

Research philosophy is a belief management essay



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The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research philosophy, approach, strategy that is relevant to this business research. In addition, data collection method that is conducted to address the research problems as provided in chapter 2 is also included. The research methodology will be based on the research onion as introduced by Saunders et al. (2009) – Figure 3. 1.

Selecting the appropriate methodology is essential for the effectiveness of any research (Buckley, 2006). The right choice of the approach will help to make a more informed decision about the research design and strategy that will be consistent with the research topic (Easterby-Smith et al., 1993). In this section, a questionnaire is to be designed to support data collection and further analysis on the research hypotheses. Besides, ethical issues of this research are also included in the end of this chapter.

3. 2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy is a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be collected and analyzed (Levin, 1988). It is significant with particular reference to research methodology because: (i) it can help the researcher to refine and specify the research methods to be used in a study, that is, to clarify the overall research strategy to be used, (ii) knowledge of research philosophy will enable and assist the researcher to evaluate different methodologies and methods and avoid inappropriate use and unnecessary work by identifying the limitations of particular approaches at an early stage and (iii) it may help the researcher to be creative and innovative in either selection or adaptation of methods (Easterby-Smith et al., 1993).

Figure 3. 1 – Research onion

Source: Saunders et al. (2009)

According to Saunders et al. (2009), there are four research philosophies in management research including positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism. The choice of research philosophy will therefore influence the development of the research. And although each research philosophy has its strengths and weaknesses (Neville, 2005), the author chooses philosophy of positivism for this study because of the following reasons.

The philosophy of positivism research is considered a source of knowledge closely associated with the physical and natural sciences (Alavi and Carlson, 1992).

The special features of positivism are seen to be a philosophical ideology and movement, and it has a certain influence in human perception (Birger, 2005).

By positing a reality in separation of subject and object, the positivist paradigm provides an objective reality against which researchers can compare their claims and ascertain truth (Popper, 1972).

Positivism is largely concerned with the testing, confirmation and falsification, and predictive ability of generalizable theories about an objective, readily apprehended reality (Chua, 1986; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991).

The objective of positivism is to provide a valid logical foundation for empirical research, and simultaneously restrict the scope of human

rationality in scientific study to discovery the efficient means with its aim to achieve the end goal Friedman (1953).

3. 3 Research approach

In their 2009 work, Saunders et al. referred to the two broad methods of reasoning as the deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive reasoning works from the more general to the more specific, meaning that it starts with a theory, and then hypotheses are developed and a research strategy is designed to test the hypotheses. Meanwhile, inductive reasoning moves from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories, meaning that theories are developed as a result of data collection (Saunders et al., 2009). In this study, the author chooses deduction research approach due to the following reasons:

It involves the development of a theory that is subjected to a rigorous test (Saunders et al., 2009).

It is the dominant research approach in the natural sciences, where laws present the basis of explanation, allow the anticipation of phenomena, predict their occurrence and therefore permit them to be controlled (Collis and Hussey, 2003).

Deductive reasoning is more narrow in nature and is concerned with testing or confirming hypotheses (Babbie, 2001) and therefore, more suitable with the context of this study.

3. 4 Research strategy

Saunders et al. (2009) stated that research strategy is important as it will help to answer particular research questions and meet research objectives, and that the choice of research strategy will be guided by the research questions and objectives, the extent of existing knowledge, the limit of time and other resources available. The strategies as indicated in the research onion (Saunders et al., 2009) are: experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research. In this study, the author thinks that case study strategy is most suitable and consistent with the research objectives, for the following reasons:

It is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 2002).

It provides a better understanding and content theorization of the processes and context in which the practices of management control take place (Morris and Wood, 1991; Adams et al., 2006; Berry et al., 2009 cited in Simoes and Rodrigues, 2008).

It can be a very worthwhile way of exploring and challenging existing theories and provide a source of new research questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

It has considerable ability to generate answers to the questions “ Why”, “ What” and “ How” (Saunders et al., 2009) that are raised in this study.

According to Yin (1994), the case study methodology is the most suitable approach to answer the questions “ Why?” and “ How?” In this case, the questions we want to answer are: “ Why has the BSC been introduced as a performance measurement tool?” and “ How is the BSC model evaluated via employee’s feedback?” “ How is the relationship between those measures?” The advantage of this approach lies in the possibility of achieving triangulation (Denzin, 1978) which is given by the possibility of using many data sources.

