

# Case Study Method of Business Administration Discipline in China

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**Abstract:** Case study, as a relatively common research method in business administration disciplines, mainly studies social sciences based on cases, and it plays a very important role in promoting the decision-making and hands-on operation of business administration students. Therefore, through the case study method related analysis, the importance of the case study method and the application value, combined with the specific steps of the case study method application, the normative case study method is explored. Furthermore, from the environmental background subdivision, the establishment of the normative research model and the study of advanced research methods, as well as the quantitative study of the case of the same nature, optimization suggestions are proposed for the current case study method of business administration disciplines in China to promote the academic research of the case school of China's business administration discipline and international standards, and move toward standardization.

**Keywords:** Business administration; Case study; Research method

## 1. Introduction

The discipline of business administration belongs to the category of management, and its corresponding is public management. In China, the discipline of business administration is a separate discipline, so there are advantages and disadvantages. One of the most widely used teaching methods in business administration is the case study method. The case study method is mainly based on the actual life cases, through the in-depth analysis of the behaviors and results that have occurred in the enterprise, and the management experience of the enterprise, so as to achieve the purpose of improving the students' decision-making and hands-on practice. However, the actual situation is that the actual environment for the survival of enterprises has a strong variability, and political, economic, and market factors will affect the external operating environment of the enterprise. Therefore, enterprises at different stages should be different in management methods. Therefore, some academic scholars have suggested that the case study method has unscientific shortcomings, which can easily lead students to fall into the misunderstanding of ideas and not applicable to the teaching of business administration. Therefore, the case study method of China's business management discipline has been widely concerned by researchers.

One of the fundamental reasons why case studies have become an important research method in business administration disciplines is that it is suitable for studying the important propositions of business administration disciplines. The study of business administration generally focuses on the real problems of enterprises, and it is based on what and why the business activities are carried out<sup>[1]</sup>.

Through the creative practice of the enterprise, new objective facts in the development of enterprise management are summed up and explored, and general conclusions are refined and drew. And "general conclusions" are popularized and promoted to more corporate practice activities, and then the overall management level is improved. The case study is a detailed case to describe in detail what the phenomenon of the thing (case) is, to analyze why, and to discover or explore the general laws and particularities of things to derive a research method for deriving research conclusions or new research propositions. Therefore, case studies can more accurately explain the differences in practice and behavior patterns of corporate management in various countries and their causes. Of course, it is also an effective research method for creating business management disciplines with Chinese characteristics.

Therefore, the presentation and innovation of modern management theory is based more on the practical activities of enterprise management and is refined and sublimated through case study methods<sup>[2]</sup>. The complexity of modern enterprise management and the differences in corporate practice activities in various countries further promote the theoretical research of business administration disciplines to pay more attention to case study methods.

## 2. Case Study in the Discipline of Business Administration in China

When using the case study method to engage in business management research, we must first have a basic idea and carry out some preparatory work. For example, in the

past 20 years of reform and development, Chinese household electrical appliance enterprises have been growing at a high speed and have formed certain international competitiveness. What is the process and reason for its rapid growth? When studying this topic, we first need to find representative corporate cases (Haier, Galanz, Changhong, etc.), and on this basis, case studies are investigated and conducted.

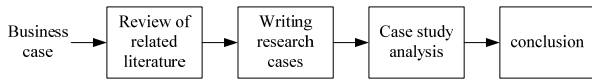


Figure 1. Case study steps

From Figure 1, the case study should generally follow five steps: the first step, based on the enterprise case to ask questions and research purposes; The second step is to conduct a literature review, derivation and propose a theoretical analysis framework, theoretical propositions or theoretical perspectives for the analysis of the research questions; The third step is to write a normative research case; The fourth step is to analyze the research case and verify the theoretical proposition of the second step, or discover the new facts and new ideas generated in the enterprise practice; The fifth step is to present the research conclusions and to clarify the future topics<sup>[3]</sup>.

By studying the related books by Robert K. Yin and combining his own practical experience, the author believes that when applying the case study method in the business management discipline, the relevant research steps should be focused. In which, the focus of the research steps will be different with the purpose of the research, as shown in Figure 2.

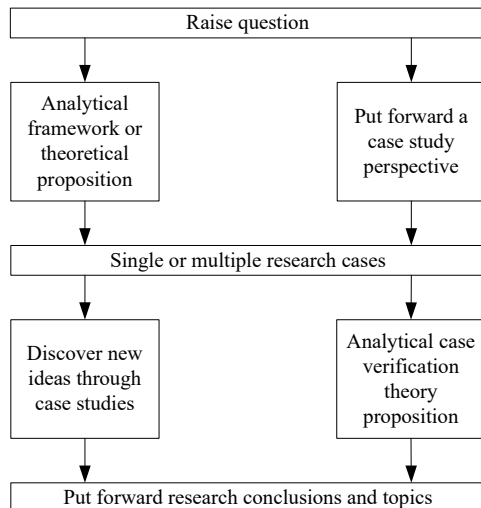


Figure 2. Specific steps of the case study

When the second research objective focuses on discovering new objective facts or theoretical innovations, the research focus (60% of energy) is placed on the research

case itself, the third step<sup>[4]</sup>. At this time, theoretical research such as literature (the second step of the case study) is only for the purpose of investigating the enterprise and collecting case materials, providing an analytical perspective or a case study. Whether we can discover new facts and new ideas through the case itself (of course, we must first understand what is new) is an important criterion for evaluating the results of such case studies.

