



STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

Call for Papers for a Special Issue

Question-Driven and Phenomenon-Based Empirical Strategy Research

Submission Deadline: January 31, 2018

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Aims and Scope

This special issue of the *Strategic Management Journal* seeks alternate approaches to the way that we approach empirical research. In particular, we seek innovations that focus on identifying and analyzing key questions about strategy and strategically relevant phenomena, as alternatives to developing specific hypotheses. Important and interesting strategy questions remain to be addressed that do not fit neatly with existing theories or prior understandings from traditional empirical research. It often makes sense to pursue these questions through systematic and thorough analysis of relevant data, and to provide plausible interpretations of the empirical findings so as to inform our knowledge of strategy issues.

In the past decades, the strategy research field has moved to a dominant approach to empirical research that tests hypotheses based on logical arguments that draw from one or more theories. Clearly, the hypothesis-driven approach is one way of providing rigor in research design and often is relevant for the context of a study, but it also constrains research opportunities and implications. The hypothesis-testing approach is most appropriate for cases with unambiguous logic underlying the predictions, which can limit our ability to engage in research contexts that do not fit neatly within existing theories and their associated assumptions, concepts, and causal logic. Indeed, scholars may sometimes feel they must force-fit arguments so as to pose hypotheses within a specific theory, which limits the degree to which we can interpret the implications of the results. If overused, the downside of hypothesis-based research is that it constrains the strategy field's ability to undertake important empirical research and to develop new conceptual and empirical understandings beyond the logic of existing theories. This special issue, therefore, will encourage authors to submit empirical papers that do not state hypotheses but, instead, are built on research questions.

We emphasize that question-driven research does not mean "brute empiricism" in which papers have little rationale for the analysis and merely generate a battery of empirical results with loose speculations about the reasons for the observed associations in the data. Instead, papers should produce rigorous interpretations of these results grounded in the questions asked and prior strategic management research. If appropriate, these interpretations may be accompanied by corroboration or rejection of plausible mechanisms, which may call for future empirical analyses to investigate the proposed interpretations. The results of question-driven research ultimately may lead to new theory as well as more comprehensive understanding of strategic management phenomena.

We seek multiple approaches to question-driven research.

- We welcome papers that use question-driven approaches to phenomenological research that are common in other fields, such as economics, finance, and natural sciences where scholars often simply start with questions that the field believes are relevant.
- We also encourage alternative approaches:
 - One option is an orienting proposition approach, in which the arguments start with initial concepts from relevant theories and outline general propositions that arise from the concepts, thereby providing an initial focus for subsequent fine-grained exploration in the analysis.
 - Another approach might build on learnings from inductive qualitative research.
 - Yet another approach might pose and investigate empirical puzzles that do not accord with prior theory or empirical findings.

Many other approaches to question-driven research are possible and we are excited about the opportunity to learn about them in the submissions to this special issue.

In turn, we welcome varied approaches to developing implications from the empirical results. Multiple options include:

- Stylized facts based on the empirical patterns in the analysis
- Implications for existing theories
- Implications for new theory
- Implications for prior empirical findings
- Other approaches to discussing the results

The core points that we will focus on is that authors have strong arguments for why they take a particular approach to the research, and then carry out an appropriate set of qualitative and/or quantitative analyses that answer the paper's research questions and provide relevant insights for future research.

Overall, then, the special issue has two goals.

- First, we will publish outstanding work that identifies questions that are important for strategy scholarship and provides reliable answers to the questions, where by reliable we mean systematic and thorough analysis of the data using appropriate methods that identify robust core results and also determine relevant boundary conditions to the core results.
- Second, we will help build templates for expanding the ways that strategy scholars approach empirical research, helping maintain rigor in our research designs even as we expand the range of questions that the field addresses.

The key point for all the work is that it must both stand on its own as outstanding research and develop insights for expanding the scope of research design in the field. Most fundamentally, we seek advances in question-driven research that will help push forward the discipline of strategic management scholarship and the reach of strategic management scholars – by expanding the audience of scholars who engage in strategy research, the questions we ask, and the reliability of our results and implications.

Papers

We welcome submissions within and across multiple forms of methodological inquiry, including – and certainly not limited to – qualitative analysis, statistical analysis, measurement of phenomena, experiments, and other empirical approaches to answering research questions.

Successful papers will have several attributes:

- **Research question:** First, successful papers will identify one or more research questions that do not fit neatly within the assumptions, concepts, and logic of existing theory, whether a traditional question that has ambiguous underlying logic or a question that scholars typically do not address because it lacks existing theory for developing unambiguous testable hypotheses.
- **Approach:** Second, the papers will explain the rationale for the research question and why it is appropriate.
- **Analysis:** Third, the papers will undertake appropriate analysis, leading to reliable answers to the research questions.
- **Implications:** Fourth, the papers will use the answers to develop strong implications for relevant empirical and/or conceptual audiences.
- **Optional methods supplement:** Where appropriate, some papers may also include a methods supplement that discusses the approach and rationale for developing the research questions in the paper at greater depth than is available in the body of the paper.

Submission Process

Submitted papers must be in accordance with the requirements of the *Strategic Management Journal*. Original manuscripts are due by the Submission Deadline of January 31, 2018, and must be submitted using the SMJ Submission system at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/smj>. Authors should indicate that they would like the submission to be considered for the special issue “Question-Driven and Phenomenon-Based Empirical Strategy Research.” Authors of papers invited to be revised and resubmitted will be expected to work within a tight timeframe for revisions.

Editorial Team and Further Information

The special issue includes a team of editors with an open-minded view on strategic management research, including audiences, questions, ways of stating questions, and methods. Rather than simply seeking to answer questions in isolation, the special issue editors have the goal of using different research approaches to advance the questions of, and the audience for, strategic management research.

Questions pertaining to this special issue may be directed to:

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For questions about submitting to the special issue contact the SMJ Managing Editor, Sara DiBari, smjeditorial@wiley.com or visit <http://smj.strategicmanagement.net/>



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