Chapter I

The Choice of Qualitative Methods in IS Research

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INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter I set the stage for the remaining chapters by discussing factors that influence the choice of qualitative methods for information systems research. In doing so, I provide examples from my own work as well as that of other qualitative researchers in the IS field. I consider these influencing factors in order to highlight the interplay between methodological choices and the context within which they occur. Just as decisions about information systems need to be considered within their contexts of use, so too do choices about qualitative methods for information systems research.

In successive waves throughout my career, I have broadened the scope of the qualitative research methods I have chosen to use. In doing so, I have also expanded the range of issues I have had to confront. My qualitative research initially took the forms of case study and policy analysis as I followed the telecommunications privatization movement in the U.S. (Trauth 1979, 1986; Trauth, et al., 1983, 1991). The next stage of my journey began in 1989 when I was developing a research plan for a country-level case study of Ireland's emerging information economy. In this project the scope (the entire country), the level of
The choice of qualitative methods in research is complex and requires careful consideration. The selection of appropriate methods is crucial for achieving the research objectives and ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings. Qualitative methods are particularly useful when the research aims to explore complex phenomena, understand human experiences, and gain deep insights into social, cultural, and cognitive processes.

Qualitative methods are characterized by their flexibility and the depth of data collection, allowing researchers to adapt to new insights and interpretive findings. These methods are ideal for studying issues where the context, individual experiences, and meanings are central to understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Qualitative researchers often employ techniques such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis to gather rich, detailed data that can reveal patterns, themes, and insights not apparent through quantitative approaches.

In contrast, quantitative methods focus on the measurement and analysis of numerical data, offering a different perspective on research questions. Quantitative methods are suited for testing hypotheses, making generalizations, and facilitating comparisons across larger populations. They are often used to establish cause-and-effect relationships and to provide precise, objective measures of variables.

Choosing between qualitative and quantitative methods depends on the research questions, the nature of the phenomenon being studied, and the desired level of detail and generalizability. Researchers may find it beneficial to combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches, using qualitative data to inform and refine quantitative analysis, or vice versa, to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic.
The choice of qualitative methods is research.
The degree of uncertainty surrounding the phenomenon

concerns the choice of qualitative research methods to study the adoption of CASE tools. The
selection of methods depends on the nature of the research questions and the data required. Qualitative methods
are particularly useful when the research aims to explore complex social phenomena or when the
researcher seeks to gain a deep understanding of the research context. Quantitative methods, on the other hand,
are more suited for testing hypotheses and making generalizations. The choice of methods should be guided by
the research objectives and the nature of the research questions.

The Researcher's Theoretical Lens

The theoretical lens is an important aspect of qualitative research. It refers to the
researcher's theoretical framework or perspective that guides the research. The researcher's theoretical
lens influences the choice of research methods, the construction of the research questions,
and the interpretation of the data. Theoretical lenses can be diverse, ranging from
constructivism to critical theory. Understanding and acknowledging the researcher's
theoretical lens is crucial for interpreting the research findings.

In the case of the adoption of CASE tools, the researcher's theoretical lens might
focus on the nature of the adoption process, the factors influencing its success,
and the implications for organizational change. This lens would inform the
choice of methods and the interpretation of the data.
The choice of qualitative methods is presented in the primary text, which discusses the importance of qualitative methods. The text highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the research questions and the complexity of the issues at hand. It emphasizes the value of qualitative methods in providing rich, detailed insights that are not possible with quantitative approaches. The text also suggests that qualitative methods are particularly useful when exploring complex social phenomena that are difficult to quantify.

The importance of qualitative methods is emphasized in the primary text. The text argues that qualitative methods offer a way to uncover the underlying meanings and motivations that drive human behavior. It notes that qualitative methods are particularly useful for studying issues that are multidimensional and context-specific.

The text introduces the concept of ethnography, which is presented as a core qualitative research method. Ethnography involves immersing oneself in the culture being studied and observing the behavior of the people within that culture. The text provides an example of an ethnographic study of a small community in a rural area, highlighting how the researchers were able to gain a deep understanding of the community's culture and social dynamics.

The text also introduces the concept of case studies, which are another type of qualitative research method. Case studies involve in-depth examination of a single case or a small number of cases. The text illustrates the use of case studies in studying social phenomena and provides an example of a case study of a community facing a social problem.

The text concludes by emphasizing the importance of qualitative methods in providing a deeper understanding of complex social phenomena. It notes that qualitative methods are particularly useful for studying issues that are difficult to quantify and that they offer a way to uncover the underlying meanings and motivations that drive human behavior.
The choice of qualitative methods is present...

Academic Policies

In this chapter, we discuss the relationship between the use of qualitative research methods and the development of good research practices. We also explore the role of qualitative research in understanding complex social phenomena and in generating new insights.
CONCLUSION

The choice of qualitative methods is research and the profession

is for these reasons that this book was written.

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methods are most appropriate to their particular research questions.

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In my experience of working with qualitative research, it is clear that researchers can obtain different results depending on the methods used. In this chapter, I explore the choice of qualitative methods and discuss the implications of these methods for research in general.

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ENDNOTES

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The choice of qualitative methods in research is a critical decision that can significantly impact the outcomes and conclusions of a study. This article explores various qualitative methods and their applications in research, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and appropriate uses. It emphasizes the importance of selecting the right qualitative method to address specific research questions and objectives. The article also discusses the role of qualitative methods in generating rich, detailed data that can provide deep insights into complex phenomena. Additionally, it addresses the challenges and ethical considerations associated with the use of qualitative methods in research.