3. 5 Research Method

As indicated in the research onion by Saunders et al. (2009), mono method, multi-method or mixed methods can be used as the system of collecting data for research projects. In multi-method, quantitative and qualitative researches are used widely in business and management research to differentiate both data collection techniques and data analysis procedures (Saunders et al., 2009). Qualitative research method focuses on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants-that is, qualitative research explores meaning, purpose, or reality (Hiatt, 1986). It is usually described as allowing a detailed exploration of a topic of interest in which information is collected by a researcher through case studies, ethnographic work, interviews, and so on (Harwell, 2011). Meanwhile, quantitative research method attempts to maximize objectivity, replicability, and generalizability of findings, and is typically interested in prediction. Its key features are the use of instruments such as tests or surveys to collect data, and reliance on probability theory to test statistical hypotheses that correspond to research questions of interest

(Harwell, 2011). In supporting this study's objectives, the author chooses to use both qualitative and quantitative researches. It is hoped that the combination of these two methods will strongly support the development of this study in terms of data collection and analysis.

Specifically, qualitative approach will be applied in this study via closed questions in questionnaires to obtain information with its aim to explain how the factors impacting BSC in current context of HSBC.

Besides, data of research allows researchers to access and recognize population attitudes, perceptions, and ideas about particular social questions with a small sample, as well as practical knowledge (Swidorski, 1980).

Accordingly, questionnaire surveys play an important role in helping researchers understand the principles of questionnaire design to explain results in an optimal and meaningful way (Slattery et al., 2011).

3. 6 Methods of collecting data

3. 6. 1 Data source

Data are facts, figures and other relevant materials, past and present, serving as bases for study and analysis (Dekeba, 2012). Therefore, data collection is an important aspect of any type of research study. Data gathered by different methods may provide different windows onto social world (Gilbert, 2008). On the other hand, inaccurate data collection can impact the results of a study and ultimately lead to invalid results (Afroze, 2010). Basically, data collection includes primary data and secondary data.

Primary data is the data which is collected for the first time (Hair et al., 2011). Researchers discussed that the major advantage of primary data is <https://assignbuster.com/research-philosophy-is-a-belief-management-essay/>

that the information is specific, relevant, up-to-date and that they answer specific research questions that secondary data cannot. However, cost and time consuming are its main disadvantages (Onkvisit & Shaw, 2008).

Secondary data is the data which is not originally collected but rather obtained from published or unpublished sources (Jha & Shah, 2009). Its advantage is that it can be quickly and cheaply obtained, however the most important limitation is that it may not be accurate and updated, therefore not meeting specific research needs (Saunders et al., 2009).

In particular, both primary data and secondary data are used in the research with the purpose of providing an objective and multifaceted view on the topic. Secondary data retrieved from e-books, e-journals from the University's e-library, websites and HSBC's available internal sources and the bank's internal and restricted reports on strategy, structure and procedures as inputs for chapter 1 and 2 and for designing questionnaires. Primary data is to be collected from a survey using questionnaires amongst HSBC's staff within the scope of this research.

3. 6. 2 Data collection method

As mentioned by Saunders et al. (2009), three ways of primary data collection include Observation, Interview and Questionnaires.

Observation involves the systematic observation, recording, description, analysis and interpretation of people's behavior (Hodges & Videto, 2011). The main advantage is that it allow researcher to witness behaviors, skills, record and reflect those in their research. However, it is possible that the

researcher makes incorrect observations and interpretations (Kerlinger, 1988).

Interview is defined by Kahn and Cannel (1965) as a purposeful discussion between two or more people. Interviews help researchers gather valid and reliable data that are relevant to their research questions and objectives but it is a costly method in term of time and money. The interviewer is also needed to be equipped with skills so that they do not interfere or mislead the interviewees with their questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

Questionnaire is one of the most widely used data collection techniques widely in business and management research for descriptive or explanatory (Saunders et al., 2009). The term “ questionnaire” is defined as a formalized set of questions with the purpose of obtaining information from respondents (Malhotra et al., 1996).

According to Ackroyd and Hughes (1981), questionnaire has some limitations such as: (i) respondents can misinterpret the questions and therefore give incorrect answers, (ii) limited information can be retrieved due to formatted questions, (iii) low chance for the collector to come back and ask for clarification from respondents and (iv) respondents may not be willing to answer if they are not required. However, according to Afroze (2010), there are various factors influencing the choice of a data collection method, including research questions, resources available, scope of work, timeline, and so on. Further to this study, the author decides to choose collecting data using questionnaires rather than observation and interview approaches when

considering all these factors and referring to the following advantages (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1981).

