacher, an administrator or an entity, such as a school, a university, a classroom or a programme. In some policy-related research; the case could be a country. Case studies may be included in larger quantitative or qualitative studies to provide a concrete illustration of findings, or they may be conducted independently, either longitudinally or in a more restricted temporal period. Unlike ethnographic research, case studies do not necessarily focus on cultural aspects of a group or its members. Case study research may focus on a single case or multiple cases.

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