

Adopted research method qualitative research method management essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



3. 1Introduction to Research Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology adopted to collect and analyze the data required to meet the set aims and objectives of the current research work.

3. 2Research Rationale

CSR concepts and approaches are based on various academic principles and have been broadly discussed in the Chapter 2(literature review). Academic insights as compared to real-life examples are sometimes quite different; therefore the current research work will contribute to the existing knowledge by providing a snapshot in-depth analysis and study of CSR policies/activities of international mobile phone manufacturing companies by considering various key factors as discussed in the literature review.

3. 3Research Processes

Great understanding of the business related research's philosophies, approaches and strategies and data collection methods act as a backbone in order to adopt the most suitable and effective methodology for any research development which mainly depends on the research questions and objectives (Robson, 2011; Jensen, 2011). To understand the centre point of the current research methodology, Saunders et al. (2012) 'research onion' has been adopted (Fig. 3. 1) which splits the research into different stages of philosophies; approaches; strategies; data collection techniques and procedures very clearly.

3. 4Research philosophy

Research philosophy mainly depends on the researcher's way of thinking and approaches about the development of knowledge. Saunders et al. (2003, p. 83-85) defined it into the three categories: Figure 3. 1: The research process "onion"(Source: Saunders et al., 2012)Positivism – When work has to be done with an observable social reality for end product of law-like generalisation. Interpretivism – When there is need to understand the reality working behind them. For interpretivists, the world is quite multifarious to be reduced to a set of observable laws and generalization is not an important matter as compared to understanding of the actual conditions behind the reality (Gray, 2004). Realism – When the existed reality is independent of human thoughts and beliefs.

3. 4. 1Adopted Research Philosophy: Interpretivism

As the current research is related to the comparison of CSR activities of the mobile phone companies and their contribution towards society, the positivist framework of CSR will lead to a merely instrumental interpretation of corporate responsibility (Jones, 1995) that fits into an economic theory of the firm (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Therefore, it does not provide a good moral grounding to the CSR based research work. While interpretivism focuses interactive social actions to understand the reality (Slevitch, 2011), interpretivism philosophy is selected for the current study because its aim is to understand motivations, intentions of mobile phone manufacturing companies behind their CSR policies, not only the explanations.

3. 5 Research approaches

It's quite important to determine the nature of research approach to be implemented because scientific inquiry in practice typically involves alternating between deduction and induction. Both methods consider interaction of logic and observation and directs towards the construction of social theories (Babbie, 2010: p. 53). 3. 5. 1 Deductive Approach – It includes development of theory and hypothesis and designing of research strategy in order to test it during the specific situation (Fig. 3. 2) (Wilson, 2010: p. 7; Saunders et al., 2012: p. 48). This approach is associated with the positivism philosophy and various kinds of data are collected by the researcher either to confirm or reject the hypothesis (Gill and Johnson 2010).

Inductive Approach

Deductive Approach 3. 5. 2 Inductive Approach – Data is collected by a researcher and a theory is developed after performing data analysis (Fig. 3. 2). The inductive approach is a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data with specific objectives and idea which helps in generalization of the situation (Campbell et al., 2003; Crowther and Lancaster, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012: p. 48). Figure 3. 2: Inductive Vs. Deductive Research Approach (Source: Wilson, 2010: p. 8)

3. 5. 3 Adopted Research approach: Inductive Approach

As we are neither interested in developing CSR theories nor its hypothesis to prove some assumptions, thus deductive approach is not suitable for current research. Therefore, inductive approach, having strong association with interpretivism, allows the researcher to provide subjective reasoning.

3. 6Research Methods

3. 6. 1 Quantitative Research Method

Quantitative research strategy is to discover the answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures by hypotheses testing, causes analysis & effects and making of predictions (William et al., 2012). This approach deals in advance with the research questions and objectives and a detailed method of data collection and analysis are adopted in order to generate the numerical data and information (Cameron and Price, 2009; Jensen, 2011).

