

"A review of business case studies in Sweden"

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Abstract

This paper has the goal to analyse different cases done in Sweden. The main study will be business but other studies might be presented as well. The analyse will be about what case studies are common in Sweden.

When analysing and comparing different case studies the ambition is to form an idea of what kind of case studies are often made in Sweden. A great contributor to the subject is Klaus Solberg Søilen, his literature will be used to help understand how case studies in Sweden are formed along with other case studies, scientific articles and literature touching the subject.

After reviewing different cases we can see that Sweden is a country that uses case studies in various contents. It seems like they are used within business to grow internally and to learn both within a company and about a company. The usage has increased and it seems to be a research type that is growing and being used in a wider range both as internal development and even as a marketing tool.

Keywords

Case study
Business
Sweden
Education
SME

Case studies

Definition of a case study

Sharan B. (1994) means that. "A case studie is a research of a specific phenomenon, such as a program, an event, a person, a experience, an institution or a social group. This limited or defined system is chosen because it is important and interesting, or because it represents some kind of hypothesis." (Sharan B. 1994. p.24)

Case studies are commonly used in small scale surveys (Denscombe, 2009). "The starting point, and in my opinion what distinguishes case studies is its focus on only a single survey unit." (Denscombe, 2009. p. 59). According to Denscombe the goal with a case study is to highlight the general even though you are looking at a single survey unit (Denscombe, 2009). They are also used within business economics and are divided into categories, *a single organization, one place, a special person, a specific event* (Bryman, Bell, 2011). The form of a case study is a good way to analyse a specific question thoroughly and Denscombe also means that more than one research method is suitable to use (Denscombe, 2009).

Within economy as a subject, a case studie often focuses on the organisation in a particular company (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006). When creating the case studie you describe a key-person within the company and if other companies are mentioned it is mainly their competitors (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006).

Case studies worldwide are often made on multinational companies (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006). However in Europe they are often made on specific industries and in Sweden several has been made with small and medium-large companies (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006).

Definition of company sizes

- Medium-large companies are companies with less than 250 employees and an annual turnover of less than 50 million euros or a total balance sheet of less than 43 million euros (European Commission, 2016).
- Small companies are companies with less than 50 employees and an annual turnover or a total balance sheet of less than ten million euros (European Commission, 2016).
- Micro companies are companies with less than 10 employees and an annual turnover or a total balance sheet of less than two million euros (European Commission, 2016).

When looking at case studies you can see that it sometimes is referred to as good PR¹ for a company if someone decides to make a case studie about the company or industry (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006). Some examples seen worldwide is according to Solberg Søylen France Telecom and the American company Cisco who both sees case studies as rewarding PR (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006). When comparing this to Scandinavia and Sweden as a part of that, this phenomena is quite new and pretty unknown (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006). A more common way of using them in Scandinavia seems to be as internal-education (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006). When using them internally, the company can face a problem on a general basis and make the employees have their opinion about a certain problem (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2006).

Observed case studies

What kind of case studies are used in Sweden?

Below are a number of case studies made by Klaus Solberg Søylen and Stefan Huber. With them there are short descriptions of their content and they will be used as a part to analyse case studies in Sweden.

Mercatus AB - The case study of Mercatus AB talks about human resource management through internal development by making investments in their staff (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2004. Case ID-001). It is an example of a company that have put their personell first and it has payed off in increasing sales and thereby also increasing yearly turnover (Solberg Søylen, Huber, 2004. Case ID-001).

¹ According to NE.se, PR has the following meaning after being translated from Swedish to English. "PR, public relations, activities aimed at creating and maintaining favorable relationships between, for example a business and different target groups, such as customers".

Berglunds Mekaniska AB - Case study of strategy, administration and leadership have been run ineffectively and Berglunds needed consultancy assistance.

Tomva AB - The sight of running the business and how the role changes for the entrepreneur in the company.

Glimakra Akvamatik AB - Strategy study by technical improvements via investments in new technology along with intensifying marketing activities and employing academic assistance.

ADC of Sweden (Handelsbolag) - Gjuteribolaget i Bredaryd AB - International business in how to meet competition from abroad by marketing, merger and structural processing.

Mickes Måleri i Ådalen AB - Management study via restructuring in competence and sticking to your main business and being effective.

Brücke Trähuskomponenter AB - Finance study using leadership and the PUFF-model to do internal skill development (Solberg Søilen, Huber, 2004. Case ID-007). PUFF is a model where you strive to develop something within the company, it is done by planning, execution, follow-up and improvement (Solberg Søilen, Huber, 2004. Case ID-007).

Fotfavoriten AB - A study about entrepreneurship and reeducating to start your own business to please local government who rather use consultants. Therefore the local government encourage previous employees to become entrepreneurs and in that way privatize business and improve efficiency.

