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A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CASE STUDY ANALYSIS ON THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF LATIN AMERICAN COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

A conceptual framework for case study analysis is developed through qualitative meta-analysis on N=26 articles on the internationalization of Latin American companies in countries with a GDP of more than \$ 100 billion, published between 2010 and 2018. Key findings revealed a matrix comprising nine dimensions, and suggest that case studies should be improved through consistent (i) statement of the unit of analysis, (ii) the diversification of the use of data collection sources, and (iii) the use of analysis software for qualitative research. This article is provided scholars with a new perspective and taxonomy on the case study analysis, and implications of these findings are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Case study analysis, internationalization, Latin American countries, conceptual framework.



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Introduction

This article addressed the meta-analysis of N=26 case studies on the internationalization of Latin American companies, resulting in a conceptual framework designed to analyze single or multiple case studies on the subject under investigation, helpful to scholars, researchers, decision-makers, and other practitioners.

According to Creswell (2014), there are some significant approaches on qualitative studies: (i) narrative research: it aims to narrate the history, experience, the phenomenon that occurred with one or more individuals; (ii) phenomenology: seeks to find common traits for individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon; (iii) grounded theory: intends, from the phenomena observed in the field and shared by several individuals, to construct or discover explanatory theories for these phenomena; (iv) ethnography: seeks to examine the action, interaction or process of a group of individuals who share the same physical environment and culture at a given time. Finally, (v) Case studies: seeks to examine a case, or multiple cases, contemporary, taking into account its context, of real life. This research is limited to case studies. Other research approaches are not part of this investigation and should be investigated in separate studies.

In the next sections, a comprehensive theoretical background on the case study is disclosed, followed by the methodology, findings, and analysis sections. Finally, the discussion section and recommendations for future research compile the present work.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

According to Yin (2011), the case study has five applications (i) explaining causative links in complex real-life situations; (ii) describing the intervention as well as the context in which it occurs; (iii) illustrating topics descriptively; (iv) exploring situations where the interventions that occur in it do not do so clearly and simply and finally (v) a meta-evaluation. Yin and Lenardt (2001) present six data sources that are used for the case study, shown in Table 1, as follows:

Table 1

Data sources for the case study

Sources	
Documents	Cartas, memoranda, minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, etc.
File records	Tabelas, budgets, demographic census, phone book, etc.
Interviews	Interviews with the participants of the case using a structured, semi-structured or open script.
Direct remarks	Researcher is present in the studied situation, but does not interact with her or other people to any degree.
Participant note	Researcher interacts with the situation studied both affecting and being affected by it.
Physical artifacts	Use of tool, instrument, artwork, etc.

Source: adapted from Yin (2001) and Lenardt (2001)

According to Eisenhardt (1989), data collection is not limited to interviews, observations, and file sources, and the researcher should seek the most diverse qualitative and quantitative data sources to bring robustness to the research, stressing the relevance of keeping field notes for reference.

For Eisenhardt (1989) data analysis is a central part of the theory creation study. It highlights the "intracaseanalysis" and the "cross-analysis" for the construction of theory from the case study. Finally, the final stage is the conclusion, where, after the analysis is saturated, the researcher describes the global meaning that is extracted from the case (Creswell, 2014), or as Yin (2001) points out to the construction of patterns or explanations.

Quality assessment in Case Studies

According to Yin (2001), there are tests to assess the quality of a case study: (i) Construct validity; (ii) Internal validity; (iii) External validity, and (iv) Reliability. Creswell et al. (2000) pointed out that the choice of quality procedures of research refers to lens to validate the studies and the paradigm adopted by the researchers, as illustrated in the following Table 2:

Table 2

Validation lenses

Lens	Paradigms		
	Post-positivism	Constructivism	Critical
Researcher lens	Triangulation	Non-confirmatory evidence	Reflexivity of the researcher
Lens of survey participants	Member verification	Prolonged commitment in the field	Collaboration
Reviewers' and readers' lenses	Audit trail	Thick and rich description	Peer review

Source: Adapted from Creswell et al. (2000)

Observe in Table 2 the lens and paradigms faced by the researcher when auditing the quality of a study. In the next section, the Methodology for the present investigation is addressed.