Advantages:

Suitable for specific research problem
Appropriate for scientific researches
due to involvement of numerical analysis
Clear independent and dependent variable
High reliability level and minimum personal judgement

Disadvantages:

Researcher & their biases are not known to participants in the study, & participant characteristics are deliberately hidden from the researchers
Limited outcomes due to structured method
Difficult to control the environment
Expensive and time consuming preparation work
Complex analysis
Larger data set
Low validity

3. 6. 2 Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research is like a situated activity that locates the observer in the real world and applied to discover the people's behavior, practical experiences, believes, behaviors and reactions to a certain environment and

facilitates in understanding & interpretation of social interactions (Davies, 2007; Dawson 2009; Michael; 2009).

Advantages:

Researcher & their biases may be known to participants in the study, & participant characteristics may be known to the researcher
High validity
Rich and subjective data collection
Specific variables studied
Concentrated on proving some phenomena, rather than a theory
Suitable for non-scientific research like social or business related researches based on real-life situations

Disadvantages:

Low reliability level
Small samples or data
Particular or specialized findings

3. 6. 3 Adopted Research Method: Qualitative Research Method

The qualitative research method has been chosen which is further associated directly with the inductive approach (Wilson, 2010). It will help us to discover the mobile phone manufacturing companies' social interactions and involvement towards CSR activities and sustainable development by using the subjective data collection. Also, our intention is not to develop a new CSR theory but mainly to conduct a non-scientific research based on their real-life issues. Therefore qualitative research approach would be best suited for the present CSR research.

3. 7Research Strategies

Research strategy provides a general plan in order to answer the research questions. Although, there is not any inherently superior strategy, but just that research strategy is most suited which can answers the all research questions (Saunders et al., 2012). Saunders et al. (2012) presented research strategies include experiment based on natural, social science; action research related to the change management and collaboration with practitioner and researcher; grounded theory focused on the interpretation of the social world. Saunders et al. (2012) further discussed about following two research strategies which are frequently used and will be discussed in detail:

3. 7. 1Survey research

Survey research is specific type of field study that involves the data collection from a sample of elements drawn from a well-defined population through the use of questionnaire. It helps in conducting easy and practical study of a representative sample through field research for confident generalization of research finding from selected sample to entire population by generation of statistical data (Jackson and Bundgard, 2002; Robson, 2011; Gupta, 2012). The main demerits of survey research are that it is based on small amount of individuals at first and furthermore it mainly reflects the respondent ethical stance not the actual corporation (Jankowicz, 2009; Michael and Jerry, 2012).

3. 7. 2Case Study

Case study is a research study which focused on understanding the dynamics present within single setting or unit of analyses (Eisenhardt, 1989; Collins and Hussey, 2003). Case study is defined as " an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon by using multiple evidence, set within its real-world context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009: p. 18; Saunders et al., 2012). It embraces the tasks of case study design, data collection, data analysis and reporting the results (Yin, 2012: p. 3). The case study design is based on the kind of research questions that a study can be able to address (Shavelson & Towne, 2002: pp. 99–106). Case study research is generally adopted either in case of descriptive or explanatory questions. Furthermore, by emphasizing the study of a phenomenon within its real-world context, the case study method can be adopted with the data collected in natural settings, compared with relying on " derived" data (Yin, 2012: p. 5). Therefore, the qualitative research method based on case study has an additional strength of dealing with various forms of evidences like reports, surveys, interviews and observations (Yin, 2012).

Advantages:

Yin (2009: p. 18) reveals that the adoption of the case study: copes with the technically distinctive situation by considering multiple variables. relies on multiple sources of evidence, with converged triangulated data. gets guidance for data collection and analysis from the previous theoretical propositions development. provides rich insightful explanations as compared

to other research methods. allows comprehensive details to be collected. facilitates with rich data collection having greater depth as compared to experimental designs. allows us to conduct rare cases where large samples of similar participants are not available.

Disadvantages:

Inappropriate for scientific research work or generalization. Very lengthy resulting in enormous and unreadable documents. Biasness in data collection is possible due to data collection by single experimenter. Time consuming research progress.

3. 7. 3 Adopted Research Strategy: Case study

Survey research method, which reflects respondents' personal views, is not suitable for research work related to CSR and sustainable development because CSR mainly emphasizes the CSR questions not personal responsibility. It means such surveys will reflect only the respondent ethical stance not the corporation which makes it impossible to target the survey to the actual corporation. Moreover, survey research considers small amount of individuals which can't fulfill the CSR research work demand of large amount of individuals for CSR policy formulation (Dobbin, 1998). Therefore, this data collection technique is inappropriate for the present research work. On the other hand, case study is considered an ideal strategy for this research work due to need of holistic and in-depth exploration (Feagin et al., 1991).