MSG (Mould Supply Group) - International business and the management along with decisions in strategy to face the worldwide-market. Facing the competition with cooperations through clusters.

Nipsoft AB - A study about entrepreneurship as an engineer and the need of schooling as an businessman and entrepreneur.

Nymek AB - Strategy study in alternative strategies in staff training and investments in the personell to maximize profits.

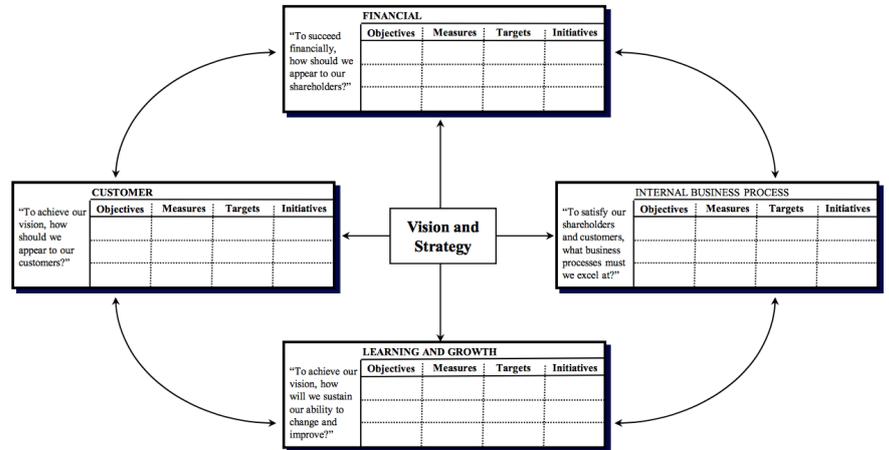
Röngårds Åkeri AB - Management by efficiency within the company, structural changes in the way they work by technical improvements mainly regarding using digital media.

Waltergruppens skolor AB - Entrepreneurship in form of privatization through internal educating in the school management, focusing on leadership, marketing and economical strategies.

Odlarna AB - Marketing study where a good business strategy can compensate for the small size of a company mainly by having good relationships with other businesses.

Unident AB - Human resource management using the strategy with the system "Balanced Scorecard".

The figure shows that the balanced scorecard has four main perspectives in the form of, financial, internal business process, learning and growth and customer (Kaplan, 2010).



Lars Höglund AB - Logistics and competence development among the personell through proDesign and the so called "Lean-production"-program to get effective solutions in their work process. The goal for the model is:

- "to get the right things to the right place at the right time, the first time, while minimizing waste and being open to change."

Zetterbergs AB - Strategy through competence network proDesign to develop industry-design and technology. Without greater success or big changes in the daily work but a ending up in a new strategy. Useful insights was that design is an important element in their work. The other insight is that investments in technology development isn't possible at the moment because of the complexibility in their line of work.

MSA Sordin AB - Technology implementing and competence development within the company using the consult firm tekniQ. Led to continuous development for the staff and new products.

Rock City AB - Musiclink AB - Entrepreneurship and cooperation where Musiclink AB is one of the companies working together with similar companies that can help one another. Working decentralized without hierarchy as their business model.

Svenska Magnet Fabriken AB - Entrepreneurship and internal development via the company TekniQ which has given them ideas of new products and helped to realize product ideas. The internal development has been combined with restructuring from being a supplier to a company of knowledge.

The following case studies are different ones with various authors found either online, in databases or in books. These will also work as cases to show what kind of case studies that are made in Sweden. As to the ones authored by Solberg Søilen and Huber a short description or quote will follow the title.

Social economy and employment - the case of Sweden - "This paper analyses employment in certain entrepreneurial forms, usually considered belonging to the social economy, in Sweden during the 1990s." (Westlund, 2003. p. 163).

Correlation between Negotiated Rents and Neighbourhood Quality: A Case Study of Two Cities in Sweden - "The aim of this paper is to analyse whether or not differentiated rents reflect differences in neighbourhood quality in housing of similar quality and age in two target cities in Sweden." (Björklund, Klingborg, 2004. p. 627).