METHODOLOGY

In this work we addressed the internationalization of Latin American companies, to investigate the characteristics of the case study methodology applied to a topic chosen by the authors due to the ease and availability of a database of case studies. We investigated mainly on four databases: (i) EBSCO, (ii) Springer, (iii) Proquest, and (iv) Elsevier for identifying relevant research in the field, on articles published between 2010 and 2018 due to a representative and updated set of publications.

Criteria for articles selection

As our scope is the internationalization of Latin American companies, we list the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of these countries and select countries with GDP of more than \$ 100 billion, as shown in Table 3:

Table 3*Ten largest GDP of Latin American and Caribbean countries - 2014 and 2017*

Nome País	Código País	Ano 2014	Ano 2017
		PIB (em US\$ milhões)	PIB (em US\$ milhões)
Brasil	BRA	2.455.993,63	2.055.505,50
México	MEX	1.314.385,33	1.149.918,79
Argentina	ARG	526.319,67	637.590,42
Venezuela, RB	VEN	482.359,32	Retirado do relatório em 2014
Colômbia	COL	378.195,72	309.191,38
Chile	CHL	260.584,09	277.075,94
Peru	PER	201.080,66	211.389,27
Porto Rico	PRI	102.445,80	Retirado do relatório em 2016
Equador	ECU	101.726,33	103.056,62
Cuba	CUB	80.656,10	Retirado do relatório em 2015
República Dominicana	DOM	66.065,02	75.931,66
Guatemala	GTM	58.722,32	75.620,10
Panamá	PAN	49.921,46	61.838,18

Source: Adapted from World Bank National Accounts Data (2018)

Note in Table 3 that we chose not to include Puerto Rico since, despite being officially a free state, it is an unincorporated territory of the United States.

A total of 36 searches were searched in the four selected databases in total, resulting in 1,258 articles. Of these, the repeated ones were removed, 558, leaving 700 articles. We used the Criterion h-index as a statement of the relevance of the publication, and 531 articles remained to be analyzed. After inspection of titles and abstracts, of a total of 133 articles, only 26 articles were selected for analysis, as depicted in Table 4:

Table 4*Classification of the articles found (h-index)*

H-Index	Total articles
$H \geq 24$	10
$9 < H < 24$	12
$0 < H < 9$	4

The number of articles per journal investigated is shown in Table 5, as follows:

Table 5

List of journals investigated

Publication	h-index	#
Energy Policy	159	1
Journal of Business Research	144	2
International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Technology	90	1
Journal of World Business	87	1
International Business Review	73	1
International Marketing Review	71	1
Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	50	1
European Business Review	33	2
Journal of Global Marketing	26	1
Journal of Wine Research	23	1
International Journal of Emerging Markets	18	2
Journal of Technology Management and Innovation	18	1
Perspectives on Global Development and Technology	13	1
Latin American Business Review	11	4
Production	11	1
International Journal of Business and Globalisation	10	1
Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Science	6	1
Brazilian Journal of Business Management	6	1
Food	5	1
Journal of Globalization, Competitiveness and Governability	3	1
TOTAL		26

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

After downloading the databases, the articles were imported into N Vivo 11 and a critical evaluation of their introduction, methodology, results (when it was necessary to understand the analysis process adopted in the article), and the conclusion was performed.