Large number of responses can be collected from a large number of people in a short period of time and in a relatively cost effective way

The results of the questionnaires can be quickly and easily quantified by the researcher or through the use of a software package

It can be analyzed more 'scientifically' and objectively than other forms of research

When data has been quantified, it can be used to compare and contrast other research and may be used to measure change

Positivists believe that quantitative data can be used to create new theories and/or test existing hypotheses

Figure 3. 2: Types of questionnaire

Source: Saunders et al. (2009)

As indicated by Saunders et al. (2009), there are two kinds of questionnaires including self-administered and interviewer-administered questionnaires. In this research, self-administered, delivery and collection questionnaire is used, due to the following rationales.

- It is more cost effective to administer than face-to-face interviews, convenient to respondents as they can complete it at a time and place that is convenient for them, reducing the possibility of interviewer bias, and is

perceived to be less intrusive than telephone or face-to-face surveys and hence, respondents will more readily respond truthfully to sensitive questions (Eiselen et al., 2005).

- The responses are gathered in a standardized way, so questionnaires are more objective than interviews, and information can be collected from a large portion of a group (Milne, 1999). It facilitates generalization but on the downside, could lead to false conclusions (Deem et al, 2010).

According to O'Leary (2004), a well-designed questionnaire should meet the research objectives. It should give accurate and relevant information to the research questions and be clearly organized and presented in a way that ensures respondents fully understand the questions and provide accurate, unbiased and complete information. Accordingly, the author was trying hard on building a questionnaire that works in practice and meets the research objectives as elaborated in Chapter 1.

In this research, the questionnaire is divided into six sections of 28 questions as described in Figure 3. 3 below. They are designed to collect information regarding employees' comments and feedback during the implementation process of BSC in HSBC.

Figure 3. 3: Allocation of questions and research content

Section

Description

Question

Section 1

Balanced Scorecard weighting

Q1-4

Section 2

Setting objectives

Q5-14

Section 3

Financial

Q15-18

Section 4

Customer

Q19-21

Section 5

Internal processing

Q22-24

Section 6

Learning and growth

Q25-28

It is a combination of a 5-point Likert rating scale (Likert, 1932) (1='strongly disagree'; 2='disagree; 3='neutral'; 4='agree'; 5='strongly agree') and open-ended statements " Please explain..." to collect both quantitative and qualitative information. In other words, questionnaires include both quantitative and qualitative questions with which participants can choose one of the five ratings and explain their choice. This ensures respondents have the option to add their own views and feelings (Fisher, 2007) and, on the other hand, providing more information and facts to the author in doing research. It may take 10-15 minutes to complete a self-administered questionnaire. In general, the research is more about what employee' experience is with the BSC than about getting a " correct" answer (Waal et al., 2009).

In addition, it is necessary to have a questionnaire cover letter written in order to shortly explain to the respondents of the questionnaire what the survey is all about and what is the purpose of asking the questions (Kiernan, 2005). Considering the nature of this research, it is also essential to let people know that their participation is voluntary and that their data are anonymous and confidential.

In this survey, 28 questions are designed in an attempt to get answers to 7 hypotheses as mentioned in Chapter 2, following are the general descriptions:

Q1 is to classify sales and non-sales position of participants at HSBC.

Q2 is to classify the seniority of the participants at HSBC.

Q3 & 4 are to explore the proportion of the four perspectives of HSBC BSC.

Q5 is about the effectiveness of BSC at HSBC.

Q6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 & 19 are to explore positive effects of BSC at HSBC, in which Q6 is about strategy translation, Q8 about strategy link, Q9 about employee understanding, Q10 about tracking record, Q11 about clear communication, Q13 about feedback encouragement, Q14 about employee satisfaction, Q15 about long and short term link, Q16 & 19 about a clear focus on achieving targets.

Q7, 8, 9 & 11 are more focused on employee understanding

Q17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 are about potential relationships between four perspectives, in which Q17 & 18 are about relationships between financial and customer value and learning and growth, Q20 & 21 about relationship between learning and growth and customer, Q22 & 23 about relationship between customer and internal processing and Q24 about relationship between learning and internal processing.

Q25, 26, 27 & 28 are more focused on learning and growth to figure out if it is the weakest point in HSBC BSC.

All these questions are written in details in the Appendix 1 under a full questionnaire.

3. 6. 3 Sampling method

Sample is a part of a population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Webster, 1985). It is a process of selecting

respondents form larger part for the purpose of a study. Sampling owns a lot of advantages. It saves time, costs and efforts, making data collection become more manageable as fewer people are involved, and the results will be available more quickly. And to ensure a sample is representative, it is suggested to obtain as high a response rate as possible.

According to Saunders et al. (2009), sampling techniques help to reduce the amount of data needed to collect by considering only data from a sub-group rather than all possible cases or elements. Two types of sampling techniques are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, sample units are selected randomly, whereas in non-probability sampling, they are selected based on the researcher's judgment, convenience, or other non-random process (Blattberg et al., 2008). The choice of which technique is used in this research is made in favor of non-probability sampling.