Therefore, case study technique seems suitable for this research with the general research question of examining the embracement of the idea of CSR and sustainable development by the international corporations and to reveal

the extent of their involvement in CSR activities. Furthermore, case study research will help in exploring specific phenomena with freedom of using qualitative and/or quantitative data collection by considering the wider group or population to which the case belongs (McGivern, 2003). It means that the case study technique will help to explore the data in real-life environment which seems difficult to capture by observations, interviews or survey research methods (Zaidah, 2003).

3. 7. 4Design of the Case Study

Generally speaking, case study method as a research tool receives criticism in terms of its lack of robustness. Therefore, crafting the design of current case study has paramount significance. Depending on research questions, researchers have choice to adopt either a single or multiple-case studies design. Single-case study design is suitable for the researcher in case of absence of replicable cases while the multiple-case studies design, in order to compare the key factors of several related organizations on wider population, can be adopted with real-life events. It will help in generalization of results thereby supporting the previous results robustness (Yin, 2012). Therefore, the multiple-case studies design would be most suited to perform the comparative case studies and it has been adopted for the present research work in order to compare the mobile phone manufacturing organizations of Apple (manufacturer of iPhone) and Samsung mobile phone company with each other, exploring their CSR dimension, activities and involvements and will facilitate us to make future recommendations. The main reason to select Samsun for the current multiple-case study design is

due to its involvement in various CSR activities of green management, Eco-Productd, climate change & energy sustainability (Samsung sustainability report, 2012). Furthermore, Samsung has uploaded yearly based sustainability reports highlighting its CSR activities openly and it is a member of Dow Jones Sustainability World Index and FTSE4Good Index. Therefore, we assume that it has a mature business environment to cultivate CSR which can facilitate the current research work requirements. Conversely, many major companies are missing a huge trick on the online communication of their CSR activities, policies or sustainability reports. In spite of major investment in data collection of their activities, they are totally failed to get the value from that effort with their valuable stakeholders (Mallen, 2012). Due to that reason, among that big leading mobile phone manufacturing companies, Apple for its mobile phone is selected whose CSR activities although are not well presented to its consumers and there are still a lot of details that Apple hasn't disclosed about their iPhone mobile. Until end of 2011, Apple has not told to its consumers about what metals or minerals were in their phones, or where they came from and how much environmental issues have been considered. Furthermore, both of these companies are under the critical debate of business researchers due to various reasons like their involvement in ethical debate, suspect of conducting an unethical approach to business either by providing unethical products or manufacturing in an unethical manner.

3. 7. 5Case Study Approach

The case study will be dissected into the following manner: Analysis of the history/profiles of the companiesCSR policies of the companiesDiscussion/comparison of current environmental and social activities' involvementFuture recommendations

3. 8Data Collection Methods

There are two kinds of data collection methods for research project (Saunders et al., 2012) as follow:

3. 8. 1Primary data

Primary data is collected specially for the research project being undertaken (Saunders et al., 2012) which can be collected through the following techniques: Questionnaire – It's difficult to develop perfect questionnaire design due to its limitation to the in-depth detail of data and time control. Such method results couldn't be accurate or reliable due to low response rates, suspiciousness of the respondent's trustworthiness and due to misinterpretation of data results & unsuitable use of data analysis procedures (Michael and Jerry, 2012: p. 137).

Interviews – Interviewing mainly involves researchers to ask various questions to get their answers either individually or in a group (Punch, 2011; Robson, 2011). Interviews are personal form of research as compared to questionnaires and deals directly with the respondents with their easiness. Demerits of interviews are time consuming and resource intensive and an interviewer must be competent to control the biasness in the results as slanting of the results might jeopardize the results or purpose of the study (McNamara , 1999; Michael and Jerry, 2012: p. 91).

Observations – Observation typically provides anthropological data – anthropological fieldwork generally requires immersion in a culture over a long period of time (Silverman, 2000). The systematic information about a phenomenon of interest is obtained by observation method without communication of the observer with the people and may be conducted in a natural or contrived environment (Bryman, 2012: p. 272-277; Michael and Jerry, 2012: p. 111). It is cheaper and faster but biasness in the researcher's perception could bias the data further.