The comparative analysis evidenced nine categories of analysis, namely: (i) Approach: Identification of the approach used by researchers in the research (inductive, deductive, or abductive). We only pointed out the approach when the researcher registered in the article; (ii) Data analysis: two categories of analysis developed by Yin (2001) were used, formulating a case description and based on theoretical propositions, and two categories developed by Eisenhardt (1989) intracase analysis and cross-analysis. In some articles, the method of analysis was only clear in the analysis of the results of the article. (iii) Data collection: the six data collection sources described by Yin (2001) were used – (a) documents, (b) file records, (c) interviews, (d) direct

observations, (e) participant observation, and (f) physical artifacts. (iv) Quality tools used: we use the framework created by Creswell et al. (2000) to base our analysis – (g) triangulation, (h) member verification, (i) audit trail, (j) non-confirmatory evidence, (k) prolonged commitment in the field, (l) thick and rich description, (m) researcher reflexivity, (n) collaboration, and (o) peer review. (v) Justification for choosing the case: the justifications presented by the authors for the choice of the case were selected. (vi) The paradigm adopted: positivist, interpretivism, post-positivist. (vii) Case type: single or multiple case study. (viii) Type of research: exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. (ix) Unit of analysis: the excerpts in which the authors clearly described the unit of analysis were selected. To expand the analysis of the unit of analysis, we developed two more categories - the objective of the article and the research question. Observe in the following Table 6 all these categories generated 11 nodes in NVivo:

Table 6

Nodes generated in NVivo

Name	Sources	References
Approach	3	4
Data analysis	26	102
Data collection	26	88
Quality tool adopted	14	20
Justification for choosing the	24	68
Purpose of the article	26	37
Paradigm of the author(s)	15	23
Search question	10	10
Type of case	26	30
Search type	10	12
Analysis unit	7	9

The categories of analyses were arranged in Table 7 to allow a comparative evaluation between the articles, as follows:

Table 7

Conceptual Framework for case study analysis

Texto	Classificação journal	Abordagem	Análise de dados	Coleta de dados	Quais as ferramentas de qualidade utilizadas	Há justificativa para escolha do caso	Qual o paradigma adotado pelos autores	Tipo de caso	Tipo de pesquisa	Unidade de análise está clara?
1	A1	Não informado	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> análise intra caso <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> desenvolvendo uma descrição <input type="checkbox"/> análise cruzada <input type="checkbox"/> baseando-se em proposições	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> documentos <input type="checkbox"/> observações diretas <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> registros de arquivo <input type="checkbox"/> observação participante <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entrevistas <input type="checkbox"/> artefatos físicos	Verificação de membros	Sim	Positivista	Único		Sim
3	A1	Não informado	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> análise intra caso <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> desenvolvendo uma descrição <input type="checkbox"/> análise cruzada <input type="checkbox"/> baseando-se em proposições	<input type="checkbox"/> documentos <input type="checkbox"/> observações diretas <input type="checkbox"/> registros de arquivo <input type="checkbox"/> observação participante <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entrevistas <input type="checkbox"/> artefatos físicos	Não identificado	Não	Nenhum	Múltiplo	Explanatória	Não
4	A1	Não informado	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> análise intra caso <input type="checkbox"/> desenvolvendo uma descrição <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> análise cruzada <input type="checkbox"/> baseando-se em proposições	<input type="checkbox"/> documentos <input type="checkbox"/> observações diretas <input type="checkbox"/> registros de arquivo <input type="checkbox"/> observação participante <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entrevistas <input type="checkbox"/> artefatos físicos	Verificação de membros	Sim	Nenhum	Múltiplo		Não
5	A1	Indutivo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> análise intra caso <input type="checkbox"/> desenvolvendo uma descrição <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> análise cruzada <input type="checkbox"/> baseando-se em proposições	<input type="checkbox"/> documentos <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> observações diretas <input type="checkbox"/> registros de arquivo <input type="checkbox"/> observação participante <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entrevistas <input type="checkbox"/> artefatos físicos	Não identificado	Sim	Positivista	Múltiplo	Exploratória	Não

Our first finding is that all articles present the explicit description of the objective of the article, the type of case studied, the collection and analysis of the data. This seems quite obvious since Yin (2001) points out five components of a research project: the questions of a study, its propositions if any, the unit(s) of analysis, the logic that unites the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. As one of the items may or may not exist, only the lack of clarity regarding the unit of analysis has caused us surprise. In only two cases, no interviews were used for data collection. In these two articles, only records of files and documents were used.