Postponement and logistics flexibility in retailing: a multiple case study from Sweden - "The purpose of this paper is to explore how postponement is applied in retailing and how such application is connected to logistics flexibility." (Jafari, Nyberg, Hilletoft, 2015. p. 445)

Utvärdering av lågenergibygnader - en fallstudie. Ett gemensamt regeringsuppdrag för Boverket och Energimyndigheten - A case study evaluating energy-efficient houses and ways to follow up both new, used and renovated houses that classifies as energy-efficient in forms of costs regarding both building and operating, technical aspects, environmental aspects etcetera (Einarsson, Carlsson, Karlsson Hjorth, Norrman, Storm, Linton, Andersson, Eriksson, Pettersson, Thornberg, 2015)

Leadership, organization and health at work: a case study of a Swedish industrial company - "The purpose of this article is to analyse the leadership and organization, including the organizational culture, of a Swedish industrial company in relation to the health of the employees." (Eriksson, Jansson, Haglund, Axelsson, 2008. p. 127)

The Framing of Corporate Social Responsibility and the Globalization of National Business Systems: A Longitudinal Case Study - A case study where 15 Sweden corporations has been analysed in their corporate social responsibility. Some of the companies are Volvo, Handelsbanken, SCA, Skanska, SEB etcetera. (Tengblad, Ohlsson, 2009)

Valedo Partners investmentgroup case studies - The company Valedo Partners is a part of various case studies of the companies they have invested in. It is a company investing in small and mid-size companies (Valedo Partners, u.å.). "Valedo actively supports management teams in driving long-term value creation initiatives and strengthening companies' market positions. This value creation is not only built on sales- and earnings growth, but also on investments in product development and focus on customer- and employee satisfaction." (Valedo Partners, u.å. *Faktablad om Valedo* p.1)

The companies where case studies has been created with Valedo are, Akademikliniken, Perten Instruments, Evidensia, INOM, Broadcast Text International, Aspen and Solhagagruppen.

Svenska företag i globala värdekedjor - sex fallstudier - Case studies of large Swedish companies touching subjects like strategy, competence and unique knowledge within the company. It mainly

focuses on how Swedish companies should face the globalization of the world economy and how they work in global value chains. The companies are ABB Robotics, Sweco, Carmel Pharma, Digital Illusions CE, Ludvig Svensson, Odd Molly and Quintiles. These companies are different types, some are companies within multinational concerns and some are completely Swedish companies or concerns (Tillväxtanalys, 2011).

Skanska case studies - "Skanska's business in Sweden provides a range of construction services for private and public sector clients. We also build high specification Green projects" (Skanska, 2016 <http://skanska-sustainability-case-studies.com/index.php/sweden?limitstart=0>)

Skanska creates numerous case studies about their different projects both in Sweden and abroad. They are used to show their projects and explain them and they have a pretty big focus on the environment and sustainability (Skanska, 2016)

Kinnarps case studies - Kinnarps is a company that creates workspaces. They use case studies a bit like Skanska, to show their different projects. They have several customers in Sweden but also abroad and uses their case studies in the same way whether or not the client is a Swedish or English company (Kinnarps, 2016).

Oneflow case studies - Oneflow is a company that works with an all-in-one solution regarding digital contract handling. Oneflow uses case studies to show their product in a form of marketing by explaining and evaluating how their clients have used their products and developed as a company. They have helped companies like, ServaNet, Byggmax, Bluegarden, Live it, Högberga Gård, Aveqia, Körunda, Kundo and The Amazing Society (Oneflow, 2016).

Concluding thoughts

In what areas are case studies common in Sweden then ?

- Well, it seems like case studies in Sweden is a growing market. Case studies in Sweden focuses sometimes on internal development in businesses and or to simplify learning in schools when using different fictive or actual cases. They are many times used internally in different companies to let the personell grow and develop new ideas.

Since the book "20 svenska fallstudier för små och medelstora företag" (Solberg Søilen, Huber, 2006) that was mainly used to define case studies and the "market" of case studies it seems like the subject and method has developed a lot. Today it is a more commonly used research method and it is used to face many different problems and questions. The case studies found in this paper has had their main focus on small and medium-large companies and many times with different aspects of internal development. Nowadays it seems like a lot of different sized companies uses case studies even as a way of marketing like Oneflow, Kinnarps, Skanska and Valedo. Case studies also seems to be used to explain larger questions and create a discussion around these. That can be seen in the following case studies:

- Social economy and employment - the case of Sweden,
- Correlation between Negotiated Rents and Neighbourhood Quality: A Case Study of Two Cities in Sweden,
- Postponement and logistics flexibility in retailing: a multiple case study from Sweden,
- Utvärdering av lågenergibygnader - en fallstudie. Ett gemensamt regeringsuppdrag för Boverket och Energimyndigheten.

When looking at the development of the research form of case studies I would argue that small and medium-large companies like the ones Klaus Solberg Søilen and Stefan Huber researched, would benefit to use it as a form of either internal development or even to explore a new market. This would mean that future research should be done out on the fields and more hands-on companies of different sizes within Sweden. Very much like Klaus Solberg Søilen and Stefan Huber and thereby encourage companies to use it even more.

Another interesting area within the subject would be to look at the largest companies of Sweden and see how their case studies differs form the so called SME-companies. An interesting angle would be to analyse how international influences the case studies of these larger companies.

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