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# Table of Contents

Research problem .............................................................................................................. 3

Significance of research .................................................................................................... 3

Qualitative Research questions .......................................................................................... 4

Qualitative approach and rationale .................................................................................... 4

Population, sampling strategy ............................................................................................. 5

Data collection methods ...................................................................................................... 5

Credibility and utility .......................................................................................................... 6

Data analysis methods ........................................................................................................ 6

Role of the researcher ......................................................................................................... 6

Data presentation strategy .................................................................................................. 7

References ............................................................................................................................ 8
Research topic: Measuring and improving performance in Greek family wine and spirits industries.

Research problem

According to ICAP’s list, family businesses are the backbone of the Greek economy, with families owning or controlling 80 percent of all businesses. The same stands for the 150 Greek family wine and spirits industries, which face many challenges nowadays as the need for faster and more efficient services, access to capital, direct and timely purchase of the raw material (grape) and the desire for continuous improvement of service quality (Adams, 2012). All these lead them to start thinking about measuring and improving their performance in a more professional way. Hienerth and Kessler (2006) refer that the problems associated with measuring and improving performance within this type of businesses are primarily caused by the lack of comparable data due to the ambiguity of success and by the subjective biases. Banda (2013) states a more qualitative approach when considering how to measure and improve performance in family businesses, inferring that it is expected to focus on the interpersonal relationships as long as these are what make a family business unique. The study will rely mostly on attitudinal data between family members and executives rather on accounting methods, in order to measure their impact on business results.

Significance of research

Given the global economic crisis and considering the tsunami of recession that has flooded Greek economy, it seems quite obvious why wine and spirits industry studies increasingly attract attention in academia and industries. Greece holds the 13th position in the global wine production by 400,000 liters and has, proportionally, one of the largest numbers of wineries (150) than any other EU member-state (Kyriazopoulos P., 2007). Besides the popularity of such kind of business form and its contribution to wealth creation (Wang, 2005), Greek society needs solutions on how to increase job generation and improve regional competitiveness.
This study represents an ongoing exploration into the role of Greek family wine and spirits industries and the special conditions that apply inside them when trying to reach success. In the finance science and practice, the results of this study will serve as a contribution to the new knowledge business owners and financial analysts require.

**Qualitative Research questions**

This research attempts to answer one main question: Do Greek family wine and spirits industries perceive the value of measuring and improving performance differently from non family ones? Further this research provides answers to two sub-questions:

1. How do interpersonal relationships between family members and executives in wine and spirits industries affect business results in Greece?
2. What competences do family businesses in the Greek wine and spirits industry report as essential to the effective performance management of those businesses?

**Qualitative approach and rationale**

The study aims to investigate the way Greek family wine and spirits businesses should consider measuring and improving processes along with the interactions applied to the phenomenon between family members and executives. To succeed in this, it is required to focus on the existing experiences of the aforementioned individuals and, consequently, determine the perceptions under which these experiences originate. Some of the main characteristics of the phenomenological approach is to focus on the lived experiences of individuals (Sun, 2009), as well as to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Lester, 1999). Adding an interpretive dimension to this phenomenological research, it can be used as the basis for practical theory from wine and spirits businesses to become more competitive and to optimize their functionality, hence, profitability.
Population, sampling strategy

The researcher will use ICAP’s list to select 30 out of 150 Greek family wine and spirits companies in northern Greece. The sample for the current study consists of 30 financial executives who work in these industries and 30 family members who are the owners. According to Kleiman (2004), purposeful and criterion sampling methods are particularly suited to the phenomenological inquiry. As such, the current research will employ the two aforementioned strategies for sampling. During the purposeful sampling strategy, the researcher will invite via e-mail the individuals to ensure that they are able to share personal knowledge and inform an understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2007). In order to make sure that criterion sampling would work effectively, it is important the participants to share two certain characteristics: a) have an extensive experience in factors that affect business performance and b) have a frequent interaction with the other side (owners or executives).

Data collection methods

Similar to Kaur and Garg (2010), the 60 individuals selected for interviews will contacted by phone to inform them about the place of the interviews. It will be a quiet and private meeting room in a central hotel. The researcher will ask for a sponsor to cover this cost, probably a winery industry which shall not participate in the procedures so as to not to bias results. Moreover, he will compensate the participants in the focus groups for their time offering gift certificates, one meal and some bottles of wine also sponsored by the aforementioned winery. After accepting the invitation, the participants will be interviewed on two focus groups of 7 people who are unfamiliar with each other to ensure trustworthiness and objectivity. Because that the focus groups will last for little more than one or two hours, the researcher will only have time for five open-ended questions. The first focus group will consist of family members who own different winery businesses and the second one, of financial executives who work in them.
Credibility and utility

During the in-depth interviews, the researcher will build an individual report per participant which will depict their experience to the phenomenon, their aspects about the examined relationship and their recommendations for improving performance in such industries. To enhance the credibility of the study, member checking will be used, asking the participants via email to check, confirm or alter that profile for accuracy and clarity (Park, 2006). Moreover, the aforementioned multiple data sources will support credibility, utility and trustworthiness of the study (Leavy, Saldana & Beretvas, 2011).

Data analysis methods

Although it is considered to be time demanding, transcript-based analysis will be used for the transcription of videotapes (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech and Zoran, 2009). The videotaped focus groups interviews will be transcribed into text format using Microsoft Word, and then will be loaded in a CAQDAS tool like N-Vivo, to organize and code them (Park, 2006). Because focus groups data are analyzed one at a time, a constant comparison analysis will effectively serve to compare findings (Charmaz, 2000). Following the three major stages of constant comparison analysis as Strauss & Cobin (1998) suggest, the researcher will initially use open coding to separate data into small units, attaching a code to them. Then, axial coding will be used to group these codes into categories. At last, the researcher will compare specific incidents of data, developing concepts that express the content of the groups.

Role of the researcher

Acting as a human instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), the researcher will initially describe himself to participants informing them that he works in a similar industry (in the financial department). He will also disclose relevant aspects of self, as that his lived experiences qualify his ability to conduct the research even if they might influence his judgment altering the outcomes. In order to reduce such bias, the researcher will clearly define both risk and outcome, as well as he will use standardized protocols during the data collection.
During the in-depth interviews, the role of the researcher will vary. In the beginning, his role will be emic as he will fully participate asking probing questions and interacting with the participants. Later, his role will become more etic seeing the procedure from an outside view and becoming an objective observant (Punch, 1998).

**Data presentation strategy**

Prior to presentation, the researcher will give emphasis on respondents anonymity defining that when speaking about an owner, it will referred as “the owner” and regarding an executive, it will referred as “the executive”. The data will come from different sources; notes, videotapes, publicly accessible sites and blogs will be mixed to validate the claims that will arise from the survey. In order to facilitate readers, the author will adopt a “most simple to most complex” technique. The presentation of data will start with the simplest discovered example, perhaps by describing the existing relationship of an owner and an executive in such industries and its impact on business performance. Combining the codes from data analysis into over-arching themes that depict data, he will present exemplars that show the different perspectives which will probably occur, due to the different nature of participants within the two focus groups. As the complexity of each example or exemplar presented increases, the reader will have a better chance of following the presentation (Chenail, 1995). Later, he will suggest an unfolding of the research results using business words and phrases (Charmaz, 2008) that mainly used in daily work routine by the participants and therefore, sounds familiar to them. As the data presentation will move forward, the transition from one exemplar to another will best relate the research outcomes and suggestions with the research questions.
References