Due to the scope of work and the limitation of time, the survey is conducted amongst Premier Center staff only. Only 40 people are included in the survey, they are at different positions (teller, counter officer, service assistant, service manager, relationship officer, sales manager) and different levels of seniority (senior, junior, new joiner). And in this case, it is not necessary to launch a pilot test as recommended by Peterson (2000). There are two primary reasons.

First, they are every day dealing with issues related to BSC systems, from setting objectives at the beginning to rating performance every mid-year or year-end. Their daily work and performance is directly subject to all

measures of the BSC. Hence, a lot of opinions and feedback can be collected as a source of data collection.

Second, they are all working in Premier Center that is the same workplace with the author, then the nature of working environment and the point of view can be quite identical and easier to approach. Moreover, response rate can be high and they are more willing to support the author in doing questionnaires with frank answers. It is believed by many observers that higher response rate will assure more accurate survey results (Rea and Parker 1997).

3. 7 Framework of data analysis

Figure 3. 4 below provide a summary and connection between research objectives as mentioned in chapter 1 and related literature in chapter 2 and equivalent hypotheses as provided in regards to questions designed in chapter 3 to collect data and information for further analysis.

Figure 3. 4: Summary of chapter 1, 2 and 3 and relevance

Objective – O

Literature

Hypothesis – H

Question – Q

O1: To understand BSC as a performance measurement tool

Performance Measurement and BSC

H1: BSC and its perspectives act as an effective performance measurement tool

Q5

O2: To identify positive and negative effects of BSC in HSBC Vietnam

Positive and negative effects of BSC (9P3N: 9 positive & 3 negative points)

H2: There are relatively positive impacts of BSC in HSBC

H4: There are relatively negative impacts of BSC in HSBC

Q6-8-9-10-11-13-14-16-19

Q12

O3: To measure if HSBC BSC model is different compared to an ideal model

What is an ideal model? (Norton, 2000)

H6: The execution of BSC in a specific organization in practice is different with an ideal BSC

Q3-4

O4: To evaluate the relationship between employee understanding of the organization's objectives with a well-performing organization

What is a well performing organization? (Steward, 1999)

H3: There is a positive relationship between a well performing organization and its employees' understanding of its objectives

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Q7-8-9-11

O5: To analyze the causal relationships between 4 perspectives of BSC

Relationship between four perspectives

H7: There is a causal relationship between 4 perspectives of BSC in HSBC

Q17-18-20-21-22-23-24

O6: To identify the weakest one of the four perspectives.

H5: Of the four perspectives of HSBC's BSC, learning and growth is the weakest point.

Q25-26-27-28

Due to the nature of this study and the limited timeframe, the author only uses simple formulas in excel 2007 to consolidate figures and analyze data. Analysis is based on quantitative and qualitative information collected from the survey as well as from the author's individual understanding of the subject.

3. 8 Ethical issues

Since people are the subject of research, it is very difficult to avoid falling into ethical issues (Monette et al., 2005). Therefore, approval has to be obtained from management to conduct this survey at Premier Centers, and a brief explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire is necessarily included in cover letter in order to have an appropriate approach and outlook from participants.

In addition, the research topic is about Balanced Scorecard, which is in fact a relatively sensitive issue in terms of human resource management. It covers all employees and managers at all levels as well as issues concerning employee's benefits, corporate governance, empowerment, motivation and retention policy and so on. As such, particular attention must be paid to the approach of gathering information from subjects in banking area which are considered to be 'sensitive', especially in HSBC where privacy and confidentiality is part of its code of conduct and execution. Being aware that disclosure of the bank's information to third parties can put the bank at risk and result in operational and reputation loss, there are several points that need high commitment as follow.

First, participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and the rights of respondents as human beings should be respected at all times (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2004).

Second, for privacy concerns, no actual names of participants are to be revealed. Information provided by them remains confidential and will be reported in summary format only.

Third, the content and results of this study are required to be kept private and confidential between the author and the professor only. As some restricted and highly restricted information has been used in this study, particularly highly sensitive and confidential performance data has been obtained, public access and reference are not allowed for any purposes.

3. 9 Chapter summary

This chapter on methodology enables the author to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted, therefore answering the “ why”, “ what” and “ how” questions (Saunders et al., 2006). This section also provides a connection between itself with the research objectives in chapter 1, literature and hypotheses in chapter 2 by presenting research method and data collection via a list of questions to be worked on. Further in the next chapter, results and analysis on collected data will be discussed in details.