Chapter- 3

Methodology for Analysis.
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While the Case Method existed in Medical and Law Schools, its first use in management studies is said to be in 1912 at the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. In 1924 it became the prime method there (Ewing 1990). Harvard was not only the innovator, but has remained preeminent in the development of case material. It had generated over 5,000 cases by 1998, and is still producing 600 cases a year. (Crainer S. and Dearlove D. 1998)

Most business school students are familiar with the method of learning by case study analysis. In addition to being a learning tool, this model is used as model of research. But a case study is not an assimilation of data about a company or its working. A report on the company’s working or its decision is not a case study. To be a good case study it often has to fulfill a few criteria. But before that lets first know what is a case study:

Prof. Mumford defines it as ‘A depiction (in words or video) of a situation specifically written for development purposes, which exists or existed within an organization. Learners read (or watch on video/film) and analyze what has happened. Subsequently they present, debate, defend, discuss and critique the analysis, with tutors and fellow learners, in a
variety of ways, such as interaction in pairs, groups or fully plenary
sessions’. (Mumford A. 1997, How to choose the right development
method, Peter Honey Publications.)

This definition was produced by Prof. Mumford after reviewing definitions
by other authors. These include:

"The term case teaching in this context refers to a description of a
situation which exists or existed within an organization". (Smith G.
1987).

"Cases are teaching documents that have been designed with two goals
in mind: a substantive lesson and effective pedagogy". (Garvin D. 1991).

"A teaching case is a description of episodes of practice, a selection of
reality, a slice of life, a story designed and presented as study material,
an exercise, a puzzle, or a problem." (Barnes L.B., Christensen C.R.,
Hansen A.J. (1994)).

"A group is taught by Case Method when participants have studied a
case situation prior to discussing what should be done and how it should
be done. The trainer in a Case Method class is seen more as a facilitator
and encourager of discussion and participation than as a repository of
the correct answer". (Reynolds J.L (1998)).

In general the key point of Case Study can be summarized as:
A case study is an intensive examination, using multiple sources of evid-
ence (which may be qualitative, quantitative or both), of a single entity,
which is bounded by time and place. Usually it is associated with a location. The ‘case’ may be an organization, a set of people such as a social or work group, a community, an event, a process, an issue or a campaign.

Case study inquiry enables you to collect 'rich', detailed information across a wide range of dimensions about one particular case or a small number of cases. A good case study, therefore, highlights the numerous factors governing managed communication in a particular setting, portraying something of its uniqueness while also - but not always - attempting to offer insights that have wider relevance.

But here in this thesis our purpose was to know about the existing Internet business community and its potential strategies. As we have already said in the synopsis and in forming the proposal of this thesis that we are to explore the potential business strategies, and find the ongoing faults/mistakes in understanding or in execution of the mode of this business, if any.

Surveying, for the public opinion about their acceptability of Internet was surely easy but not a very effective way of understanding the problem. Because the users are often not always very sure what to expect and what has/have been hindering their usability. So for a clear understanding of the mode of business we have to choose this case study.
method, and even at times a few grounded study to understand what is going on, and what generalizations can be made, if any.

The case studies have been formulated keeping in mind the following key points:

- Undertaking a detailed analysis of a particular case and its setting.
- Trying to understand it from the point of view of business proposition and its effectiveness.
- Noting the many different influences on and aspects of communication relationships and experiences of the users.
- Drawing attention to how those factors are related to each other.

As this is not a classroom case study, the case does not end in the middle point, where lots of more discussion can be made. We have explored the real life case study to its final point. Which helped us to explore the strategies, its feedback, acceptance from the targeted customer/ user group, and to some extents its viability and success. It can only be done with real life case study. For example the case of Napster clearly points out its acceptability among its users, it also gives us a clear idea of a future business model for earning revenue. The case happens to be an intrinsic study of evolving technology, the changing need of the customers, impact of it on its competitors, and the existing laws that regulate Internet. As a whole the business of
Napster is still a loss-making unit. But we just don't dump it because it is loss making, we go through the different stages of the business development and find out what could have been eliminated to make it a success. Here in this thesis we have discussed the details of it under the failure chapter, but still during the discussion we have pointed out the salient features that made it such a success among the users.

Maufette-Leenders (1997) say that the case is “an excellent tool to test the understanding of theory, to connect theory with application and to develop theoretical insight” We fully realized the veracity of its comment when we worked on the case studies of Dell, Hotmail and Webvan.

The concept of viral marketing is new in the world of marketing. In fact it came to life with the advent of Internet. The theory and its practical application is so related with the case of Hotmail.com as developed by Sabeer Bhatia, that one cannot be studied without the other. We also have analyzed the causes for selling off of hotmail to msn.com, considering the options left to the makers of hotmail.com that was the best thing to do.

While making these case studies we have to go through many formal and informal materials. Other than research works business
magazines, web journals, daily reports company reports, consultants' websites like Bcg.com, Arthur Anderson, Mckinsey.com, PWC.com (PriceWaterHouse Coopers) and many such others were referred. In some cases like Fabmart.com and Webvan; the companies were contacted by email. In cases of Rediff.com and Indiatimes.com they were not ready to share any strategic data with us even for academic purposes.

Some of the case studies were getting uncannily big and cumbersome; but we have curtailed it with the goal of either building a theory or of testing a theory. We have purposely elaborated the Trust Building point in the case study of Ebay.com. because it is one of the main points of success.

The cases of Dell and Cisco were studied with great detail because they involve not just one single point but multifarious factors, business decision, customer satisfaction, use of configarator etc. We have even gathered a few feedback of satisfied customers from their website, which helped us to clearly demonstrate the success of their business decision.

We have mainly focused in the Business to Consumer sector of e-commerce in this thesis. And Cisco is not a typical example of the same; it belongs to the Business-to-Business category. But we have analyzed it because it has wonderfully integrated the Internet not
within the company people but also to serve its customers. The attention that Cisco gives to the need of its customers is simply great, and that what we wanted to highlight. The web is so well integrated to its business that the customers can no longer think without it – for many of them Cisco means the website of Cisco. The latest software upgrades are downloaded online, and by this the company not only saves money of sending the software, but also the customer is saved of the time delay. It is this very symbiotic relation that we wanted to highlight.