3. 8. 2 Secondary data

The already published data and reanalysis for some other reason are called secondary data. It contains both raw and published data and can be used for both descriptive and explanatory research. Secondary data can be collected through reports, written documents, multiple source and survey and can be used for both quantitative and qualitative (Saunders et al., 2012). Its strength is to look and understand people's meanings, to adjust to new issues and ideas as they emerge and to contribute to the evolution of new theories

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). The collecting of secondary data make it possible for the researcher to explore what others have contributed to the subject matter and compare opinions/ideas within existing published material from both the academic and business worlds.

3. 8. 3 Adopted Data Collection Method: Secondary Data

Primary data collection techniques couldn't be adopted for the current research due to the following reasons: Interview technique is not suitable for CSR related research work related to mobile phone manufacturing companies of Apple and Samsung because the respondents' information to the interviewer about telling the organizations' particular course of CSR may affect the aim of evaluating the corporate ethical stance i. e. the interviewer's words may trigger certain involvements, and there is high chances of 'untruthful' statements (Creswell, 2008). Sometimes it may also possible that people might discuss those things which they feel are in favor of the interviewer and to secure their jobs or reputation thereby causing biasness (Jaber et al., 2012). Similarly, observation technique is also not suitable for CSR research work as it does not lend itself to a 'snap-shot' evaluation, where policies – not people, are evaluated at a point in time and difficult to generalize the findings. It will provide less information about the underlying preferences, motives and beliefs of the mobile phone manufacturing companies and difficult to observe specific kinds of behavior. In some cases, it's unethical to observe companies' confidential activities/ policies without letting them know or consent. For the qualitative research work, the best option would be the secondary data which can be thought of

examining and reflecting on perception in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Secondary data was collected from numerous sources like CSR, sustainability, supplier's responsibility and product environmental reports of Apple and Samsung mobile phone manufacturing companies, News, journals, newspapers and reliable Internet portals. An online Swansea Metropolitan University's library data base named " ABI/INFORM" and " CSR-Wire" containing full text journal articles was used prolifically.

3. 9Data Processing Methods

Although various researchers have developed and adopted different methods to measure the CSR concept/approach, following method of measuring CSR is adopted for the current qualitative case study:

Content analysis

It is a research technique for making replicable and specific inferences from text to other properties of its source (Krippendorff, 2008). It gathers the categorized data from written descriptions/documents and transforms the material into quantitative scales for additional analysis (Weber, 1990; Holder-Webb et al., 2007) by either discussing its items qualitatively or by using raw data set in form of counted items for quantitative research (Riffe et al., 2005). Qualitative content analysis is different from traditional quantitative content analysis because the researchers use it for constant revision of the categories that are extracted from the assessment of documents (Altheide, 1996; Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative content analysis within the framework of Krippendorff (2008) defines itself as an

approach of empirical and methodological controlled analysis of texts following the content analytical rules. Such analysis must be systematic, analytic as well as flexible (Mayring, 2000: p. 2). Advantages: Content analysis is an unobtrusive technique which gives full consideration to reliability by confirming the use of same measures by different researchers and validity by the use of word counts (Silverman, 2000; Krippendorff, 2008). It can use for both quantitative and qualitative operations (Ross, 2008). Disadvantages: Content analysis results are not generalisable to the wider population (Cameron & Price, 2009: p. 430). Satisfactory categories are difficult to be clearly defined, together with a context due to large volume of unstructured data (‘t Hart et al., 2005). The reasons to select qualitative content analysis are: It includes the framework of a relational analysis for having higher reliability and validly based on large volumes of data (Collis & Hussey, 2003: p. 257). It’s a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories (Stemler, 2001). Preferable tool to analyze CSR attitudes (Vourvachis, 2007; Yongqiang, 2008). Therefore, qualitative content analysis will make it possible to develop generalized and extended results to other mobile phone manufacturing companies by performing the comparative case studies based on analysis of the CSR practices of two different mobile phone manufacturing companies of Apple and Samsung.