The second research objective focuses on verifying or supplementing and correcting theoretical propositions, and its research focus (50% of energy) should be placed in the second step, the analytical framework of the paper. Material is collected for business case studies to support the paper's analytical framework or proposition, and theoretical propositions are validated or corrected through single or multiple research cases. Whether it is possible to come up with a logical and creative paper analysis framework or theoretical proposition, and through empirical analysis, it is the key to achieve self-justification to evaluate its research level. This method of case study uses the empirical research methods of economics, emphasizes the importance of literature research, and proposes analytical frameworks or theoretical propositions through literature research, emphasizing the rigor of the analytical framework or theoretical propositions<sup>[5]</sup>. In general, when instructing bachelors or masters of business administration to use case studies to do their thesis, such methods are promoted to use. It is necessary to cultivating students to summarize and organize the basic principles of management through literature research, and propose paper analysis framework or theoretical propositions, and empirical research through case studies<sup>[6]</sup>. Whether it is possible to fully and comprehensively understand the basic principles of management and to demonstrate it, or to provide a new interpretation (unlike deriving new concepts through literature collation) of existing management concepts through research cases, or to propose new management concepts, is an important criterion for evaluating the thesis.

At this stage, there is still a big gap between the research level of domestic business management disciplines and developed countries, which is at a relatively backward level. The analysis of the reasons for this phenomenon is mainly due to the serious shortage of classic business management cases in China. Even if we investigate and study the management activities of enterprises, we cannot have a true understanding of the problems and actual management of enterprises. Because there is no real research and exact verification, the current business management case does not have a high level of academic value. At the same time, it has become one of the main reasons why some scholars believe that the case study method is not suitable in the business management discipline.

### 3. Raising Research Questions and Research Purposes

When applying case study methods, the research direction should be chosen. Determining whether to conduct a comprehensive survey, or other aspects of the survey; whether to conduct research on corporate culture or organizational structure<sup>[7]</sup>. Secondly, it is necessary to make a choice of the enterprise. Only by deciding which company to study, can we raise corresponding questions according to the company's case. However, the choice of the enterprise case should not be based on the size and advancement of the enterprise, but should be based on the ability to analyze the relevant enterprise problems.

After determining the business case, the company's historical background, current social status, current business status, management level, and problems faced are understood. Therefore, according to the analysis and in-depth understanding of the enterprise case, it provides more research-oriented issues. The specific requirements are: to define the time background of the case; to understand the case through extensive reading and intensive reading, and to make reading notes; Attention should be paid to the key strategic issues of the company in the case; the relevant knowledge and theory should be applied. Theory is the starting point and end point of theoretical construction case studies<sup>[8]</sup>. The entry point of constructing the theory of industry-university-research cooperation from case studies is a unique phenomenon that the existing theory can't explain yet. The point is to propose a new theory.

Therefore, the entry point should be a theoretical blank point to keep the construction flexibility and avoid the bound theory to explore the space and limit the theoretical imagination.

### 4. Literature Review and Derivation of Research Questions

After passing the above steps, the next step is to find relevant documents based on the questions raised and conduct research on the enterprise. More information about relevant companies is obtained to write the best preparation for the next research case. In order to maximize the comprehensive and accurate reflection of the relevant literature and literature on the research issues raised by the country, we can conduct a more comprehensive search through the important online academic databases at home and abroad, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Important Academic Database Literature Search Method**

Academic data name	Specific search method
ABI / INFORM Global	1 Refine the questions raised 2 Search by topic or keyword
EBSCOhost Web	
Blackwell Synergy	

Springer Link	
Wiley Inter Science	
China Knowledge Network	
Literature Library	

In addition, a comprehensive understanding of the problem requires an overall investigation and analysis of the entire problem. The dependence on data in case studies is also extremely important in the need for data. The analysis process is not only a process of collecting data, but also a process of interaction and learning. The advantage of case studies is that the way in which data is obtained is diverse, and information collected from documents, physical evidence, files, photographs, letters, diaries, etc. is accepted. At present, many small enterprises in China cannot provide original documents or materials in management, so it is difficult for case researchers to obtain highly usable information in actual research<sup>[9]</sup>. This makes the case study in our country will encounter relatively large difficulties. However, in the research, we still need to pay attention to the collection of data, especially the first-hand information.