Regarding the data analysis, we observed that the concepts of Eisenhardt (1989) "intracase analysis" and "cross-analysis" seem to be a consensus among the researchers, because twenty-four articles do intracase analysis and in nine cases for used cross-analysis. Contrary to what was stated by Yin (2001) we observed more chaos of the category "developing a case description" (10 cases) than of the category "based on theoretical propositions" (6 cases).

We also highlight the lack of a clear statement on the articles investigated: (i) the research approach (inductive, deductive, or abductive). In 23 cases there was no statement of which method approach the study used. (ii) From the analysis unit. In 19 cases the unit of analysis was not declared. Evidence showed a tendency for researchers to link the unit of analysis to the case in which they are studying. In many cases, this association is true and makes sense, but in other cases, there is a certain imposition of this association.

IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

This article addressed a conceptual framework to better the analysis of single and multiple case studies, through meta-analysis of selected works aforementioned. The conclusions have implications in other fields of study, not limited to: (i) case studies on contract negotiations (Aquino and Dias, 2022; Cunha and Dias, 2021); (ii) case studies on streaming video business (Dias and Duzert, 2021); (iii) case studies on business negotiations on intangible assets (Dias, et al. 2022), amongst others.

There does not seem to be a concrete concern with the formulation of the unit of analysis as if it were something implicit to the case study, being a counter position to the position of Yin (2001) that places the unit of analysis as an important component of a research project. (iii) From the paradigm of authors (positivist, interpretive, critical, or post-positivist). Of course, it is not an essential issue, but the declaration of the paradigm of authors is a way to give more transparency in bias. In many cases, we observe the paradigm of authors by the use of theorists who traditionally adopt a paradigm, but in eleven cases we did not find clues to the paradigm adopted by the authors. (iv) From the adopted quality tool (triangulation, member verification, audit trail, non-confirmatory evidence, prolonged commitment in the field, thick and rich description, reflexivity of the researcher, collaboration, and peer review). It does not seem to be an item that awakens the care of researchers the statement of the quality tool adopted. (v) The type of research (exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory). In sixteen cases there was no clear statement of the type of research.

We did not observe a difference in the frequency of the lack of declaration by publication classification. (vi) The research question. In sixteen cases the research question was not stated in the article. Again we did not notice a difference in frequency by publication rating. For the quality tool used, triangulation was the most frequent among the cases analyzed. Although we could not identify the tool used in twelve cases, in seven triangulation was indicated.

In sum, multiple cases were the majority of cases analyzed, fifteen (58 percent). As single cases were found in eleven articles. We seemed to be a very significant number of unique cases in our study. As Eisenhardt (1989) pointed out, the number of cases to be analyzed for theory building should be between four and ten.

This article was designed to help researchers in developing case studies, through the conceptual framework proposed in Table 7. Analyzing case studies is sometimes a hard task, according to Yin (2001) because "good case studies are very difficult to be conducted. The problem is that we have few ways to filter or test a researcher's ability to perform them." (p.30)

Finally, the declaration of the type of research and the approach of the research, although not fundamental, helps the reader to make a prior selection of which reading he will prioritize.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The present research is limited to (i) the articles investigated; (ii) Latin American countries with GDP above \$100 billion; (iii) single or multiple cases studies published, in (iv) higher h-index rates; (v) international business field of research. Therefore, other countries, articles, fields of research, and research approaches may convey incorrect understandings of the phenomenon studied. Therefore, we encourage future research on the application of the conceptual framework in different fields of study, other countries with lesser GDP, as well as different research approaches.

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