3. 10Validity and Reliability

Bryman (2012) defines validity as the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. The validity of the present qualitative

case study will be measured by verifying the extent of mobile phone manufacturing companies' involvement in CSR activities from recourses of sustainability reports, News, Newspaper etc. As the qualitative case studies can gain higher validity due to close relationship of the data with the research field and analyses of the research subjects (Thomson, 2011), therefore the current research work's validity is very important in order to get accurate coordination of research findings with the actual situation. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1994) considered validity as 'trustworthiness' for qualitative case study which is based on four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Great care would be taken to achieve believable findings i. e. credibility as well as generalization of the results to other contexts i. e. transferability, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1994). Therefore, validity is possible only if the current qualitative study is researched in a professional, precise, transparent and methodical manner which can properly associate data with its conclusions (Bulmer, 1979: p. 49). As the research has to be conducted by single researcher, therefore dependability and conformability will be tried to achieve by securing all the records of all phases at one place to facilitate others to follow the research process like collected data, data sources, downloaded copies of websites, and analysis notes. The researcher will try to avoid any personal bias during the qualitative content analysis. Regarding the validation, it has two important forms appropriate for the qualitative case study (Silverman (2006) :(1) Triangulation: A method to compare different kinds of data collection, theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and processing methods in order to see whether they corroborate one

another (Stake, 2010). Patton (2002) presented four kinds of triangulation: Data source triangulation - when the researcher looks for the data to remain the same in different contexts; Investigator triangulation - when several investigators examine the same phenomenon. Theoretical triangulation - when investigators with different view points interpret the same results. Methodological triangulation - when one approach is followed by another, to increase confidence in the interpretation. Environmental Triangulation - when different locations or settings related to the environment are considered during the study like time, day, or season.(2) Respondent validation: A method to take ones findings back to the subjects, where these people verify ones findings. For the of current case study, " data source triangulation method" is adopted by collecting converged evidence from different sources as well as by checking constantly the reliability of the findings (Maxwell, 2009: pp. 244–245). As validation has gained an extra important for conducting the case study related to the CSR activities, therefore data source triangulation method will help in increasing the robustness of the current qualitative CSR based case study of Apple and Samsung mobile phone manufacturing companies by increasing assurance of their collected data from multiple resources and revealing unique findings (Thurmond, 2001: p. 254). Regarding the reliability of the research work, it is considered as the extent to which a measuring procedure produces the same result on repeated checks (Carmines and Zeller, 1979). Bryman (2012) states that the reliability is about to create a link between a measure and a concept in order to generate a measurable concept. Reliability would be high

if the data sources support each other from different resources and if not, then this will be analyzed in the results (Silverman, 2006).

3. 11Research Ethics

Consideration of research ethics in business and management realm has becomes a topic of concern which deals with the role of values in the research process (Bryman and Bell, 2011: p. 122). Hammersley (2012) outlined the considerations of extrinsic research ethics like lowering the harm risk to participants or suffers adverse consequences from research activities; acquiring informed consent for research, the value of autonomy and the protection of secrecy and confidentiality for participants. The researcher considers himself as an extra attentive and observant due to his knowledge of the chosen industry of mobile phone manufacturing forming the basis of this research. Furthermore, thinking of above mentioned ethical issues has stimulated the researcher to consider his own values particularly when integrating them into the research, assuring truthfulness and reliability would be constant throughout. The data used for this research is obtained from the published sustainability reports and/or from the websites of Apple and Samsung mobile phone manufacturing companies in addition to the authentic news and reports published by other reliable institutions or organization. As all of these data are publically accesses by internet, therefore there is no need of getting consent/permission from the selected companies or there is no risk of harming the selected mobile phone manufacturing companies of Samsung and Apple.

3. 12Summary

The qualitative research method had been adopted based on comparative case studies of mobile phone manufacturing companies of Samsung and Apple's iPhone. Such methodology will help us to gain deep review of the CSR and sustainable development activities of both mobile phone manufacturing companies. Therefore, in order to explore the research questions to get the research objectives, the qualitative methodology would be the best suited and comprehensive approach to this study. Secondary data set had been used from the existing published material from both the academic and business worlds. Qualitative content analysis for data processing will be adopted for this comparative case study by using multiple sources of evidence like CSR or sustainability reports, news and the websites. Finally, author will adopt triangulation method of validation by collecting converged evidence from different sources to make our findings robust and highly reliable.