In business administration, it is necessary to analyze the importance of the relationship. When collecting the data information of the case, special attention is paid to the access, observation, investigation and analysis of the file. Because the collection methods are diversified in the collection of information, researchers will find it easier to detect changes in event relationships. Finding the events associated with them by the phenomenon of events, so that they can fully understand the relationship between them, in order to explain the relationship more accurately. For the case study method, whether it is to develop a good case of corporate practice or to make a good case closer to the company's practical activities, it must be updated in a timely and accurate manner<sup>[10]</sup>. Case studies are a time-consuming and labor-intensive research project, especially when new problems arise during the research process. Since the emergence of new problems will directly affect the results of the research, it is necessary to adjust the research plan according to the emerging problems. Only experienced researchers can turn problem research into academic breakthroughs, and only well-trained researchers can complete case studies more economically, efficiently, and efficiently.

### 5. Writing a Normative Research Case

Writing a research case is an important step in the application of case study methods to conduct business management research. When writing research cases, try to use objective data, accurate language and facts to avoid using vague or subjective judgments. The case writing should be studied in the case investigation, improve the judgment ability in the verification, and let the research case be implemented.

The purpose of the case study is to use the form of the case to specifically show the business situation and existing problems, so that managers can better change the status and strengthen management and development. Therefore, when writing a case, we should fully focus on the relevant issues, and seek truth-seeking to write relevant content into the case. We cannot easily write personal opinions and ideas into the case and do our best to write normative research cases.

When writing a case, pay attention to the idea, that is, how the theme behaves, how the problem is raised, how the plot is organized, and how the answer is implicit. The problem should be placed in the plot through clever time descriptions, the essence lies in the phenomenon, the answer lies in the story, and the known conditions of the analysis case should be given. The relationship between people and people involved in the case, the context of the main events in the case should be clearly explained. Where to be true, where to be complicated, where to be simple, where to be true, and where to be virtual must consider thoughtful<sup>[11]</sup>. Through the description of the plot, the primary and secondary points are clearly defined, and the case content is displayed in a simplified and appropriate manner to form a standardized research case.

In addition, case writing requires a fictional plot, such as material data not to be published. At this time, proper fiction is required. However, even if it is fiction, it does not mean that it can be fabricated, but it should be properly virtualized according to the original data, materials and plots. This will not only ensure the protection of corporate trade secrets, but also ensure that the purpose of the research case does not change.

## 6. Analytical Verification and Conclusion

Data analysis is the core of the case study, and the most difficult to explain. The key is to demonstrate the evidence and empirical evidence on which the theoretical induction is based. The recommendations or decisions are derived by analyzing the problems involved in the case and logically organizing them. The formulation, evaluation and selection of various options should follow the basic steps of appropriate corporate strategic management and conduct the necessary arguments.

At the same time, the case analysis verification step mainly highlights the procedural nature. The most prominent contribution of the case study lies in its procedural nature. In the research process, breakthrough theoretical relationships or new viewpoints can be found. Therefore, in the case study, we will always study the matter at the bottom of the study, and discover the ins and outs of the incident and analyze its underlying causes. This also requires analysts to have a full understanding and grasp of such events, starting from the whole, to achieve the overall logic of case studies<sup>[12]</sup>. Secondly, the case study analyzes the ins and outs of the whole event and forms a

complete story. Whether using case studies to discover new theories or the attributes of the case events themselves, the background, process and causes of the events are completely analyzed, and a complete story is finally formed.

In the analysis verification and conclusion steps, the requirements should be: no matter the analysis process or the conclusion process, the terminology of enterprise management and strategic management should be used as accurately as possible; Subheadings are used to point out the topic or point of view of the section; It is necessary to focus on logic, and the ideas of the report make it obvious from the title sequence<sup>[13]</sup>; Charts are used to illustrate problems as much as possible with unique decisions or recommendations. At the same time, the advantages and constraints of achieving the decision objectives and the special action plan must be explained in the report<sup>[14]</sup>. It should be known that the role of each strategic case analysis participant is an entrepreneur, and no one can replace your decision.

In the future, the data processing process should be thoroughly explained, the field records should be well done, and the original data coding and empirical evidence display should be fully carried out. Citing original evidence is emphasized (such as observation records, interview recordings, etc.) to significantly improve the reliability and validity of case studies.

## 7. Conclusion

In summary, in the subject of business administration, the case study method still has great application value<sup>[15]</sup>. In order to obtain meaningful research results and conclusions from case study methods, it is necessary to ensure that the selected research cases have relatively high academic research value. It is combined with the actual business environment outside the company and the specific internal management conditions to conduct comprehensive research. From this we can see that we should conduct scientific research work with a correct and objective attitude, and apply case study methods scientifically and rationally, so as to promote the further improvement of domestic industrial and commercial management research level.

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